

Lessons from the Life of Jacob (Israel)

**Growing Godly Families
Old Testament Series
Manual 3**

By

Duane Anderson

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics which were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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Isaac Wanted to Give the Blessing to Esau

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on godly character as they begin to think about marriage or as they help others who are thinking about marriage. In this topic, we see that as Isaac began to think that his time to die would come soon, he wanted to give the blessing to Esau even though Esau had earlier despised the birthright.

Genesis 27:1-4 says, “Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, ‘My son.’ And he answered him, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ‘Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death. Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.’” In these verses, we see that Isaac thought that he was getting old and that the time of his death would soon come. He wanted to make certain that he had given the blessing to Esau before that day came because he did not know when he would die. In addition, due to his age, his eyesight was gone and he could not see. This may have had a part in making him think that the day of his death would soon come.

In order to prepare for the blessing, Isaac told Esau what he was to do. Isaac told Esau that he was to go out in the fields and hunt for some game that he could kill in order to make a savory stew for his father. The word translated “savory” means *very tasty or delicious food*. This word is used six times in this chapter. Isaac wanted Esau to prepare a very special dinner from the meat that he was able to kill that day as he hunted. Then he wanted Esau to prepare a stew with the meat for him to eat before he gave the blessing. Isaac said that once he had eaten this very special dinner, he wanted to bless Esau before he died. Isaac did not realize that he would live many more years before he died so he wanted to make certain that he had given the blessing before that time arrived.

However, Rebekah was listening when Isaac talked to Esau. As husband and wife they each had a favorite son. Genesis 25:27-28, “So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” The fact that each had a favorite son meant that each favored one son. Rebekah knew what God had told her in Genesis 25:23 where we read, “And the LORD said to her: ‘Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’” She knew that Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob as Genesis 25:33-34 says, “Then Jacob said, ‘Swear to me as of this day.’ So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.” In addition, both Isaac and Rebekah were very upset about the wives that Esau had chosen as Genesis 26:34-35 says, “When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.” The fact that Isaac and Rebekah both had a favorite son was now about to lead to more sin.

Esau had already sinned by despising the birthright and rejecting the spiritual leadership for the family. Now Genesis 27:5-10 says, “Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring *it*. So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, ‘Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying, “Bring me game and

make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.” Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall take *it* to your father, that he may eat *it*, and that he may bless you before his death.”

Isaac chose to sin by trying to give the blessing to Esau even though God had said, “the older would serve the younger.” Here we see that Rebekah chose to deceive her husband so that Jacob would get the blessing. Jacob also chose to sin by agreeing to help carry out the deception of his father. Such choices always have consequences. We will see some of those consequences in the next several chapters. Meanwhile, while Esau was out hunting for an animal to kill to make the delicious stew, Rebekah went to talk to Jacob. She told Jacob what she had heard Isaac say to Esau. Then we see that she began to explain her plan to make sure that the blessing went to Jacob instead. Rebekah wanted Jacob to carry out the command that she was going to give him. By this statement, Rebekah showed that she felt very strongly about the fact that Jacob should receive the blessing rather than Esau.

Rebekah told Jacob to go to the flock and get her two young kids of the goats. She said that she would take those young goats and make savory stew like the kind of stew that Isaac loved. She felt that she could make the meat from those young goats taste just like a similar stew that would be made from wild game such as a young deer. Since Jacob could get the goats from the flock he would have the meat ready very quickly for the stew and in much less time than it would take Esau to hunt for some kind of wild game. Rebekah said that once she made the delicious stew, Isaac would eat the stew and then give Jacob the blessing before he died. Rebekah was sure that her plan would deceive Isaac.

However, Jacob was not as certain. Genesis 27:11-17 says, “And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, ‘Look, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth-skinned man. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.’ But his mother said to him, ‘*Let* your curse *be* on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.’ And he went and got *them* and brought *them* to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.” Esau had been a hairy man from the time that he was born. Genesis 25:25 says, “And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.” In contrast, Jacob had very smooth skin without much hair. Jacob was afraid that his father might feel him and realize that his skin was smooth. This would cause his father to recognize that he was a deceiver and not Esau. Instead of receiving a blessing, Jacob was afraid that he would bring a curse upon himself. Jacob understood that sin and deception can cause consequences for which he was not prepared. The same is true for us today when we try to deceive others. Jacob did not want to bring a curse on himself instead of a blessing.

Rebekah was prepared for that answer by Jacob. She said that if Isaac gave a curse, the curse should fall on her instead of on Jacob. Rebekah then told Jacob to obey her voice to go and kill the two young goats and bring them to her so that she could make savory food like Isaac loved. Then Jacob went and killed two young goats and brought the meat to his mother so that she could prepare the savory food that Isaac loved. As a result, each member of the family had chosen to do the thing that they hoped would get them what they wanted instead of what God had planned. We will see that the consequences of this choice had a major negative effect on the lives of each of them. Galatians 6:7 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” They all reaped the consequences of their

choices.

Rebekah made the savory food and then she prepared Jacob so that he would be able to deceive his father. Rebekah had some of the best clothes of Esau in her tent and so once the food was ready, she took the clothes of Esau and put them on Jacob. Genesis 27:26-27 says, “Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come near now and kiss me, my son.’ And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: ‘Surely, the smell of my son *is* like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed.’” Here we see that Isaac was deceived by the smell of these clothes so that he thought it was Esau rather than Jacob that had brought him this food that he ate. Rebekah had recognized that was one of the things she could do to deceive Isaac.

However, she also did one other thing to deceive Isaac. She took the skins of the two young goats that Jacob had killed and put these goat skins on the hands and neck of Jacob. This helps us to understand how hairy Esau was. Genesis 27:22 says, “So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, ‘The voice *is* Jacob’s voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.’” When Isaac felt the goatskins on the hands of Jacob, he thought that he was feeling Esau because the hands were so hairy. As a result, both of the things that Rebekah did to deceive Esau worked. As we will see when we get to these verses, Isaac was deceived even though the voice sounded like the voice of Jacob. She may have deceived her husband but she certainly did not deceive God.

Once Rebekah had placed the clothing and the skins on Jacob, she gave him the food that she had prepared for Isaac. We will see in our next topic that Jacob had to lie in order to totally deceive his father. This is a reminder that one sin will lead to other sins to try to cover the sin that has already been committed. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that sin is like a trap. Each sin committed only leads to more sin and more consequences. Genesis 27:41 says, “So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, ‘The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’” Here we see that Esau would decide to kill Jacob because of these sins. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to explain the consequences of sin.

Jacob Deceived His Father and Received the Blessing

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that sin leads to more sin and that there are also consequences that happen when we sin. In this topic, we will see the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob even though he thought he was giving it to Esau.

Genesis 27:18-20 says, “So he went to his father and said, ‘My father.’ And he said, ‘Here I am. Who are you, my son?’ Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.’ But Isaac said to his son, ‘How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?’ And he said, ‘Because the LORD your God brought it to me.’” In these verses, we see that Jacob had to start telling lies to cover up the fact that he was actually trying to deceive his father to get the blessing rather than Esau. This is a reminder again that when we sin that we will have to commit other sins to try and cover the first sin.

Jacob began by saying, “‘My father.’” These words were true but they quickly led to Jacob telling a lie because his father answered, “‘Here I am. Who are you, my son?’” When Isaac asked this question, suddenly Jacob was faced with a choice. In order to try and deceive his father we see that Jacob chose to tell a lie. This will be the first of several lies that he chose to tell in his efforts to deceive his father. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament warn that we sin when we tell a lie. The ninth commandment given in Exodus 20:16 says, “‘You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor...’” In this case, Jacob chose to give a false witness to his father and against his brother by claiming that he was Esau as he said, “‘I am Esau your firstborn.’” In addition, he added another lie as he said that he had done just as his father had told him to do.

To try and stop the questions Jacob quickly said to his father, “‘Please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.’” Here we see that he included another lie to stop the questions. It was not even wild game that he was serving to his father. Instead, it was the meat of the goats that his mother had prepared. Another example of the fact that one lie leads to more lies. He wanted his father to eat so that his father would not ask any additional questions that would require lies to answer them. However, his father chose to ask another question first as his father said, “‘How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?’” Jacob had asked his father to eat the wild game that his father liked. As a result, his father wanted to know how he had found the wild game so quickly. His answer was another lie as Jacob said, “‘Because the Lord your God brought it to me.’” By this answer, Jacob said that the Lord had brought the wild game to him quickly. Each lie just led to additional lies.

Genesis 27:21-24 goes on to say, “Isaac said to Jacob, ‘Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.’ So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, ‘The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.’ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau’s hands; so he blessed him. Then he said, ‘Are you really my son Esau?’ He said, ‘I am.’” Although Isaac could no longer see, that did not mean that his other senses were not working. He could still hear quite well. He recognized, because of his hearing, that something did not sound right. As a result, Isaac made another request of Jacob as he said, “‘Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.’” Jacob did not know why his father made this request but he soon understood. He walked over close to his father and the first thing that his father did was to feel his arms. His father then explained why he felt his arms. His

father said that the voice sounded like Jacob. However, when he felt the hands of Jacob, Isaac was deceived by the skins because the hands felt like the hands of Esau.

Rebekah had planned to deceive her husband so that Jacob would get the blessing instead of Esau. However, that plan had already caused Jacob to tell his father several lies in order for him to do his part to deceive his father. Jacob would later learn the meaning of the words what we sow we will certainly reap. In Genesis 29, we will see that Jacob was deceived by his future father-in-law. He worked for Laban for seven years in order to get Rachel as his wife. Then Laban deceived Jacob. Genesis 29:23-25 says, “Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?’” Suddenly that morning, Jacob learned very quickly the impact that deception can have on others. He reaped what he had sown when he deceived his father. The deception of Jacob had a great impact both on his father and on his brother.

However, we see that the deception worked for a time for Jacob. His father did not recognize him even though the voice sounded like Jacob because of the deception with the animal skins on his arms. We see that Isaac was deceived and decided to bless Jacob. However, Isaac had one more question for Jacob first. Isaac asked the question, “‘Are you really my son Esau?’” This question showed that Isaac was still uncertain who was talking to him because of the fact that the voice sounded like Jacob. Suddenly, Jacob had to decide again if he was going to tell the truth or lie to his father. Each lie makes it a little easier to tell the next lie. That is shown by the response of Jacob to the direct question. He immediately answered, “‘I am.’” As we can see, Rebekah and Jacob both committed sins in order to deceive Isaac. We do not read about the death of Rebekah so it is possible that she died during the twenty years that Jacob was working for Laban. If that is the case, it meant that Jacob was not with his mother when she died.

Isaac was satisfied once he heard the direct answer from Jacob. Genesis 27:25-29 goes on to say, “He said, ‘Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son’s game, so that my soul may bless you.’ So he brought it near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Come near now and kiss me, my son.’ And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said: ‘Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed. Therefore may God give you of the dew of heaven, of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be those who bless you!’” Isaac ate the savory stew that Jacob had brought. Then Isaac asked his son to come near to him and kiss him. In these verses, we see one final way that Jacob deceived his father as his father smelled the clothing of Esau. Then his father was ready to bless him.

Isaac said, “‘Surely, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed.’” As Isaac began the blessing, he started this blessing with the final way that he had been deceived by Jacob. He compared his son to the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. That was due to the fact that Esau was a man of the field. Genesis 25:27 says, “‘So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.’” This statement showed that the smell of the clothing of Esau was the final thing that convinced Isaac that he was giving the blessing to Esau. The first part of the blessing was related to this smell of the field. This part of the blessing had three parts. First, Isaac asked God to bless his son with the dew of heaven because that was what watered the grass and fields and caused them to grow. Second, he asked the Lord to give him fertile ground that would

produce good crops. Third, he asked God to cause his fields of grain and his vineyards to produce abundant crops.

In the blessing, Isaac said that the peoples and the nations would serve him and bow down to him. Then Isaac gave the part of the blessing that would cause great hatred by Esau when he said, “Be master over your brethren, and let your mother’s sons bow down to you.” The word translated “master” is only used one other time and that is in verse 37 of this chapter where we read, “Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, ‘Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?’” However, before Isaac made this statement we see how he reacted when he heard that Jacob was the one who had received the blessing. Genesis 27:33 says, “Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.’” Isaac realized that he had sinned in not giving the blessing to Jacob and so he said that Jacob was indeed the one that would be blessed. Isaac knew what God had said but he had wanted his favorite son to receive the blessing anyway then realized that was not going to happen.

The final statement of the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob was the same as the final statement that God gave to Abraham when God announced the covenant to Abraham. God had told Abraham in Genesis 12:3, “...I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Here we see that Isaac finally realized that the covenant of God would carry on through the line of Jacob and not Esau. God had earlier made it clear the covenant would pass through Isaac when He said in Genesis 17:21, “...But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” Now God had allowed Isaac to learn that God would cause the line to go through Jacob. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain the fact that God revealed both to Abraham and to Isaac to whom the line of Christ would be passed. God wanted His plan for the future made clear. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how God revealed His plan in spite of the sins of Isaac and his family.

Esau Planned to Kill Jacob

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how God made it clear to both Abraham and Isaac through whom the line of Christ would come. In our topic today, we will see the anger of Esau when he found out that Jacob had been given the blessing instead of him.

In Genesis 27:30-36 we read, “Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, ‘Let my father arise and eat of his son’s game, that your soul may bless me.’ And his father Isaac said to him, ‘Who *are* you?’ So he said, ‘I *am* your son, your firstborn, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me—me also, O my father!’ But he said, ‘Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.’ And *Esau* said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’” In these verses, we see what happened when Esau came to his father with his savory stew.

Esau probably brought the savory stew to his father with great happiness because he thought that he was going to receive the blessing. When he came to the tent of his father he asked his father to come and eat that stew and then give him the blessing. Suddenly that happiness was totally changed. His father asked him the question, “‘Who *are* you?’” He immediately replied that he was Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac. Suddenly his father began to tremble and shake. He asked a second time, “‘Who?’” Then Isaac realized what had happened. He now understood why the voice had sounded like Jacob. He knew immediately that the voice had sounded like Jacob because it was Jacob. Isaac then said, “‘Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me?’” Esau learned that his father had already received a savory stew and that Isaac had eaten it. Then Esau heard words that changed his happiness to fear and anger. Isaac said, “‘I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.’” Esau immediately knew that Jacob had brought his father a savory stew and that his father had eaten that stew.

In addition, his father had given the blessing to Jacob and now said that Jacob was the one who would be blessed. Isaac realized that he had been wrong to try to give the blessing to Esau because God had said in Genesis 25:23, “‘And the LORD said to her: ‘Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’” Isaac had tried to give the blessing to Esau because Esau was his oldest son. However, Isaac saw that God had promised that blessing to Jacob and now Isaac realized that God had caused him to give the blessing to Jacob so he said that Jacob would certainly have that blessing. Isaac said that Jacob had come with deceit and had taken away the blessing of Esau. Esau said Jacob was certainly the name that fit Jacob because that name means *supplanter* and that is what Jacob had done two different times. Then he said that Jacob had taken away his birthright. Here we see that Esau had deceived himself because he had sold the birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew because he did not want the spiritual leadership in the family. However, he did want the blessing and now Jacob had taken that also. As a result, Esau asked his father if his father had another blessing for him.

Genesis 27:37-40 says, “Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, ‘Indeed I have made him your

master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?’ And Esau said to his father, ‘Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!’ And Esau lifted up his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him: ‘Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above. By your sword you shall live, And you shall serve your brother; And it shall come to pass, when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck.’” Esau wanted to know if his father had another blessing for him but Isaac first told him what he had said in the blessing that he gave to Jacob.

In the blessing that Isaac had given to Jacob he had said that Jacob would be the master over his brothers and that all of his brothers would be his servants. Isaac had also said that the crops of Jacob would be blessed. Then Isaac asked Esau, “What shall I do now for you, my son?” Isaac felt that he had given the complete blessing to Jacob and he now asked Esau what he could give to him. Esau did not like what he heard when he heard how his father had blessed Jacob. He felt that his father could also give him a different blessing. As a result, we see that Esau answered his father, “‘Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!’” Isaac did give a blessing but it did not reverse the blessing that he had given to Jacob. Isaac then said that Esau would receive the blessing that would be provided by the earth. He would live in a place where the land was fertile but not like the land that Jacob received. That land would be watered by the dew that came during the night so that there would be food for his animals and his crops would also be watered by the dew. This meant that he would experience some blessings.

However, the blessing that Isaac gave to Esau also said that Esau would live by the sword and that he would serve his brother. The fact that he would live by the sword meant that he would frequently fight with others. Then Isaac said in this blessing that Esau would serve his brother. This part of the blessing was the part that Esau really hated because it did not undo what Isaac had said to Jacob in his blessing when he said Jacob would be the master of his brethren and that his mother’s sons would bow down to him. Esau became filled with bitterness at the thought of bowing down to his brother. Hebrews 12:15-17 says, “...looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.” Here we see that bitterness took root in the life of Esau and that was the reason he could not inherit the blessing because there was no repentance in his life. He was told that the day would come when he would finally break off this yoke and no longer serve his brother.

However, Esau was not happy with that blessing. Genesis 27:41-46 says, “So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, ‘The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’ And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, ‘Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. And stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury turns away, until your brother’s anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?’ And Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?’” Here we see that Esau became filled with hatred toward his brother because of that root of bitterness.

He immediately began to plan to murder his brother because of that hatred. He felt that his

father would soon die and that once his father died, he would kill his brother. He must have talked to others about his plans because his mother heard that he planned to kill Jacob. As a result, Rebekah sent a messenger to get Jacob and tell him what Esau had decided to do. From what we read we see that his way of comforting himself was to think about what he would do to Jacob after their father died. Here we see that when people are bitter, the thought of taking revenge brings comfort to those who are planning the revenge. That is why Jeremiah 17:9 says, ““The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?””

Rebekah had a plan that she suggested to Jacob to protect Jacob. She told him to flee to the home of her brother Laban in Haran so that he would be a long distance away and Esau would not be able to find him. She said that he could stay there for a few days until the anger of Esau had passed away. She said that once he forgot his anger, she would send a message to him so that he could return home. She did not want to have both of her sons killed. The reason she spoke about both of them being killed was due to the fact that if Esau killed Jacob, some relative would avenge that murder by killing Esau and she would lose both of her sons. That message never came from Rebekah to Jacob even though Jacob spent 20 years in Haran.

Rebekah also had to get Isaac to agree to let Jacob go. However, she gave Isaac a different reason to send Jacob to the house of Laban in Haran. In this way, she chose to deceive her husband again. Instead of telling Isaac about the plan of Esau to kill Jacob, she told Isaac that the wives of Esau were causing her to experience grief so she did not want Jacob to also marry a wife from the Hittites. She said that then her life would not be worth living. One of the things that we see is that when we tell lies, it leads to more lies. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the importance of speaking the truth in their own lives and also help them learn to teach others the importance of speaking the truth. Ephesians 4:15 says, “...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ...” Here we see that speaking the truth in love is a key part of our spiritual growth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children show others the importance of speaking the truth.

Jacob Fled from Esau

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to speak the truth in love as that is a key part of their spiritual growth. It also causes their lives to be a good example to others. In this topic, we will see that Jacob fled and went to Padan Aram in order to escape the anger of his brother.

In Genesis 28:1-2 we read, “Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother...’” Rebekah had told Jacob to flee to her brother in Haran to escape from the anger of Esau. However, she told Isaac that the Hittite wives of Esau made her life very difficult. She said that her life would have no value if Jacob also got a wife from among the people living in the land. As a result, Isaac called Jacob and gave him instructions about getting a wife.

Isaac began by giving Jacob a blessing and then charged him not to take a wife from the daughters of the people of Canaan. The word translated “charged” means *to give a command*. Many times in the Old Testament it spoke of God giving a command to a person. In Genesis 6:22 we read, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” Here we see that Noah was obedient to all that God commanded. In 1 Samuel 17:20 we see that David carried out the command of his father when that verse says, “So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took *the things* and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle.” That is the way that the word is used here as we see that Isaac commands his son not to get a wife in Canaan.

Instead Isaac told Jacob where he was to go to get a wife. Isaac told Jacob to go to Padan Aram to get a wife. In addition, he also told him to get a wife there from the daughters of Laban. Genesis 24:29 says, “Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well.” This verse tells us that Laban was the brother of Rebekah. As a result, Isaac made it clear that he was to go to the family of his mother and take a wife from the daughters of her brother. Marriage to close relatives was allowed prior to the giving of the Law to Moses and that law was not given until about six hundred years later. Padan Aram was the name of the area and means a plain or very large field while Haran was the name of the actual city where Laban lived. Rebekah mentioned the name of the city in Genesis 27:43 while Isaac here mentioned the name of the area.

We go on to read about the blessing that Isaac gave Jacob as he sent him away. Genesis 28:3-5 says, “‘May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.’ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.” In this blessing, we see that Isaac had come to an understanding of the fact that the blessing that God had given to Abraham and Isaac was to be passed on through Jacob and not through Esau. God first revealed Himself as the almighty God in Genesis 17:1 where we read, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.’” This verse is the second time where that name for God is used so that is why we see that Isaac now understood that the promise to Abraham was to be passed on to Jacob.

The promise that God gave to Abraham is first mentioned in Genesis 12:1-3 where we read, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” Then in Genesis 15:17-18, God made it a blood covenant as we read, “And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...’” Isaac included the main thoughts of this covenant in his blessing of Jacob.

Isaac also looked forward to the day when Jacob and his descendants would possess the land in which they were presently strangers. God had promised that land to Abraham and the Lord had reminded Isaac of that promise when the Lord said in Genesis 26:4, “And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...” Now as Isaac sent Jacob to Laban, he reminded Jacob that the blessing included the promise from God that his descendants were the ones who would inherit the land in which he was presently a stranger. This promise had been given to Abraham, reaffirmed to Isaac and now Isaac wanted Jacob to know that this blessing would pass to him and his descendants.

This blessing also showed the faith of Isaac. The only land that Abraham had purchased was a burial place for Sarah and was the place where he was later buried. Isaac had not received any additional land but God had reaffirmed that promise to him. Now as Isaac included that promise as he blessed Jacob, he was showing his faith in the promises of God. Hebrews 11:20 says, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” Here we see that Isaac became one of those listed among those Old Testament saints who lived by faith because of this blessing that he gave here to Jacob. Isaac had also let Esau know that Jacob was the one who would have that blessing when he said in Genesis 27:33. “Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.’”

Once Isaac had reaffirmed this promise to Jacob, we see that he sent Jacob away and told him to go to Padan Aram. Isaac gave two specific instructions about what Jacob was to do when he went to Padan Aram. First, he was to make certain that he went to the house of Bethuel who was the father of his mother. Second, he was to take as his wife one of the daughters of Laban, the brother of Rebekah. We will see that the Lord gave Jacob a love for Rachel who was one of those daughters. Genesis 29:18-20 says, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’ And Laban said, ‘*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.’ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.” When we come to these verses we will also see how Laban deceived Jacob so that Jacob ended up working fourteen years for Rachel.

Meanwhile we see that Esau learned about the instructions that Isaac had given to Jacob. Genesis 28:6-9 says, “Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,’ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.” Esau realized by what Isaac said to Jacob that his father was not happy with the Hittite wives that he

had married.

The statement that Isaac made when he said, ““You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan”” made it very clear to Esau that his father did not approve of the wives that he had married. He also saw that Jacob was obedient to his father and mother and left Canaan to go to Padan Aram to carry out the instructions of his father. Esau still wanted to please his father even though he had not received the blessing. Perhaps he thought that his father would give him a better blessing if he had a wife that was not from any of the nations that lived in the land of Canaan.

Many years earlier Abraham had learned that the Lord had given his brother, Nahor, eight sons including Bethuel by his wife Milcah. Then Genesis 22:23 says, “And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.” Bethuel was the father of Rebekah who became the wife of Isaac and that was why Isaac sent Jacob to the house of Bethuel to get a wife. As a result, Esau went to Ishmael and made arrangements to marry the daughter of Ishmael named Mahalath. Ishmael was also a son of Abraham even though he was not the son that carried on the blessing and so Esau thought that he could gain the approval of his father by marrying a relative of the family of Abraham.

Esau gives of an example of the desire of most children to have the approval of their fathers even when those children have been angry at the decisions that the father made. Esau even took another wife in his efforts to try and feel that approval. Ephesians 6:4 says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Even though Esau was very angry at his father and his brother, he still wanted the approval of his father. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why it is so important even for rebellious sons and daughters to know that they have the acceptance and approval of their father. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things to others.

Jacob Had a Dream at Bethel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why it is important, even to very rebellious children, to know that they have the acceptance and approval of their fathers. In this topic, we will see what happened to Jacob as he traveled to Padan Aram to the family of his mother.

In Genesis 28:10-12 we read, “Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” We see that Jacob left his parents where they were living in Beersheba and began the long trip to Padan Aram. We see what happened one night as he was traveling.

One evening as he was traveling, he came to a certain place and decided to stay there for the night. He found one of the rocks there that he could use as the place to rest his head and then he laid down and went to sleep. Up to this point, we have not read about God speaking to Jacob as he had spoken to Abraham and Isaac. However, we see that was going to change that night as God chose to speak to Jacob in a dream. Throughout the Bible, we see that there were times when God spoke to individuals through a dream. A key thing to remember is the fact that when God spoke to anyone through a dream, everything that was said in that dream was consistent with the rest of the Bible. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 says, “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.” Here we see that people must be careful because God allows false dreamers to test the hearts of people.

Deuteronomy 18:20-22 adds, ““...But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.” And if you say in your heart, “How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?”—when a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that *is* the thing which the LORD has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.”” Here we see that what one said when a prophet spoke in the name of God (Thus says the Lord...) was to be right 100% of the time which meant that what he said would have to always agree with the Word of God. If what a person said did not agree with the Word of God the people were not to listen to that person.

Here we see that what God said to Jacob in this dream was and is in agreement with everything that is taught throughout the rest of the Bible. In this dream, Jacob saw a ladder that stretched up from the earth and the top of the ladder reached up into the heaven. In his dream, Jacob also saw the angels of God going up and down on a ladder. Then Genesis 28:13-17 says, “And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: ‘I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.’ Then Jacob awoke from

his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it. And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!’” When God spoke to Jacob, He reminded Jacob of the promises that He had given to Abraham and Isaac.

As God spoke, He told Jacob that He was the LORD God of Abraham and Isaac. First, God talked about the land. God said that the very place where Jacob was laying would be given to Jacob and his descendants. Israel actually took possession of this land during the time of Joshua just as God had promised Abraham. God had told Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16, “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.’” God had explained to Abraham why there would be a period of time before they possessed the land.

Second, God told Jacob that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth. This promise to Jacob also said that the people would spread out in all directions from the place where he was sleeping. Third, God told Jacob that through his seed all of the families of the earth would be blessed. Galatians 3:13-14 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” These verses explain how the family of Abraham has brought blessing to all families. Fourth, God promised Jacob that wherever he went, God would go with him and would bring him back to this land.

Then Jacob woke up from his sleep. He had learned a very important lesson during his sleep that night as he said, “‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know *it*.’” This is one of the things that every Christian needs to learn because the Lord promised us in Hebrews 13:5, “*Let your conduct be* without covetousness; *be* content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” This new understanding caused Jacob to say, “‘How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!’” This would become a very special place in the life of Jacob as he remembered how God spoke to him there.

Genesis 28:18-22 says, “Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.’” For Jacob, this was the place where he met God and this is the place where he later returned and took his family after he told them to put away their foreign gods. Genesis 35:2-3 says, “And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.’”

We see that Jacob got up early the next morning and took the stone that he had set for his head and set it up so that it became a pillar. Then he poured oil on top of the stone. We see that Jacob gave that place a new name. The town that was nearby had formerly been called Luz.

However, Jacob called this place “Bethel” which means *house of God*. Jacob also made a vow to God. This vow showed that he wanted to follow the Lord. However, his vow also shows that he had many things to learn about God as he put several conditions in his vow. First, Jacob said “If God will be with me...” Jacob had not realized that God was with him until he received this dream. In verse 15 God had said, “Behold, I am with you...” God also promises us in Hebrews 13:5b, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Second, Jacob also said if God would “...keep me in the way that I am going...” In verse 15 God had told Jacob, I “...will keep you wherever you go...” Third, Jacob said if God would give him food to eat and clothing to put on. Matthew 6:26 says, “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” Then Matthew 6:28 adds, “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin...” Fourth, Jacob said that if “...I come back to his father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.” This was his greatest fear. Genesis 32:11 says, “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children.”

Jacob said that if God would meet these conditions, then the Lord would be his God and he would also give a tenth of whatever the Lord gave him back to the Lord. Jacob also said that the stone that he had set up would be God’s house. Jacob realized that the house of God is the place where we meet God. This shows that the “house of God” is not a building but a place where God changes our lives. Christ demonstrated that the house of God is where we meet God when Mark 1:35 says, “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.” Christ frequently went alone to pray to the Father. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children come to understand that “the house of God” is where they personally meet with God and spend time alone in fellowship with Him. We want to help them learn to explain to others the importance of spending time alone in fellowship with the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand and apply this important lesson.

Jacob Met Rachel at a Well

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the importance of spending time alone in fellowship with the Lord. That is a key in the development of their spiritual lives. In this topic, we will see that the Lord led Jacob as he went to the city of Haran.

Genesis 29:1-3 says, “So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well’s mouth. Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well’s mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well’s mouth.” Jacob continued on his way after he set up the pillar where God had spoken to him. As he traveled, he came to the land of the people of the East. He was not sure where the city of Haran was located and so he had to ask questions as he went. One day as he traveled, he saw a well in the field with three flocks of sheep lying near the well. This was the place where those sheep would be watered. However, they had to wait until all of the flocks were gathered around the well and then they would move the stone that covered the top of the well. After the sheep were watered, the stone would then be placed back on top of the well. This cover was to protect the well from blowing sand.

Jacob saw that there were people with the three flocks that were already there and so he saw this as a possible place to find out what direction he needed to travel to reach the city of Haran. Genesis 29:4-8 says, “And Jacob said to them, ‘My brethren, where *are* you from?’ And they said, ‘We *are* from Haran.’ Then he said to them, ‘Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?’ And they said, ‘We know him.’ So he said to them, ‘Is he well?’ And they said, ‘*He is* well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.’ Then he said, ‘Look, *it is* still high day; *it is* not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed *them*.’ But they said, ‘We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well’s mouth; then we water the sheep.’” As a result, Jacob walked to the well and asked the men with the flocks in what city they lived. They said that they were from the city of Haran.

This must have been an encouragement to Jacob because he realized that they were from the city for which he was looking. Jacob then asked if they knew Laban the son of Nahor. The shepherds responded that they knew Laban. They also said that he was well. Then they gave what would become one of the most important pieces of information that they would give Jacob when they said, “‘And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.’” Suddenly, Jacob had to realize that God was guiding his life. The Lord had told him in Genesis 28:15, “‘Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.’” Jacob had probably given much thought to the dream in which God had spoken to him at Bethel. Now Jacob received a clear indication that the Lord was with him and had guided him both to Haran and now even to the family of Laban. However, that was just the start of what the Lord was going to do in his life to show him what it meant to have the Lord with him to guide him.

Jacob then reminded the shepherds that it was still the middle of the day and that the cattle would not gather at the well until the evening. He suggested that the shepherds water the sheep and then take them back into the fields so that they could eat. The shepherds replied that they had to wait until all of the flocks were gathered at the well and then the stone would be rolled

from the top of the well. Then they would be able to water the sheep. Jacob was still talking with the other shepherds when Rachel arrived at the well with the sheep of her father. Genesis 29:9-12 says, “Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father’s relative and that he *was* Rebekah’s son. So she ran and told her father.”

Rachel had been given the job of being a shepherdess so she was the one that cared for the sheep of her father. This shows us that her father did not have a large flock of sheep at the time that Jacob arrived at Haran. Jacob suddenly became a man of action when Rachel arrived at the well with the flock of her father. We see that Jacob went to the well and removed the covering from the well and began to water the flock of Laban. This was probably a shock to Rachel to have a stranger that she had never seen before take the stone off the well and begin to water her flock. In contrast, Jacob was very excited because he saw how God had brought him to the very family to whom his parents had told him to go and get a wife. As we will see in a future topic, it was almost like love at first sight when he saw Rachel. This is a good passage to help young people see that God will lead them if they will seek the guidance of the Lord as they look for a future husband or wife. The Lord is even more concerned about who they marry than they are because the plan of God is for a marriage that will bring joy to their lives.

Once Jacob had watered the flock of Laban we see that Jacob gave Rachel a kiss and then began to cry. That probably came as a second shock to Rachel since he was a stranger and she did not know who he was. However, Jacob quickly explained to Rachel who he was and how he was related. She had probably heard the story many times about the servant of Abraham who had come to get a wife for the Isaac, the son of Abraham. Genesis 24:15-16 says, “And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up.” Rebekah had also met that servant at a well and then the next day had left to go and become the bride of Isaac. Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s relative and that he was the son of Rebekah. We do not know if the family had ever heard about the fact that Isaac and Rebekah had a set of twins born to them. Suddenly Rachel had now met one of those twins and learned that he was the son of Rebekah, the sister of her own father. This news probably filled Rachel with surprise or even amazement especially since she met him at a well just as the servant of Abraham had met Rebekah. As a result, she immediately ran to tell her father about this meeting so that he could meet this son of Rebekah.

Genesis 29:13-14 says, “Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister’s son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, ‘Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh.’” And he stayed with him for a month.” Here we see that Laban was very happy to meet the son of his sister Rebekah. However, he may have had a little different thought than his daughter. When the servant had come to get a bride for Isaac Genesis 24:50-53 says, “Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, ‘The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the LORD has spoken.’” And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth. Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.” Laban and his mother had received gifts of great value from the servant and they heard about the way that the Lord had blessed Abraham and his son Isaac.

As a result, Laban may have been thinking about his trip to the well many years earlier when he had met the servant of Abraham as he ran to the well to meet Jacob. Of course he also wanted to learn more about the family of his sister and learn what had happened to her since she had gone to marry Isaac. We see that Laban gave Jacob a very warm welcome as he embraced Jacob and kissed him when he met him at the well. Then Laban brought Jacob into his house. That day they had much to talk about since it had been many years earlier that Rebekah had left to become the bride of Isaac. Genesis 25:20 says, "Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian." We see that Isaac had been forty years old when he married Rebekah. Then Genesis 25:26 says, "Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them." As a result, Rebekah had been married to Isaac for twenty years before they had any children. In addition, if you add the age of Jacob at the time he came to Haran, many years had passed and so there was much to learn about what had happened in their families. Laban showed that he recognized Jacob as a part of his family as he said, "Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh."

We go on to read that Jacob stayed with Laban for a month. Usually the tradition of that culture was for a person to stay three days and then begin working if they could agree on an acceptable wage. However, we see that Laban waited a month before he talked to Jacob about wages for the work he was doing. Jacob was ready when Laban asked what wages he wanted as Genesis 29:18 says, "Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.'" Jacob had been sent to find a wife and he knew which daughter he wanted for a wife because he had already developed a love for Rachel. We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize how God works to lead us as we learn to follow Him. God had led Jacob to the place where he was going. The Lord had caused him to meet the family of Laban through Rachel. Now God had developed a love in Jacob for Rachel. We want to help our children learn to explain how God leads us as we yield to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Jacob was Deceived by Laban

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord leads us as we learn to yield to Him. Jacob loved Rachel even though he had only known her for a short time when he would work for her for seven years. In this topic, we will see that Laban deceived Jacob and gave Leah to Jacob even though he had worked seven years for Rachel.

Apparently Jacob went to work for Laban very soon after he arrived. After a month Laban finally asked him what he wanted as wages for his work. Genesis 29:15-17 says, “Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages *be*?’” Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel. Leah’s eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.” Laban realized that it was not right to expect a relative to work for nothing. That is why after a month Laban asked Jacob to tell him what he wanted for wages. Jacob had come for a wife and Laban had two daughters. By this time, Jacob knew which daughter he wanted.

These verses tell us a little about each of the daughters. Leah was the older of the two daughters. We also see that her eyes were described as delicate. The word translated “delicate” or tender means that her eyes did not show brightness which some people in that day felt was a blemish. In contrast, Rachel was a very beautiful young woman. The word translated “beautiful” speaks of *beautiful in form and appearance*. Deuteronomy 21:10-12 says, “‘When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hand, and you take them captive, and you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and desire her and would take her for your wife, then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails...’” Then 1 Samuel 25:3 uses the word to describe Abigail and we read, “The name of the man *was* Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail. And *she was* a woman of good understanding and beautiful appearance; but the man *was* harsh and evil in *his* doings. He *was of the house of Caleb*.” In both verses, the word is used to describe a beautiful woman.

The verse also says that Rachel was well favored. The word translated “well favored” is used to speak of the young men that the king wanted in the book of Daniel. Daniel 1:3-4 says, “Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom *there was* no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who *had* ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.” Here we see that the king wanted good-looking young men but who listed a whole variety of other abilities. During the month that Jacob had been living with Laban he had been able to observe that Rachel had many things that Jacob wanted in a wife.

As a result, when Laban asked Jacob what he wanted for his wages, Jacob was prepared to answer that question. Genesis 29:18-20 says, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’ And Laban said, ‘*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.’ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.” We read that Jacob loved Rachel. This is the word that is used in Leviticus 19:18 where we read, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your

people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.” Christ used this statement from Leviticus in Matthew 22:37-40 where we read, “Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” This means that this word for love is used in the Old Testament and quoted in the New Testament.

Laban was happy with the offer of Jacob. He said that it would be better for him to give his younger daughter to Jacob than to some other man. However, Laban also had other plans. He took the offer of Jacob but developed a plan that would give him fourteen years of work from Jacob in order for him to receive Rachel as his wife. Jacob would learn that just as he had deceived his brother to get the blessing, Laban was going to deceive him. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Jacob was going to reap an extra seven years of work for Rachel. In addition, he was going to have two wives who were jealous of one another.

We also see that the first seven years passed very quickly for Jacob. Those years seemed like only a few days to Jacob because of the love that he had for Rachel. This is a key lesson that young people need to learn about marriage. If there is genuine love, then the time will pass quickly. However, if genuine love is missing, the opposite is true. God gives each couple the opportunity to experience His love. If we are motivated by His love, we will be able to love others. 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Here we see that as we understand the love of God for us, we begin to live for Him who died and rose again. As we live for him we experience great joy in our lives.

Soon the seven years had passed and so Jacob said to Laban in Genesis 29:21-25, “Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.’ And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah *as* a maid. So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?’” Jacob was eager to marry Rachel as soon as he had completed the seven years of work to receive her as his bride. As a result, he made the request to Laban for his wife to be given to him so that he could marry her and go in to her. Laban agreed and gathered all of the men of that place for a week of feasting to celebrate the wedding. That was the custom of their area.

That evening everything was ready for Jacob for the marriage so that Jacob could receive his bride. However, Laban chose to deceive Jacob and he brought Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel. Since the bride had a veil over her face and it was dark, Jacob could not see her face to realize that it was Leah instead of Rachel. As a result, he went into the tent in the dark of the night and consummated the marriage with her. It was not until the next morning that Jacob learned that he had been deceived by Laban and that he was married to Leah instead of Rachel. Suddenly Jacob realized what it was like to be deceived instead of being the one who was the deceiver. He had deceived his father and brother more than seven years earlier and had seen the great anger of his brother. His own anger quickly came out as he asked Laban three questions that showed his anger.

At the same time, we see that Laban had done what was customary at a wedding. He had also given Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. It was a custom in their culture for the father to

give the daughter a maid to help the daughter. Of course that did not ease the anger of Jacob but Laban could say that he had carried out the customs of his culture. In his anger, Jacob went to Laban and asked him three questions. First, Jacob asked, “What is this that you have done to me?” Jacob had worked for seven years to pay for his wife. Those years had seemed like just a few days because of the love that Jacob had for Rachel. However, he realized that Laban had tricked him and he was now married to Leah instead. This was not the woman for whom he had worked for seven years. Instead this was the older sister and not the young woman that Jacob had loved and looked forward eagerly to their marriage. Jacob suddenly knew what it felt like to be cheated.

Second Jacob asked, “Was it not for Rachel that I served you?” Jacob had said in Genesis 29:18, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’” Jacob had made it clear to Laban that it was Rachel that he wanted to marry. He had said specifically that he wanted to marry the younger daughter. Of course Laban knew what Jacob had said, but due to the fact that Leah’s eyes were delicate, he knew that it was possible that no one would ask to marry her. In fact, in the next topic we will see that Laban had already planned to give Rachel to Jacob but he was going to get seven additional years of work from Jacob for Rachel.

Third Jacob asked, “Why then have you deceived me?” Jacob understood what it meant to deceive others. He had deceived his father to get the blessing. He had deceived his brother by claiming to be Esau so that his father would give him the blessing. Now he had been deceived and knew how it felt to be deceived. He had worked for Rachel for seven years and then after the marriage found out that he was married to Leah and that his father-in-law had deceived him. The Lord later led Paul to write in Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” Jacob had reaped exactly as he had sown. We want to help our physical and spiritual children to understand and apply these verses to their own lives so that they will be able to help others realize the consequences of their choices. Many people fail to realize that they will reap the consequences of their choices. That is why it is so clearly explained what happens when people make sinful choices. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the result of sinful choices.

Jacob Worked Seven More Years for Rachel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the consequences of deception. Jacob had deceived his father and his brother. He learned that sin has consequences when he was deceived by Laban. In our topic today, we see that Laban told him what he could do in order to get to marry Rachel.

We saw in our last topic that Jacob asked Laban three questions after he was deceived. Those questions and the answer that Laban gave are given in Genesis 29:25-27 where we read, “So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?’ And Laban said, ‘It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.’” Jacob had asked the three questions. We see that Laban gave him the answer to his questions and then told him what he had to do in order to marry Rachel.

Laban told Jacob that it was not done in their country to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn daughter was married. However, Laban then went on to tell Jacob how he could also get Rachel as a wife. First, Jacob had to show Leah the honor and respect that she deserved. Laban said that Jacob could show this honor to Leah by celebrating the week of feasting that was a part of the marriage. In this way, everyone that was at the wedding celebration would have the opportunity to see that Jacob was going to show honor and respect to Leah in their marriage. Then Laban told Jacob what he had to do in order to be able to marry Rachel, once the celebration for the marriage with Leah was complete. Laban told Jacob that he would allow Jacob to marry Rachel once Leah had been honored as long as Jacob was willing to serve him for an additional seven years for Rachel. This meant that Jacob would have to work for Laban for a total of 14 years in order to marry Rachel. However, Laban did say that he would give Rachel to Jacob in marriage as long as he promised that he would work another seven years for her.

Once Jacob heard what Laban required he agreed to do what Laban had said. Genesis 29:28-30 says, “Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.” Jacob had learned that deception has severe consequences when Laban used deception to deceive him. We see that Jacob fulfilled the week of celebration of the wedding of Leah. This was probably not easy for Jacob. It was Rachel that he loved and not Leah. However, he realized that the only way Laban was going to allow him to marry Rachel was to honor Leah by this weeklong celebration. Jacob did what Laban required and outwardly showed this honor to Leah.

We see that Jacob also had to promise to work seven additional years in order to receive Rachel as his wife. Laban saw that Jacob had obeyed his words during that week of celebration for Leah. Jacob had also received the promise of Laban that he would receive Rachel as his wife if he agreed to work seven additional years for her. As a result, once Jacob had shown honor to Leah by that week of celebration, then they could begin to plan the wedding of Jacob to Rachel. This time Laban did keep his part of the agreement and gave his daughter Rachel to Jacob as his wife also. We will see that marriage to more than one wife, especially when they were sisters, would have severe consequences and cause competition between the two sisters that would affect the entire family for many years. The first principle taught to Adam and Eve before sin

came into the world is given in Genesis 2:24 where we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” We will see disobedience to the one flesh principle affected both sisters in this and future topics. We also see that when Laban allowed Jacob to marry Rachel, he gave Bilhah to Rachel to serve as her maid.

The order of these verses shows us that Jacob was allowed to marry Rachel before he worked the second seven years for her. Once Rachel became the wife of Jacob, we see that Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. This is the first consequence of being married to two sisters at the same time. In fact Genesis 29:31 says, “When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel *was* barren.” Then Genesis 37:4-5 says, “But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more.” In these two verses we see that the same word is translated “hated” and it even affected the way that they spoke to their brother. Six of these brothers were sons of Leah and Joseph was the son of Rachel. Here we see the continuing effects to the next generation of this lack of love.

We also see that after the marriage to Rachel, Jacob served Laban for seven more years. Jacob had promised to serve Laban for the additional seven years before Laban would let Jacob marry Rachel. Jacob kept his part of the bargain even though Laban had deceived him. It meant that Jacob worked a total of fourteen years for the privilege of marrying Rachel. We go on to read in Genesis 29:31-35, “When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel *was* barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, ‘The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.’ Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.’ And she called his name Simeon. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now I will praise the LORD.’ Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.” Here we see that The Lord chose to work in the life of Leah because He saw that she was unloved.

We see that the Lord opened the womb of Leah when He saw that she was unloved. In contrast, Rachel did not become pregnant. In fact, we see that the names of the first four sons of Leah were given to them to express how Leah felt because she was unloved. Leah named the name of her first son Reuben. “Reuben” means *behold a son*. One thing that was very important to the women of that day was the fact that they gave birth to one of more sons. Leah then explained why she gave this name to her first son. She said that the Lord had looked on her affliction. The word translated “affliction” means *the pain resulting from affliction*. Leah experienced great inner pain as she saw that her husband did not love her. She thought that by giving her husband his first son, her husband would certainly begin to love her. However, that was not what happened. The way that Jacob favored Rachel over Leah was so obvious that she still felt hated or unloved.

Leah became pregnant a second time and gave birth to another son. This time she said, “‘Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.’” This statement made it very clear that she did not feel loved by Jacob. She said that she realized that the Lord knew that she was unloved. In her prayer to the Lord, she had told the Lord that she was unloved and the Lord heard her. As a result, Leah named her second son “Simeon” which means *hearing or heard*. This name made it clear that she did not feel that Jacob had changed his attitude toward her. The fact that we saw earlier in this topic that Joseph became the favored son shows that Jacob never did accept Leah and Rachel as equal. Only

after the death of Rachel did Jacob finally give Leah her rights as the first wife. In Genesis 49:31 Jacob, when preparing for his own death and burial, said, “There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.” Rachel had been buried at Bethlehem when she died in childbirth. Genesis 35:19-20 says, “So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem). And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is* the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.”

Meanwhile, Leah continued to hope that she would become loved and be fully recognized as the first wife. She gave birth to a third son and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” As a result, Leah called his name “Levi” which means *attachment* as she thought that by giving Jacob three sons, he would begin to feel a real attachment to her. Here we see the sad consequences of the fact that Jacob was married to two sisters. Leah still felt like she was unloved and wanted to see Jacob become attached to her.

Leah gave birth to a fourth son. She gave the fourth son the name of “Judah” which means *praised*. We see that even though Leah was not the favorite wife that she was growing in her understanding of God. Leah said, “Now I will praise the LORD.” Leah may have still wanted to be fully accepted by Jacob but she realized that regardless of what happened, she could give praise to the Lord. James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Leah endured many years of trials because of the fact that Jacob loved Rachel and did not show that same love and respect for her. In fact, she probably went through many more years after the birth of Judah and probably did not receive the love that she desired until after the death of Rachel. Again this shows us some of the consequences when a person feels unloved. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Leah felt because of the fact that Jacob did not show her love and respect by his actions toward her. Today many women feel that same lack of love and respect by their husbands. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the consequences of this sin.

Rachel Gave her Handmaid to Jacob

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the pain and hurt that a wife feels when she feels that she is unloved. We saw that Leah experienced that pain for many years from Jacob. In this topic, we will see what Rachel did because of the fact that she did not have any children.

We saw in our last topic that Leah felt very sad because she was not loved by Jacob. However, Rachel became upset because her sister was having children and the Lord had not given her any children. Genesis 30:1-2 says, “Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die!’ And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, ‘Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?’” Leah had been given four children which meant that Rachel had seen several years pass by and the Lord had not given her any children. As we mentioned in the previous topic, children and especially one or more sons were very important to the women of that day.

As the years went by, we see that Rachel envied Leah because she had given birth to four sons. The word translated “envied” means *jealousy, envy or zealous and speaks of a very strong emotion*. It can speak of the strong feeling that one has because someone else has something that the first person desperately wants. Rachel envied her sister because her sister had four sons and she desperately wanted at least one son and she did not have any children. This strong feeling within her became so strong that Rachel could no longer keep quiet. However, she could not say anything to her sister because Jacob loved her and it was obvious to both sisters that he did not have that same love for Leah. As a result, Rachel expressed her envy to Jacob and said, “Give me children, or else I die!” Here we see that she blamed Jacob for her lack of sons.

Jacob became angry when Rachel blamed him for not giving her any sons and he answered back, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” Here we see that one of the consequences of wrong choices is that we begin to blame the other person. That began back in the Garden of Eden as soon as Adam and Eve sinned. Genesis 3:12 says, “Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’” Here we see that Rachel blamed her husband because she envied her sister. Then Jacob spoke in anger because he was blamed. Instead of praying and asking the Lord to give her a son, we see that Rachel made a different choice.

Genesis 30:3-8 says, “So she said, ‘Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her.’ Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, ‘God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.’ Therefore she called his name Dan. And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, ‘With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed.’ So she called his name Naphtali.” Here we see that Rachel made the same choice that Sarah had made many years earlier. She asked Jacob to have sexual relations with her maid so that she could have a son through her maid. This did not solve the conflict but only brought more people into the conflict.

Jacob followed the instructions of Rachel and went into Bilhah. Then Bilhah became pregnant. When the child was born, it was a son. Rachel chose to name that son “Dan” which means

justice. As a result, this child was given a name which would speak of the conflict between Rachel and Leah throughout his life. In fact, that name still points back to the conflict between the two sisters. This is a reminder of the continuing consequences of sin. The choice of Sarah to give Hagar to Abraham so that she could have a son still has daily consequences because of the conflict between the Jews and the descendants of Ishmael. Genesis 16:11-12 says, “And the Angel of the LORD said to her: ‘Behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand *shall be* against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.’” Then Genesis 21:9-10 adds, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.’” That conflict continues today.

Rachel was not satisfied with one son and so she wanted another. As a result, Bilhah became pregnant by Jacob again and a second son was born. When this son was born Rachel said, “‘With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed.’” This time Rachel named the second son “Naphtali” which means *my wrestling*. In this statement by Rachel we also see why she gave this name to the second son. Rachel said that she had wrestled with her sister and had prevailed. This statement tells us that a strong spirit of competition had developed between the two sisters. Instead of the sons providing a source of joy and peace, their names showed that Rachel felt that these two boys born to her maid had given her a victory over her sister.

That attitude of victory over her sister caused Leah to react with an attitude of competition. That is shown by what Leah chose to do next. Genesis 30:9-13 says, “When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, ‘A troop comes’ So she called his name Gad. And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, ‘I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.’ So she called his name Asher.” Throughout the books of the Old Testament, we see this same spirit of completion in families as a result of the choices of men to violate the first principle given about marriage given in Genesis 2:24 where we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The violation of this one flesh principle led to many conflicts. In 1 Samuel 1 we see that Elkanah had two wives. 1 Samuel 1:5-6 says, “But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb. And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb.” Here we see that Peninnah made life miserable for Hannah.

Then 2 Samuel 13 tells how Amnon was killed by his half-brother because he committed incest with Tamar. 2 Samuel 13:28-29 says, “Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, ‘Watch now, when Amnon’s heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, “Strike Amnon!” then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant.’ So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.” Here we see that one brother orders the murder of another brother because of the conflict between the sons of different wives of David.

Here in Genesis, we see how the competition between Leah and Rachel continued to get worse. Leah made the decision to follow the example of Rachel and she also gave her handmaid to Jacob. As a result, Zilpah became pregnant by Jacob. When a son was born to Zilpah, Leah named him “Gad” which means *a troop comes* or *good luck*. Here we see that Leah continued to try to win the favor of Jacob and become the favorite wife. Meanwhile, the sons and the names that they were given meant that the competition would continue for many years after Leah and Rachel died. This is a reminder that we cannot solve our problems by envy and

human thinking. James 3:14-16 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” There was plenty of envy and self-seeking going on between Leah and Rachel.

This competition continued until the death of Rachel and then it continued on between the sons that were born into the family. We see that Zilpah then had a second son. This time Leah named the son “Asher” which means *happy*. By this name, we see that Leah had given up trying to become the favorite wife of Jacob because she did not mention anything about Jacob. Instead, she said that the daughters of others would call her blessed because she had so many sons. It sounds like she had decided to try and find her happiness in her sons and had given up trying to become the favorite wife of her husband. However, her sons recognized the sadness in the life of their mother especially when they later saw how Jacob favored Joseph over the rest of his brothers. Genesis 37:3-4 says, “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of *many* colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.” In fact, we see that this hatred took root in their lives.

Genesis 37:19-21 says, “Then they said to one another, ‘Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!’ But Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, ‘Let us not kill him.’” Here we see that several of the brothers were ready to kill Joseph because of the attitude of their mother which led to their own hatred. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to help people who are experiencing similar rejection in their own lives. Christ is able to change hearts and lead them to forgive. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain true forgiveness to others.

The Lord Gave a Son to Rachel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help others who are controlled by dislike or hatred because of rejection. Christ is able to lead people to forgive others. In this topic, we will see that the Lord chose to give Rachel a son when she prayed to the Lord for Him to give her a son.

In Genesis 30:14-15 we read, “Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, ‘Please give me *some* of your son’s mandrakes.’ But she said to her, ‘*Is it* a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?’ And Rachel said, ‘Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.’” In that day, mandrakes were considered something that would cause a woman to become fertile so that she could have children. They were actually a small orange colored fruit but this thought caused the people who thought this to call them love-apples. Since this was before Laban began paying Jacob wages for his work, this happened before the second seven years that he worked for Rachel were complete. That would mean that Reuben was probably between the ages of five and six when he found these in the field and brought them to his mother.

Rachel apparently saw Reuben bring these mandrakes to his mother and so she asked Leah to give her some of them since she thought that might cause her to become able to give birth to children. However, Leah was not interested in the idea of giving the mandrakes to her sister. Instead just the words that she used to give her answer showed that she was angry. Leah said, “‘*Is it* a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?’” The first question showed that she felt that she had been robbed of her husband. The word translated “small matter” is translated by words like *little or small thing*. By her words, Leah made it very clear that she thought a life changing thing had happened to her when Rachel took away her husband. She had enjoyed the short time that she was the only wife of Jacob but once Jacob also married her sister, Rachel, we see that Leah felt totally rejected.

The second question showed that she was not interested in her sister possibly becoming pregnant since the people of that area thought that mandrakes were love-apples and might cause her sister to become fertile and have children. Here we see that just the thought of her sister having a son caused Leah to become angry. Instead of answering the anger of her sister, Rachel offered to purchase the mandrakes with a very unusual payment. We see that Rachel said, “‘Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.’” Apparently Jacob was not spending very much time with Leah even though she was his first wife. In fact, we see that she accepted the offer of Rachel even though it made her feel like a prostitute as we see in the next verses.

We go in Genesis 30:16-21, “When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, ‘You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.’ And he lay with her that night. And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, ‘God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.’ So she called his name Issachar. Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, ‘God has endowed me *with* a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.’ So she called his name Zebulun. Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.” In these verses, we see that Leah told Jacob that she had hired him for the night with her son’s mandrakes. The word translated

“hired” is translated either *hire or wages* and is used to speak of a temporary purchase. In this case, Leah said that she had hired Jacob for the night.

Then Leah uses another form of the word to describe the results of her night with Jacob. We read that Leah said, “God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.” God did cause Leah to become pregnant that night and when the time came for the child to be born we see that she had another son. She chose to name this son Issachar. The name “Issachar” means *hire or there is recompense*. Here we see that many of the names of the sons of Jacob were related to the fact that Rachel was the wife that was loved and Leah felt that she was rejected. Again we are reminded of the consequences of violating the first principle that God gave about marriage in Genesis 2:24. That verse reminds us, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” God gave this principle to Adam and Eve who had no father or mother to leave so this principle was for all of their future descendants including those who are still being born at the present time.

We see that the Lord later gave another son to Leah. Leah chose to name him “Zebulun” which means *to exalt or honor*. This name shows that Leah was still looking for the honor and respect that she should have received from Jacob. We see that she realized that God had given her a gift or endowment by giving her a total of six sons. We see that she thought that now her husband would honor her and dwell with her because of the fact that she had given him six sons. This honor probably did not happen until after the death of Rachel because Leah had no control over the decisions of Jacob. However, we see that was the desire of her heart. Jacob now had a total of ten sons but none of those sons had been born to the wife that he loved.

The Lord later gave Leah a daughter as well. Leah named her daughter “Dinah” which means *judgment*. Although Jacob may have had other daughters, this is the only one that is mentioned. That is probably due to the fact that in chapter 34 we will see that Jacob and the entire family experienced the result of what happened to this daughter. We go on to read in Genesis 30:22-24, “Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son, and said, ‘God has taken away my reproach.’ So she called his name Joseph, and said, ‘The LORD shall add to me another son.’” In these verses, we see that although Rachel was the favorite wife, she was still sad that she did not have a son. As a result, we see that she began praying to the Lord that He would give her a son. The fact that both Rachel and Leah prayed showed us that Jacob was doing at least some teaching to all of his family about God.

The family of Abraham had been idol worshipers as Joshua 24:2 says, “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods...”’” Laban was the grandson of Nahor. We will see that his family also worshiped idols. The only way that the family of Jacob was going to learn about the living and true God, who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, was through Jacob. Although Jacob taught his family some things about God, we will see that his family still continued to follow idols even though both Leah and Rachel prayed to God. It was not until Jacob returned to Bethel in Genesis 35:2 that we read, “And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments...”’”

We read that God remembered Rachel and listened to her. The word translated “remembered” means *to pay attention to* and many times results in some action being taken. That is what happened in the life of Rachel. We see that God did pay attention to the prayer of Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb. Here we see that God can choose to pay attention to the prayer of a person even if a person knows very little about God. That is the choice of God and

He can do whatever He chooses. We see that she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. We also see that she gave the glory to God because of that fact. Rachel said, “God has taken away my reproach.” The word “reproach” means *to cast blame or scorn on someone*. This may mean that each time Leah had a son, she mocked her sister because she was having sons and Rachel continued to be childless.

We see that Rachel also showed her belief in God by the name that she gave to her son. The name “Joseph” means *may the Lord add or He will add*. We see that her belief in God caused Rachel to feel that God would also give her another son. Rachel had waited quite a number of years for this son, but that did not stop her from believing that the Lord would also give her another son. Yet, we will see in the next chapter that Rachel stole the idols of her father. Genesis 31:19 says, “Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father’s.” The fact that Rachel stole the idols of her father was an indication that she may have still have depended, at least partially, on those idols. That is one reason why one of the things the Gentiles were told in the New Testament was to abstain from things offered to idols. Acts 15:28-29 says, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.” The early church understood that those who become Christians out of a background of idol worship need to come to a clear understanding that God is the Creator of all things and that idols cannot help them in any way.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain two key lessons from these verses. First, people can have a very limited understanding of God and still come to Him in repentance and faith. Second, there may be a need to help such individuals come to a clearer understanding of the fact that the Lord is the Creator of all things and that eating things offered to idols may hinder them from sharing the Gospel with their relatives and friends. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to explain these things to others.

Laban Offered to Start Paying Jacob Wages

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the fact that people who come out of a background of the worship of idols will need help in their spiritual growth once they come to Christ in repentance and faith. In this topic, we will see that Laban offered to pay Jacob wages for his work but that he was still trying to take advantage of Jacob for his own benefit.

Genesis 30:25-30 says, “And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you.’ And Laban said to him, ‘Please *stay*, if I have found favor in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake.’ Then he said, ‘Name me your wages, and I will give *it*.’ So *Jacob* said to him, ‘You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. For what you had before I *came* was little, and it has increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?’” In these verses, we see that Laban wanted Jacob to continue working for him.

In contrast, we see that Jacob wanted to take his wives and children and return to the land of his father. The reason that Laban wanted Jacob to continue to work for him was due to the fact that Laban realized that the Lord had blessed him while Jacob was working to receive Rachel as his wife. Jacob had now worked a total of fourteen years for Rachel because of the fact that Laban had deceived him and given him Leah even though he had worked for Rachel. As a result, Laban told Jacob, name your wages and I will pay it. Here we see that Laban makes it sound like he is an honorable man who will pay whatever Jacob requested. In actual fact, Laban was still the deceiver that he had been ever since Jacob came to his country. Genesis 31:41 says, “...Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times...” His deception included changing the wages of Jacob ten times.

Jacob reminded Laban of what his flock had been like at the time that Jacob had started working for him twenty years earlier. Jacob said that what Laban had before Jacob came was very little. In fact when Jacob came, we see that Rachel was able to take care of the flock all by herself. Genesis 29:9 says, “Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.” During the fourteen years that Jacob had worked for Rachel, the flocks of Laban had increased to a very large amount. Jacob had seen how the flocks and possessions of Laban had increased during those years. Now Jacob felt that it was time for him to begin providing for his own family. At that point, the family of Jacob had very little.

Genesis 30:31-36 says, “So he said, ‘What shall I give you?’ And Jacob said, ‘You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *these* shall be my wages. So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me.’ And Laban said, ‘Oh, that it were according to your word!’ So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave *them* into the hand of his

sons. Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks." Jacob said that Laban did not need to give a single thing to him that he already had.

Jacob then said that he would go through all of the flocks of Laban and remove any of the animals that were spotted and speckled, all the lambs that were brown and all of the goats that were spotted and speckled. This meant that all of the remaining sheep and goats would be white because all of the sheep or goats that were mixed in color would be removed from the flocks. Then Jacob said that only those sheep and goats that would be born to the white sheep and goats that were spotted, speckled or brown would belong to him. Jacob said that any white sheep or goats that would be placed in his flock would then be considered stolen by Jacob. Laban thought that would be great for him because all of the animals that were already in existence would be removed before Jacob started collecting his wages. Usually more sheep and goats that are speckled, spotted or brown are born to sheep or goats that are themselves speckled, spotted or brown.

That day Laban and Jacob went through the flocks. Any sheep or goats that already had any color on them were removed from the rest of the flock. By the time they were done that day all of the sheep and goats that were already speckled, spotted or brown had been removed from the flocks. However, Laban acted like he still did not trust Jacob. He had his own sons take the sheep and goats that were spotted, speckled or brown and remove them three days journey from the flocks for which Jacob would be providing the care for Laban. In that day, the sheep and goats that were speckled, spotted or brown were not considered as valuable as those who were white. There was no actual difference in the value of the animals that were speckled, spotted or brown because that was just their outward appearance. At first Laban thought that he would continue to be blessed, because he thought that very few animals would be born that would belong to Jacob.

We see that Jacob had to trust God to work in the flocks and bring blessing to Jacob and his family. Genesis 30:37-43 says, "Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which *was* in the rods. And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock. And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys."

Jacob had herded the flocks of sheep and goats for fourteen years for Laban. He had learned that there were certain things to do to stimulate the sheep to breed. He had found that if rods were taken from poplar, almond or chestnut trees and then had their bark removed, it would stimulate the flocks to breed more frequently. Jacob would place these peeled rods in the watering troughs and the sheep and goats would be stimulated to breed while they were in the area of the watering troughs. The word translated "conceive" means *to be hot* and those who work with animals speak of the fact that animals are in heat when it is possible for them to conceive. This word is also used by David in Psalm 51:5 where we read, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." In this context, the word is also used two more key times which help us to understand what happened as Jacob cared for the sheep of Laban.

Genesis 30:41 says, “And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.” Then Genesis 31:9-10 adds, “...So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me. And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted...” Jacob was making it possible for the stronger sheep to conceive more frequently in Genesis 30:41. However, in Genesis 31:9-10 Jacob makes it clear that the Lord was the One who was in control of what happened as he talked with Rachel and Leah out in the field. Jacob could not determine which male sheep were causing the sheep to become pregnant until God showed him in a dream.

In the dream, God made it clear that when Laban said that Jacob should have the spotted, speckled and grey-spotted sheep, it was in preparations for those times that the Lord caused the rams (male sheep and goats) to cause the females to become pregnant because Genesis 31:11-12 says, “...Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, “Jacob.” And I said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you...”” In fact Laban changed the wages of Jacob a total of ten times. Jacob said in Genesis 31:7, “...Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me...”

Jacob caused the stronger sheep and goats to conceive but the Lord knew exactly when Laban was going to change the wages and so it was the Lord who caused the particular rams to prepare for those changes in wages at the right time. The result was that Jacob became exceedingly prosperous as he worked for Laban. Laban could deceive Jacob and change his wages but the Lord was the One who was in control. As a result, the Lord provided for Jacob even though Laban had deceived him and changed his wages ten times. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain the fact that we can trust the Lord to do what is right even though people may try to deceive us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Told Jacob to Return to Canaan

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that we can trust the Lord to work through whatever circumstances happen in our lives to accomplish His plan for our lives including those who would deceive us. In this topic, we will see that the Lord told Jacob that it was time to return to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 31:1-3 says, “Now *Jacob* heard the words of Laban’s sons, saying, ‘Jacob has taken away all that was our father’s, and from what was our father’s he has acquired all this wealth.’ And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it *was not favorable* toward him as before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.’” In these verses, we see that the thinking of the sons of Laban became controlled by their envy. They chose to forget that their father had very little at the time that Jacob came to Haran. When Jacob first came, Rachel was able to take care of his flock by herself. Genesis 29:9 says, “Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.” Laban had recognized this blessing at the time Jacob had finished his fourteen years of work for Laban to obtain Rachel as his wife. In Genesis 30:27 we read, “And Laban said to him, ‘Please *stay*, if I have found favor in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake.’”

The sons of Laban did not remember how God had blessed their father for the sake of Jacob. They just saw that part of the wealth that had belonged to Laban had been gained by Jacob. They were angry to see that wealth go to Jacob because of their envy and greed. They wanted all of that wealth for themselves. The attitude of Laban toward Jacob had also changed as he saw that Jacob was now the one that was being blessed by the Lord. However, it was not the change in attitude by either the sons or by Laban that caused Jacob to decide to return to his own land. In fact, Jacob was very afraid to go back to his home because he feared his brother Esau. In Genesis 32:11 Jacob said, “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children.” We see that it was because the Lord spoke to Jacob and told him that it was time for him to return that he was willing to return to the land that the Lord had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Genesis 31:4-9 says, “So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, ‘I see your father’s countenance, that it *is not favorable* toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. If he said thus: “The speckled shall be your wages,” then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: “The streaked shall be your wages,” then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me.’” Here we see that Jacob had Rachel and Leah come and meet him out where he was taking care of the flock. This way no one could overhear him in the tent and tell Laban about his plans. Jacob told his wives that their father was no longer favorable to him. Jacob then reminded his wives of the fact that God had been with him and had protected him from their father so that their father did not hurt him.

Jacob said that he had served their father with all of his might for the previous twenty years. During the last six years, their father had changed the wages of Jacob ten times. Laban changed the wages of Jacob those ten times because he was trying to hold on to all of his wealth and did not want Jacob to gain anything from his wages. Jacob realized that it was God who had taken

away the livestock of Laban and had given them to him. Then we see that Jacob went on to explain how God had taken the wealth of Laban and had greatly blessed Jacob and given him large flocks. Genesis 31:10-13 says, “And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, “Jacob.” And I said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.””

In this dream, God revealed to Jacob how He had worked to bless Jacob and give him an inheritance. God knew what genes the rams of the sheep had. As a result, God was working even though Jacob did not understand what God was doing to give him the sheep until the Lord revealed it to him in this dream. God revealed that He caused the rams that got the female sheep pregnant to be the ones that had the colored markings of speckled, spotted or streaked to have those colors in their recessive genes. That meant that even though the rams did not show that they had those genes, they carried those genes as recessive genes. Since the genes carry the characteristics that any animal or person receives, those rams could pass on those genes to the animals that were born so that when they were born they were speckled or streaked.

Since Laban changed the wages of Jacob ten times during those six years, that meant that God showed that he knew exactly what day Laban was going to change the wages and caused the right rams to get the female sheep pregnant months before Laban even changed the wages. As a result, once Laban had changed the wages, the sheep started bearing young that had those colors. In this way, God had taken away the flocks from Laban and had given them to Jacob. In actual fact, Laban was reaping the consequences of his own sin. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Laban had deceived Jacob by giving him Leah when he had worked seven years for Rachel. He had deceived Jacob ten times by changing his wages. Laban had shown by his deception of Jacob that his focus was on the things of this world. As a result, God chose not to allow him to reap the wealth of his flocks.

In that dream, God had also reminded Jacob that He was the One who had spoken to Jacob at Bethel. God reminded Jacob that He had poured oil on the stone pillar as a reminder of the fact that he had made a vow to God. Now it was God that had told him that it was time for him to get out of the land of Haran and return to the land where he had made this promise to the Lord. This is a reminder that any time we make a promise or a vow to the Lord, He will not forget that vow. In order to walk to please the Lord, we need to keep any promises that we make to Him. We also see the response of Leah and Rachel to the words of Jacob. Genesis 31:14-16 says, “Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, ‘Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are *really* ours and our children’s; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it.’” Here we see that Laban had not treated Rachel and Leah with respect either.

Rachel and Leah did not feel like there was anything for them in the house of their father. He had not given them even a small portion or inheritance for the fourteen years of work that Jacob had given to their father. In fact, he had just treated them like aliens or slaves from another country. As a result, they had not been treated like daughters where the husband who received them had paid a dowry so that the father could give gifts to his daughters at the time of their marriage. They had been sold to Jacob like a stranger or alien and he had worked for them for a total of fourteen years. Meanwhile, Laban had become very wealthy during that time and had

kept everything for himself. He had shown no fatherly love to his daughters and their children.

As a result, Rachel and Leah said that God was the One who had taken these riches from their father. God had blessed Laban throughout the time that Jacob had worked for his daughters. Jacob had earlier said to Laban in Genesis 30:30, ““For what you had before I *came* was little, and it has increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?”” In fact, Laban had even said at that time in Genesis 30:27, ““And Laban said to him, ‘Please *stay*, if I have found favor in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake.’”” That is why Rachel and Leah felt that God had taken part of those riches away from their father especially when they saw that he changed the wages of Jacob ten times to try and keep everything for himself. They felt that God had chosen to take part of the wealth from their father because it really belonged to his daughters and their children and he should have shared it with them.

That is why Rachel and Leah said, ““Whatever God has said to you, do it.”” Here we see that both Rachel and Leah were in agreement about the fact that Jacob should be obedient to God. They realized that meant that they would go with Jacob to the land from which he had come and would probably not see their family again. However, they were ready to follow Jacob to that land. Jacob had told his wives about the vow that he had made at Bethel. Rachel and Leah were learning from Jacob how to follow God and they were ready to return with him to Bethel where the Lord had spoken to Jacob when he was on his way to Haran. They still had many lessons to learn, but we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the importance of learning to follow the Lord day-by-day as He leads us. Learning continues throughout our lives as we grow and mature in the Lord and learn to be led by His love. May the Lord richly bless you as you learn to explain these things to your physical and spiritual children.

The Lord Protected Jacob from Laban

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain and help others understand why it is important for them to continue to grow in their understanding of the Lord. This is a key for individuals to become healthy Christians who are able to help others. In this topic, we will see that the Lord protected Jacob from Laban when Laban followed Jacob as he fled from Haran.

Jacob had talked with Leah and Rachel and they were in agreement with him that they should leave Laban and his sons and return to the land from which Jacob had come. Genesis 31:17-21 says, “Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father’s. And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.” Here we see how the family of Jacob traveled as they began their trip to the land of Canaan. We read that Jacob provided camels for his wives and sons to ride as they traveled. This was the common form of travel in that area throughout most of history.

Since Jacob was not going to return to the city of Haran, it was necessary for Jacob and his family to take everything with them. This included all of the sheep, cattle and other animals that Jacob had gained during the twenty years that Jacob had lived in Haran. The Lord had greatly blessed Jacob in spite of the fact that Laban had changed his wages ten times in order to try and cheat Jacob out of the things that the Lord chose to provide for Jacob. Jacob and his family left the area of Padan Aram and began their return to the land of Canaan where Isaac, the father of Jacob, still lived. At the time Jacob left, Laban had gone to shear the wool from his sheep. This meant that it was during the spring months as that was the normal time to shear the wool of the sheep.

However, Rachel had done something that Jacob did not know about. She had stolen the household idols that belonged to her father. We saw in the last topic that both Rachel and Leah were learning to follow the Lord. However, we see here that Rachel had not yet turned from the family idols. When people have grown up worshiping idols, it is important to help them turn from idols as well as turn to the Lord. 1Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...” This verse shows us that people who make a true decision to follow the Lord are shown by God the importance of turning from idols as well as turning to God. This would come in the life of Rachel but it had not happened yet in her life.

Jacob left Haran while Laban was away shearing the sheep because he did not want Laban to know that he intended to flee. Jacob and his family took everything they possessed because this was a permanent departure from the city of Haran. Haran was located near the Euphrates River so they had to cross that river soon after they fled from Haran. Once they were across that river, they traveled toward the mountains of Gilead which were located east of the land of Canaan. Genesis 31:22-25 says, “And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days’ journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’ So Laban overtook

Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.” We see that it took Laban a period of time to catch up with Jacob.

Laban did not find out for three days that Jacob had fled from Haran. Once Laban heard that Jacob had fled, Laban talked to his brothers and extended family and got them to go with him as he went after Jacob and his family. The fact that Laban took his brothers along with him shows that Laban had a sinful purpose for this trip. Jacob had feared that Laban might come after him and so even with his family, flocks and all of his possessions, Jacob and the entire family had traveled very quickly so that they could escape from Laban. As a result, it took Laban seven days to catch up with Jacob. The fact that Jacob had already reached the mountains of Gilead shows that they had traveled quite a distance during those days.

However, the Lord was the One who stopped Laban from doing anything evil to Jacob and his family. God gave Laban a dream during the night while he was sleeping. In that dream, the Lord warned Laban not to speak to Jacob anything good or bad. By this warning, the Lord made it clear to Laban that he was not to say or do anything evil to Jacob or any of those who were with Jacob. This warning from the Lord again made it clear that Laban had a sinful purpose for this trip. Since the Lord warned Laban and he did not put his sinful plan into action, we do not know what Laban may have tried to do if the Lord had not stopped him. However, we do see that the Lord protected Jacob from Laban. God had earlier protected Abraham from harm by other men. Genesis 12:17 says, “But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram’s wife.” Then in Genesis 20:3 God gave Abimelech a dream to protect Abraham again. Genesis 20:3 Says, “But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Indeed you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she *is* a man’s wife.’” Here God protected Jacob in the same way.

Jacob had pitched his tent (had stopped for the night) in the mountains of Gilead. This was the place where Laban finally caught up with Jacob and his family. God had warned Laban not to say or do anything to Jacob. Laban had to give a reason why he had pursued Jacob when he caught up with him in the mountains of Gilead. As a result, Genesis 31:26-29 says, “And Laban said to Jacob: ‘What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives *taken* with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in *so* doing. It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’”” Here we see that Laban gave his excuse for following Jacob.

Laban began his excuse by asking Jacob why he had left without letting Laban know that he was leaving. He said that Jacob had taken away his daughters like captives taken away with a sword. He did not know that Jacob had talked with Leah and Rachel and that they had both agreed with Jacob that they needed to leave. Laban gave no thought to the way that he had treated his daughters. Genesis 31:14-15 says, “Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, ‘Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money.’” From these words of his daughters, we see that they felt like their father had mistreated them because he did not give them any inheritance. He had treated them like strangers. He had sold them to Jacob for fourteen years of work and then had not shared anything with them even though the Lord had blessed Laban greatly during those fourteen years. Laban had no idea that they felt rejected by what he did because he was only thinking of himself.

Laban then said that instead of leaving secretly, Jacob should have let him send his daughters

away with a large farewell party. He said that then he would have sent Jacob and his family away with feasting and music before they left. Laban said that Jacob did not even allow him to kiss his sons (grandsons) and daughters before they left. Laban went on to accuse Jacob of doing something very foolish by leaving without telling Laban that he was returning to the land of his fathers. Here we see that Laban tried to hide the fact that he had planned to commit sin against Jacob. However, then he went on to say something else that really showed the intent of his heart.

Laban said that it was in his power to do harm to Jacob. The fact that Laban said these words shows that he had been planning to do something. Then he explained what God had said to him in a dream the previous night. Laban said, "...the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.'"" Laban was so busy thinking about his own plans, it did not enter his thinking that by telling what God had said, he was actually showing that his plan was to do evil to Jacob. First, Laban called God "...the God of your father..." By this statement, Laban made it clear that he did not believe and have his trust in that God. In fact, we will see in the next topic that Laban was really upset about losing his idols because they were the gods on which he depended rather than the True and Living God.

Second, he said that God told him in his dream to "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad." Since God knows the thoughts of our hearts (which Laban did not understand) Laban said that God had told him not to speak anything to Jacob - good or bad. What that statement actually points out is the fact that because God does know the thoughts of the hearts that God had warned Laban not to do what he planned to do. This is one of the things that most people who do not believe in God do not know or understand - that God knows the thoughts of their hearts. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God looks on our hearts and knows what we are thinking. He knows the thoughts and intents of every person. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Jacob Became Angry with Laban

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that God knows the thoughts of their hearts. To do that we can help our children learn to explain verses like Genesis 6:5 and 1 Samuel 16:7. In this topic, we want to help our children learn to understand why Jacob became angry with Laban.

Laban had said that he followed Jacob because Jacob had not given him the opportunity to have a proper farewell. However, in this topic we are going to see the real reason why Laban pursued Jacob and his family. Genesis 31:30-32 says, “‘And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father’s house, *but* why did you steal my gods?’ Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, ‘Because I was afraid, for I said, “Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.” With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you.’ For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.” These verses show that Laban had a very different reason for following Jacob. He said that he could understand why Jacob had a longing to return to his father. However, his question shows the real reason why Laban had followed Jacob. Laban asked, “‘...why did you steal my gods?’” Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods of her father.

Jacob then explained his own fears. Jacob said that he had fled from Laban because he was afraid of Laban. He said that he was afraid that Laban would try to take his daughters away from Jacob by force. Here we see that Jacob felt that he could not trust Laban. Laban had changed his wages and cheated him so many times that Jacob had no trust of Laban. As a result, he said that he had acted from his fear of Laban because he imagined that Laban might actually take away his daughters by force. This tells us how Jacob had come to view Laban during the years that he had worked for him. He did not feel that he could trust in any way. He realized that Laban might use force to get what he wanted. The fact that God had to warn Laban in a dream in Genesis 31:23-24, “‘Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days’ journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad’” probably meant that Jacob had made a wise decision to leave while Laban was away shearing his sheep. He could not be trusted.

Jacob was so sure that he had treated Laban honestly that he answered the accusation of Laban by saying, “‘With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you.’” Jacob did not even think about the possibility that Rachel had stolen the idols of Laban. The idols that she had stolen were small female gods that Laban and his family worshiped. Various reasons are given why people think that Rachel took these idols. At this time, she may have still been depending on the idols and was trying to worship both the gods of her father and the Creator who her husband worshiped. It is also possible that she thought these idols might help her to have additional children. Laban was so angry that his idols had been stolen that he had brought a whole group of men with him to get those idols back. This helps us to realize that Laban was a very strong idol worshiper who was ready to do whatever it took to regain his idols. This was the reason that he had brought this group of men with him and had traveled seven days to catch up with Jacob.

Genesis 31:33-35 says, “‘And Laban went into Jacob’s tent, into Leah’s tent, and into the two maids’ tents, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s

tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find *them*. And she said to her father, 'Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me.' And he searched but did not find the household idols." Laban quickly began the search for his idols. First, he searched the tent of Jacob. Then, he searched the tents of Leah and the tents of the two maids who had children by Jacob. Finally, he went to the tent of Rachel.

Meanwhile, Rachel had a little time to get ready for the coming of her father to her tent since he searched the other four tents first. We see that she had taken the idols of Laban and had put them in the saddle of the camel that she rode when they traveled. Then she sat on the saddle. As a result, Rachel was sitting on the saddle when her father came into her tent. We see that Laban searched all about the tent. That meant that he went through everything in the tent that was large enough to hold those small idols. Rachel said to him as he searched, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me." Laban accepted the reason why Rachel did not stand up. He did not even think about the fact that the idols could be on the inside or underside of the camel saddle. He just searched through everything else in the tent and did not find his household idols.

Jacob watched while Laban went through all of the tents and found nothing. Genesis 31:36-42 says, "Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: 'What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set *it* here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both! These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night. *There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night.'" For twenty years Laban cheated and changed his wages ten times. Here we see that Jacob became angry and rebuked Laban for his sins.

Jacob asked three questions as he rebuked Laban. His first question was, "What is my trespass?" The word translated "trespass" is usually translated transgression in the Old Testament and is another word for *rebellion or sin and speaks of sin against God*. His second question was, "What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?" The word translated "sin" speaks of *sin or sin offering* in the Old Testament. Most commonly, this word speaks of sins against another person. As a result, Jacob was asking in what way he had sinned against Laban during those twenty years. He also asked if he had sinned in a way that would cause Laban to chase him with such an angry attitude. Third, Jacob asked, "Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found?" In this question, we see that Jacob asked Laban to show anything that he had found in the search through all of the tents. Jacob said that if Laban had found anything Jacob had taken that he could place those things before their brethren and those brothers could judge between Jacob and Laban. However, Laban had found nothing and so there was nothing that he could place before his brethren.

Jacob then went on to tell about the way that he had taken care of the flocks of Laban. He had cared for the flock of Laban for twenty years. God had blessed those flocks so that the female sheep and goats did not have miscarriages during that time. In addition, Jacob said that he had

not eaten any of the male sheep and goats.

Jacob went on to say that when any of the sheep or goats of Laban had been killed by wild animals, Jacob replaced those animals with animals of his own so that Laban did not lose any animals that were killed because Jacob had replaced them. He reminded Laban that if any animals were stolen, Laban required the replacement of those animals whether they were stolen during the day or whether it happened during the night. Jacob also said that he worked for Laban day and night. He had to deal with the drought during the day and the frost during the night. Many times the sheep and goats would give birth to their young during the night so Jacob had many nights when he got little or no sleep. Jacob reminded Laban that he had worked for him that way for twenty years. He had worked fourteen of those years for the two daughters of Laban. Then he had worked six additional years for wages. During that time, Laban had changed his wages ten times.

Jacob said that God had been with him throughout this time. He also said that He followed the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. Up to this point in this rebuke, Jacob did not make charges against Laban. However, he now expressed one fear that he felt. He said that he feared that Laban would have sent him away with nothing after those twenty years of faithful work. Laban did not deny that charge so it is possible that if Jacob had not left while Laban was away shearing the sheep that Laban would have tried to send him away with nothing. Then Jacob said, ““God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night.”” Here we see that it was necessary for God to rebuke Laban to protect Jacob from him. The Lord knew that Jacob had been a man of integrity. He had done what was right even though Laban deceived him and changed his wages ten times. This is an important lesson that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example. We want to show the importance of doing what is right in the sight of God regardless of whether others treat us fairly or not. We also want to help our children learn to continue to love the sinner even though that person may be guilty of sin just as Laban had been guilty. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to respond with love even to those who sin against them.

Jacob and Laban Made a Covenant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to respond in a way that honors the Lord even when others may deceive and cheat them. Jacob was a man who did right even when Laban sinned. In this topic, we see that Jacob and Laban made a covenant.

Laban never did admit that he had sinned against Jacob. Genesis 31:43-45 says, “And Laban answered and said to Jacob, ‘*These daughters are* my daughters, and *these children are* my children, and *this flock is* my flock; all that you see *is* mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.’” In fact, in these verses, we see that Laban claimed everything that belonged to Jacob was his. He said that the daughters were his daughters. He said that the children were his children. He said that the flock of animals that Jacob had with him was his flock of animals. In fact, he even said that everything that Jacob could see belonged to him. This was exactly what Jacob had feared.

However, then Laban added another statement. He said, “...let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.” The Lord had told Laban in Genesis 31:24, “But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’” Here we see that God had warned Laban not to say or do anything to Jacob. As a result, Laban was afraid of what God might do to him. That is why he offered to make a covenant or treaty with Jacob. This covenant was not a covenant of love but a covenant of fear. Many people only read one sentence in the covenant and fail to understand the meaning of that covenant. Laban said that this covenant would be between Jacob and him.

Genesis 31:45-50 says, “So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar. Then Jacob said to his brethren, ‘Gather stones.’ And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap. Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, ‘This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day.’ Therefore its name was called Galeed, also Mizpah, because he said, ‘May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another. If you afflict my daughters, or if you take *other* wives besides my daughters, *although* no man *is* with us—see, God *is* witness between you and me!’” The first thing that Jacob did was to take a stone and set it up as a pillar. Since Jacob had married the two daughters of Laban, the men who had come with Laban were also related to Jacob. We see that Jacob asked these men to gather stones. These men brought stones until they had piled a heap of stones together. The stone that Jacob had set up as a pillar and these stones that were gathered by the others were to be a witness between Jacob and Laban.

Once all of the stones had been gathered, we see that Laban, Jacob and the other men sat down on the stones and ate a meal together. Here we see that the people of that time had certain things that they did when they made a covenant or treaty. This included setting up stones as a witness of the agreement that they had made. This way the agreement would be remembered by the following generations of their families. Then we see that both Laban and Jacob gave a name to this pile of stones and the pillar. Laban decided to call that pile of stones and the area around it “Jegar Sahadutha” which means *heap of witness* in the Aramaic language. Jacob chose the name Galeed and Mizpah. “Galeed” also means *heap of witness* but it is in the Hebrew language. In contrast, “Mizpah” means *watchtower* which is a tower that people often built where a guard can be placed in the tower to protect a vineyard or a boundary because an

enemy that might come would be seen at a great distance.

Laban said that the heap of stones was a witness between Jacob and him that day. Through the years many people have quoted the statement, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another” as a statement of the fact that the Lord would watch over them for good. In contrast, Laban made this statement as a warning to Jacob. God was to be a witness between Laban and Jacob. The word translated “afflict” means *to force or to cause a person to suffer pain*. Here we see that Laban was warning Jacob not to mistreat his daughters or to do anything to them that would hurt them. In addition, Laban said that Jacob was not to take any other wives in addition to his daughters. Laban worshiped idols but he warned Jacob by using the name of God. Many times people use the name of God but have no personal relationship with the Creator of heaven and earth. To them God is just another name for a deity.

Laban knew that he probably would never see Jacob and his daughters again but he wanted Jacob to know that Jacob was to treat his daughters with respect. That is why he said, “God is witness between you and me!” He knew that he would not see Jacob and he also knew that there even though Jacob named the pile of stones “watchtower” he knew that there would not be a guard in a tower to watch for either Jacob or Laban to come against the other person. That was why they were making a covenant or treaty that they would keep that agreement. Laban was actually protecting everything that he had by this treaty because the idols that Rachel had hidden in the saddle of the camel and then sat on the saddle could have entitled her to a part of the inheritance of Laban when he died. As a result, Laban was actually making certain that Jacob could never claim that inheritance even if someone in the family of Jacob had taken those idols. Laban was such a deceiver that he did not trust anyone else.

We go on to read what else Laban said about that pile of stones when we read in Genesis 31:51-55 where we read, “Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which I have placed between you and me. This heap *is* a witness, and *this* pillar *is* a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.’ And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain. And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.” In these verses, we see that Laban says that this is why he had placed this heap of stones between the place where he lived and the place where Jacob would live in the future. Laban again said that the heap of stones was a witness. However, he also added that he would not pass beyond this heap of stones to do Jacob harm. He also said that Jacob would agree that he would not pass beyond this heap of stones to do harm to Laban or his future family.

Then Laban said, “...The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.” Joshua 24:2 says, “And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: “Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.”’” Here we see that Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor, and Nahor himself served other gods. They did not serve the Creator of heaven and earth. It was by the god that his fathers served that Laban made this covenant. Jacob wanted to make sure that he did not claim to serve the gods that Nahor and his fathers had served. That is why Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. Jacob also mentioned the Fear of Isaac in Genesis 31:42 where we read, “...Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night.”” In this verse, we see that the word is used to refer to the One who had

rebuked Laban the previous night. In this way, Jacob made it clear that he did not mix idols in his worship.

We see that Jacob then offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited everyone there to eat bread with him. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were a covering for sin until Christ came to take away sin. Jacob offered this sacrifice to the Creator of heaven and earth that had rebuked Laban the night before. He invited those with him to eat that sacrifice to recognize that he served the Living and True God. Although Laban and his family did not worship the Living and True God, by eating the meat of that sacrifice, Laban and those with him recognized the True God as the God that Jacob worshiped and served. This meant that they also recognized the covenant or treaty that Jacob made with Laban and that they would not pass that point to do harm to Jacob at some future time. In this way, both Laban and Jacob were protected from future harm from the other person. After they ate the meat of the sacrifice, the men slept that night on the mountain.

The next morning, Laban and the men with him got up early to return to their homes in Haran. Laban had been warned by God not to do anything to harm Jacob or to take away anything that Jacob had with him. Now that Jacob had made the covenant that he would not pass beyond that pile of rocks to do harm to Laban, we see that Laban was ready to leave even though in his mind there was still the possibility that someone in the family of Jacob had his household gods. Laban knew that Jacob could not use those idols to try and get any additional inheritance from Laban. Laban kissed his daughters and his grandchildren before he left to return to his own home in Haran. Laban then gave a blessing to his daughters and grandsons. Here we see that Laban finally did something to try and show his daughters and their children that he cared for them as he gave them his blessing since it was the last time that he would see them. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the importance of avoiding the example of Laban who did not bless his daughters and grandsons until he knew it was the last time that he would ever see them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

Jacob Prepared to Meet Esau

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the importance of showing their love and acceptance to their children and grandchildren throughout their lives and not just at the time of death. Once Jacob and his family said their goodbyes to Laban, Jacob began to prepare to meet his brother Esau. That will be the focus of this topic.

Genesis 32:1-8 says, “So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, ‘This *is* God’s camp.’ And he called the name of that place Mahanaim. Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, ‘Speak thus to my lord Esau, “Thus your servant Jacob says: ‘I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now. I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.’”’ Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, ‘We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men *are* with him.’ So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that *were* with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, ‘If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape.’” We see that the angels of God met Jacob as he traveled. The name “Mahanaim” means *two camps*. Jacob gave that place this name to show that it was both the camp of the angels of God as well as the place where he camped for a period of time.

It was from this place that Jacob sent messengers to Esau to let Esau know that he was returning from his period of twenty years of staying at the house of Laban. In the message that was sent to Esau, Jacob spoke of the way that the Lord had blessed him during the time that he was with Laban. Jacob also called himself a servant. Jacob said that he had accumulated oxen, donkeys, flocks of sheep and cattle as well as male and female servants. This word translated “lord” can be translated *Lord, lord, master or ruler*. In this use, Jacob is referring to his brother as master or ruler. In this way, we see that Jacob was humbling himself before his brother and wanted to find favor with him.

The messengers that Jacob sent to Esau met Esau and then returned to Jacob. However, the messengers then said that Esau was coming to meet Jacob and that he had four hundred men coming with him. When Jacob heard about the four hundred men that were coming with Esau, he could only imagine that a negative result would happen when he and his brother met. Suddenly, Jacob was filled with a great fear. He had strong emotional distress within himself when he heard about the four hundred men that were coming with Esau. Here we see that the only thought Jacob had was that Esau was planning to get revenge for stealing the blessing by killing him. Jacob immediately divided his cattle and flocks into two groups. Jacob said that if one group was attacked by Esau and those with him, the other group was to immediately flee and try to escape. He thought that way it would be possible for one group to escape.

Genesis 32:9-12 then tells us, “Then Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD who said to me, “Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you”: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children. For You said, “I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be

numbered for multitude.””” In his fear and distress, Jacob could only think of one thing to do and that was to pray to the Lord. That was the right thing to do. It reminds us of the fact that many people pray in a time of crisis.

In his prayer to the Lord, we see that Jacob included several key statements. First, Jacob reminded God of the fact that God was the One who told him to return to his own country. Then Jacob also said that the Lord had promised to deal well with his servant. Second, Jacob said that he was not worthy of all of the mercies and all of the truth that the Lord had shown to Him as a servant of God. The word translated “not worthy” means *small or insignificant*. Here we see that Jacob realized his own unworthiness as he prayed. He knew that he did not deserve the mercies that the Lord had shown to him. Jacob also realized that God had revealed much truth to him and that he was the servant of God. At the time he prayed, Jacob had completed the crossing of the Jordan and had divided his family and flocks into two companies.

Third, Jacob asked for deliverance from his brother and the four hundred men with him. Jacob also told the Lord that he feared his brother. He was afraid that when Esau and the men with him arrived, they would attack Jacob and his family. Instead of depending on himself, Jacob asked the Lord to deliver himself and his family. We see by his statement that Jacob was honest with God and did not try to hide his fear. He realized that the Lord was the only One who was able to deliver him and his family because Jacob had no power within himself.

Fourth, Jacob reminded the Lord of the promise that the Lord had made to his family. The Lord had told Jacob that He would treat Jacob well. He had promised Jacob that he would have so many descendants that they would be like the sand on the beach at the sea because there would be so many. God had told Jacob that the number of descendants would be so large that they would not be able to count the number. Jacob realized that he had a choice. He could either depend on himself and his own strength or he could cry out to the Lord for help. Here we see that Jacob made the choice to cry out to the Lord and ask the Lord to show His mercy.

Genesis 32:13-21 says, “So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, ‘Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves.’ And he commanded the first one, saying, ‘When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, “To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?” then you shall say, “They *are* your servant Jacob’s. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.”’ So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, ‘In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and also say, “Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.”’ For he said, ‘I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.’ So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.” We see that Jacob prayed to the Lord for protection and then he prepared a gift for his brother.

Jacob decided to send a present ahead of him for his brother Esau. The Scripture does not tell us whether God led Jacob to send this gift or if Jacob made this decision himself either before or after he had prayed to the Lord. This gift included a total of 580 animals: 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels and 30 colts of those camels, 50 cattle and 30 donkeys. Each group of animals was sent as a separate group with a distance between each group. Jacob also gave the servants with these groups of animals instructions about what they were to say to Esau when they met him. The servants were to tell Esau this message about each group of animals, ““They *are* your servant Jacob’s. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.”” Notice that the message the servants were to give, with each of the groups of animals, was to

tell Esau that they were from his servant Jacob and it was a present sent to his lord Esau. Then they were to add, “Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.” By these words, Jacob was doing his best to show that his attitude had changed over the previous twenty years. Laban had taught him what it felt like to be deceived and Jacob had a much more humble attitude.

At the same time, Jacob thought that the present might appease Esau and that afterward Esau would accept him. The word translated “appease” is translated by the word “atonement” 71 times and also by several other words including various words related to reconciliation. This is the only place where it is translated appease. Except for the use in this verse and two others, the verb is always used in connection with the removal of sin and defilement. In this verse instead of offering a sacrifice to God to make reconciliation with God, Jacob sent a gift of 580 animals to try and make reconciliation with Esau. This is an indication that Jacob realized the seriousness of his sin toward Esau over twenty years earlier. Jacob wanted to see the face of Esau and know that he was accepted by him because he feared that Esau would try to destroy him and his family.

Jacob sent this large present of animals ahead of him but we see that Jacob and the rest of his possessions along with his family stayed that night in their camp. We will see in our next topic that the Lord had more to teach Jacob before he met his brother by what happened to Jacob later that night. Here we see that Jacob was doing what he could do to try and be reconciled with his brother. This is probably a case where Jacob prayed to the Lord but he did not think that the Lord would change the heart of Esau. That happens many times even in the lives of those who follow the Lord because they try to work things out in their own strength instead of depending on the strength of the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why it is so important to depend on the strength of the Lord instead of trying to solve our problems and fears in our own strength. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children your trust in the Lord and help them learn to explain true trust in the Lord to others.

The Lord Met Jacob that Night

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to trust the Lord to solve their problems and their fears. Then we want to help them learn to explain to others how others can also learn to trust the Lord. In this topic, we will see that the Lord met Jacob the night before he met his brother.

Genesis 32:22-26 says, “And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok. He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had. Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob’s hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, ‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’ But he said, ‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’” In these verses, we see that Jacob was preparing to meet his brother. In preparation for that meeting, Jacob had to get everything that he had across the Jabbok. The word translated “brook” means *torrent of water* and is translated river more often than it is translated brook (56 times compared to 46 times). A ford means the place where a torrent of water is easiest to cross. Since Jacob had to get all of the animals and other things that he had in addition to his family across, this probably took several hours. Once everything had crossed the Jabbok safely, we see that Jacob was left alone on the other side.

Suddenly, in the dark of the night a Man began to wrestle with Jacob. This wrestling match lasted for the rest of the night. The two were still wrestling when it was getting close to daybreak. That night was probably a long night for Jacob because he did not know who was wrestling with him. He could not see the Man clearly in the dark so Jacob probably felt like he was fighting to survive with his life. That would certainly cause him to continue to wrestle as long as he had any strength. The One who was wrestling with Jacob saw that He did not prevail against Jacob. The word translated “prevail” means *to prevail or overcome*. Since Jacob continued to fight, it meant that the One wrestling with him had not overcome him. Then, the One who was wrestling with Jacob reached out and touched the socket of his hip. Suddenly, the hip of Jacob was out of joint and he could no longer fight.

When Jacob realized that he could not fight any longer because of his hip, he held on to the One that had been wrestling with him so that the person would not leave. Then the One who was wrestling with Jacob said, “‘Let Me go, for the day breaks.’” Instead of letting go, Jacob just held on to the person tighter. Then Jacob said, “‘I will not let You go unless You bless me!’” Jacob realized that he was not wrestling with an ordinary man. This person, that Jacob was holding, had put his hip out of joint just by touching it. Jacob realized that the blessing from this person was much more important than the blessing that he had received from his father 20 years earlier. That is why he said that he would not let that person leave until Jacob received a blessing from him. Verse 30 tells us Jacob realized who that person was when that verse says, “‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’” This statement makes it clear that this was actually an Old Testament appearance of Christ. Jacob had wrestled with Christ and He wanted the blessing that only the Lord could give to him. However, before the Lord answered Jacob, the Lord asked him his name.

Genesis 32:27- 29 says, “So He said to him, ‘What *is* your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob.’ And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’ Then Jacob asked, saying, ‘Tell *me* Your name, I pray.’ And He said, ‘Why *is* it *that* you ask about My name?’ And He blessed him there.”

Jacob had said that he would not let go unless the One holding him would bless him. That answer came in the form of a question. Instead of receiving an answer, the One who questioned him asked him to give his name, Jacob responded by giving his name. Suddenly, Jacob received an answer that he did not expect because he was told that his name would be changed as he heard, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.” “Jacob” means *the heel catcher, the supplanter or the deceiver*. In contrast, “Israel” means *Prince with God, he who struggles with God or God rules*. Through the rest of the book of Genesis, we will gradually see the name “Israel” more frequently and the name “Jacob” less frequently.

The various meanings for Jacob and Israel can be seen throughout his life. When Jacob was born, he was holding onto the heel of his brother Esau. Genesis 27:35-36 says, “But he said, ‘Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.’ And Esau said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’” In these verses, we see that two different words are used to describe Jacob. Isaac used the word “deceit” to describe Jacob while Esau used the word “supplanted”. The early character of Jacob certainly fit the description of the name that had been given to him at birth.

However, the Lord gave Jacob a new name. As Jacob grew in his understanding of the Lord, we see that more and more Israel began to fit the character of the name that the Lord gave to him here. Jacob was not ready to let the Lord go until the Lord blessed him. He struggled all night with God. This was an Old Testament appearance of Christ and He allowed Jacob to wrestle or struggle all night with him before touching his hip. In Genesis 35:1 we read, “Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.’” Genesis 35:9-10 says, “Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, ‘Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.’ So He called his name Israel.” Genesis 48:11 adds, “And Israel said to Joseph, ‘I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!’” Here we see that as he came to the end of his life that he is called Israel. He had learned to let God rule in his life.

We see that Christ then gave Jacob a blessing. Genesis 32:30-32 says, “So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: ‘For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.’ Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip. Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which *is* on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob’s hip in the muscle that shrank.” Jacob had been blessed by the Lord but he would limp until the day of his death as a reminder of his dependence upon the Lord. Paul had a similar thing happen in his life many years later. 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 says, “Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” It is in our own weakness that we learn to depend on the strength of the Lord.

Jacob then gave a new name to that place as he called it “Peniel” which means *face of God*. Jacob realized that he had seen God face to face and that his life had been preserved. This was due to the fact that it was God the Son, Christ, who actually wrestled with Jacob. No man can see the face of the Father on this earth and live. When the Father was speaking with Moses in Exodus 33, the Father told him in Exodus 33:20, “But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’” However, Jacob had wrestled with Christ and had prevailed. In

addition, Christ had told him that he had struggled with God and with man. As Jacob limped across the ford of the Jabbok just as the sun rose, that limp was a reminder that he could not depend on his own strength. Instead, Jacob now had to meet his brother in the strength of the Lord because he was helpless to defend himself if his brother would try to attack him.

We go on to see how the Lord caused the hip to come out of the hip socket. We read that the muscle shrank when the Lord touched his hip. When Moses wrote this book well over four hundred years later, we see that he explained that the people of Israel did not eat the muscle because the Lord had caused it to shrink. Many times people do or avoid certain things because that is what they have been told to do or avoid. By including this statement in Deuteronomy, the descendants of Jacob were now able to understand why they did not eat that particular part of the muscle.

Jacob crossed over Penuel about the time of the rising of the sun. He knew that he would meet Esau later that day. He also knew that he could not defend himself from his brother. Jacob had told the Lord that he feared his brother. That meant that Jacob had to choose to trust the Lord and could not depend on himself. This is often one of the hardest lessons for those who follow the Lord to learn. However, it is one of the most important lessons for every follower of the Lord to learn and apply daily in their lives. Throughout the rest of the book of Genesis, we will see that the name of Jacob is still used many times. As we get closer to the end of the book, we will see that the name Israel is used more often. Jacob gradually grew in his dependence on the Lord so that his character began to more and more match his new name. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply this same lesson in their lives and then they will be able to help others learn to teach this same lesson to others to help them grow in their dependence on Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn this lesson.

Jacob and Esau were Reconciled Together

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Lord instead of trying to do things in their own strength. That was a difficult lesson for Jacob to learn to apply in his life and may also be for many today. In this topic, we will see what the Lord did as Jacob chose to depend on the Lord as he met his brother, Esau.

Genesis 33:1-3 says, “Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants. And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.” Jacob had met the Lord and now he was going to meet his brother. The first thing that Jacob noticed while they were still a distance away from Jacob, his flocks and his family was that Esau was not alone. The servants had said that Esau was coming with four hundred men and Jacob could see that these men were with Esau. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” This was going to be his first test to see if he would try to depend on himself or if he would trust in the Lord.

Jacob had divided his family into two different companies so that one group might escape if Esau and the men with him were to attack. However, we see that they are all back together in one group as Jacob prepared to meet Esau. We see what Jacob did as Esau and the men got closer. Jacob had each of the four mothers take her children with her. Then Jacob placed Bilhah and Zilpah with their sons in the front. Then Leah and her sons followed behind the maidservants and their children. Finally Rachel and Joseph were at the back. In this way, Jacob made it clear that Rachel was still the favored wife. However, Jacob then showed that he had a growing trust in the Lord. Jacob went ahead of his entire family so that he was the person that Esau met first. As Jacob got closer to Esau, he began bowing himself to the ground. He bowed himself a total of seven times. Jacob hoped to show Esau by this action that he had humbled himself and recognized that his brother was the older brother and needed to be respected.

Meanwhile, we see that Esau had also had changes in his attitude toward Jacob. Genesis 33:4-7 says, “But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, ‘Who *are* these with you?’ So he said, ‘The children whom God has graciously given your servant.’ Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down. And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.” Esau did several things to show Jacob that he was forgiven. First, we see that Esau ran to meet Jacob. It had been more than 20 years since the two brothers had seen or talked to each other. By this action, Esau showed that he was very happy to see his brother again. Second, Esau embraced his brother and gave him a big hug. This is a common action when family members have not seen each other for a long time. In addition, Esau wanted Jacob to know that he was forgiven. The anger and hatred that Esau felt when Jacob fled more than twenty years earlier was no longer there. Instead, that anger had been replaced by a strong desire to see his brother again.

Third, Esau kissed his brother. This showed that his anger and hatred had been replaced by love and concern. Finally, we see that they both wept together. These were not tears of anger or

bitterness. Instead, they were tears of joy because they were reconciled to each other. Many times when people become angry and refuse to speak to one another for an extended period of time, they forget the cause of the original conflict and feel sorrow for the broken relationship. However, many times people are unwilling, because of their own pride, to be the one that takes the leadership to restore that relationship. Here Esau showed that he was very thankful that Jacob had chosen to come to him and their relationship had been restored.

Esau was so excited to see Jacob that he had not even noticed that there were other people behind him at first. Once he felt their relationship was restored, Esau looked behind Jacob and saw that there were women and children behind him. This caused him to ask the question, “Who are these with you?” That gave Jacob the opportunity to introduce his children and their mothers to Esau. That is why he said, “The children whom God has graciously given your servant.” Jacob still used the phrase “your servant”. Jacob explained that these were the children that the Lord had given to him while the two brothers were separated from one another. First, the two maidservants with their children came close to Jacob. Both the maidservants and their children bowed down to Esau just as Jacob had done. Here we see that Jacob had carefully instructed his family what they were to do when they met Esau. They showed their humility and respect toward Esau.

Once Esau had been introduced to the maidservants and their four children, then Leah, her six sons and her daughter all came and bowed down to Esau. They also showed their respect by bowing to Esau. Jacob was then able to introduce them to Esau. Finally, Rachel came and brought Joseph with her. Like the others, Rachel and Joseph also bowed down to Esau. This attitude of respect and humility by Jacob and his entire family showed Esau more about the changes in attitude that Jacob had. Esau could see the changes in the attitude of Jacob and his family. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Although these verses were not written until nearly two thousand years later, they summarize the attitude of Jacob and his family toward Esau.

Genesis 33:8-11 introduces the next question of Esau when those verses say, “Then Esau said, ‘What *do* you *mean* by all this company which I met?’ And he said, ‘*These are* to find favor in the sight of my lord.’ But Esau said, ‘I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.’ And Jacob said, ‘No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand, inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me. Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough.’ So he urged him, and he took *it*.” Here we see that this question is about the 580 animals Esau had met before he met Jacob. Esau wanted to know why Jacob had given these animals to him.

Jacob explained that the purpose of this gift was to find favor in the sight of Esau. Jacob again called Esau “my lord”. Esau recognized that this very large number of animals was a huge gift. The original conflict over the blessing was due to the fact that Esau wanted the double inheritance that went along with the blessing. This gift of these 580 animals may have been nearly as much as Esau would have received by a double inheritance. The anger of Esau over the loss of the blessing was gone. He had been reconciled with his brother and so he said to Jacob, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.” Esau did not feel that he needed that gift. Genesis 36:6-7 says, “Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock.” Here we see that Esau had

also gained many cattle and other animals while Jacob was in the land of Haran. As a result, he later chose to move away from Jacob so that there would be enough grass for them both to feed their cattle, sheep, goats and other animals.

It was very important to Jacob that Esau take this large gift of animals from him. That would let him know that there was not any lingering anger in Esau that might still be hidden. Jacob said, "...I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me...." Jacob had seen the face of the Lord the previous night. Now he had seen the face of his brother. The Lord had taken away his fear and given him a new attitude which he had shown as he talked with his brother. Jacob had also seen that the Lord had changed the attitude of Esau toward him and they had been reconciled to one another. Jacob could see by the actions and words of Esau that his brother was pleased to see him again. This brought great joy and peace to the heart of Jacob. A few hours earlier, he had received a blessing from the Lord. Now, he wanted Esau to receive a blessing from him.

The fact that Jacob said that he wanted to give this gift to his brother as a blessing gave the gift a whole new meaning to Esau as well. As a result, when Jacob urged him to receive this gift for that reason, we see that Esau then received the gift. Jacob had earlier made a covenant with Laban that was based on the fear of Laban that Jacob would return at a later time to claim the inheritance because someone had the gods of Laban. In contrast, just as Jacob had received a blessing from the Lord, he now wanted his brother to receive his gift as a blessing. That is why Esau chose to receive that gift when Jacob urged him to receive the gift. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to give a blessing to others instead of taking from others. Our children will follow our example as they see that we give a blessing to others when we combine our teaching with our actions so that they see us bless others in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to bless others.

Jacob Promised to Visit Esau

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example how to be a blessing to others in their lives. Jacob was given a blessing by the Lord and he then gave a blessing to his brother. In this topic, we will see that Jacob promised that he would come to Seir where Esau lived to visit him.

Genesis 33:12-14 says, “Then Esau said, ‘Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.’ But Jacob said to him, ‘My lord knows that the children *are* weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing *are* with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die. Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.’” Here we see that Esau made a suggestion to Jacob. He suggested that they travel together until they came to the place where Esau lived in Seir. However, Jacob realized that it would not be wise for them to travel together. Esau only had men traveling with him so they could travel rapidly. In contrast, Jacob had his family with young children and his flocks who needed to be able to spend part of each day eating food so that they could stay strong. In addition, many of the animals in his flocks were nursing their young.

As a result, Jacob explained to Esau why it would not be good for them to travel together. He said that his children were weak. The word translated “weak” means *young, tender or soft*. The first use of this word in the Old Testament is in Genesis 18:7 where we read, “And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.” A tender calf would be a young calf. The meat from a young calf is called veal because it is very tender and easy to eat. Jacob used the word in this verse to speak of his children. He had eleven sons and one daughter and they were all twelve years old or younger. It takes much longer to get that many young children ready to travel each morning and they are not able to travel rapidly. The same was true for the animals that had young lambs, calves or other animals. Jacob had been a shepherd who cared for the flock of Laban for twenty years and for his own flocks as well as they developed. He knew what would happen if the men tried to drive them too rapidly. Many of the young animals would die if they were driven too rapidly.

Jacob told Esau, “Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant.” Here we see that Jacob continued to use words that recognized Esau as the older son and he as the younger son. He also said that he would come to visit Esau in Seir but that he would come at a pace that the animals and the children were able to endure. Jacob knew that the men would have to drive the animals because they would want to move at a rapid pace to get home. In contrast, Jacob would lead the animals at a slow pace with many stops along the way to give adequate rest to the animals and the children. It was important to travel only a few days and then allow the animals to rest for a period of time before moving any further. Jacob had already moved the animals as quickly as he could to escape from Laban. Now they needed to rest for a period of time before moving very far. We will see that they stopped at Succoth which was a few miles east of the Jordan River.

Succoth was actually just a short distance from the place where they had crossed the Jabbok and a good place to stop for a period of time before going any further. Genesis 33:15-17 says, “And Esau said, ‘Now let me leave with you *some* of the people who *are* with me.’ But he said, ‘What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.’ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.” Here we see that Esau made a

second offer to Jacob. He offered to leave some of the men who had traveled with him to meet Jacob to help Jacob and his servants drive the flocks. This would still create the same problem because those men would still be anxious to get back to Seir. Seir was a mountain range south of the Salt Sea (Dead Sea) in the land of Edom. It extended from the Salt Sea all the way to the Gulf of water to the south. We will see that it was necessary for Jacob to stop for several periods of time as he, his family, his livestock, his servants and everything that he had traveled south.

Jacob said that he did not need any of the men to help him since his servants had been caring for his cattle and flocks and would continue to do so. Jacob just wanted to know that he had found favor with Esau. He thanked him for the offer of help but said he did not need the help. Esau understood and so he and the men with him left that day to begin their return to Seir. Meanwhile Jacob traveled only as far as Succoth for their first period of rest. That was only a little over five miles from Peniel where Jacob had wrestled with the Lord. When they arrived in Succoth, Jacob built a house and then they made booths (corrals) for all of the livestock to use at night while they were in that location. In fact, the name "Succoth" means *booths*. They probably spent an extended period of time at this location because it takes time to build a house and enough corrals for all of the animals. This area was also good grazing land for the cattle and sheep. The two and a half tribes of Israel that later settled east of the Jordan River wanted to settle in that general area because they had a lot of cattle.

The next move that Jacob, and everyone with him, made was to cross the Jordan River and move to the city of Shechem. Because of the fact that Jacob had so many animals, the crossing of any river was a major project that probably took an extended period of time. Genesis 33:18-20 says, "Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram; and he pitched his tent before the city. And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel." The fact that these verses mention that Jacob came safely to Shechem means that even though the process of getting across the Jordan River may have taken an extended period of time, they were able to get all of the animals across the river in safety. We see that once they were across the river, they traveled to the area of the city of Shechem.

Shechem was located in the land of Canaan. The name "Canaan" means *lowland* because it is the area located west of the Jordan River and extended from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. God had spoken to Jacob when he was in Padan Aram because God had told him in Genesis 31:3, "Then the LORD said to Jacob, 'Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.'" Once Jacob had crossed the Jordan River he was in the land of Canaan. We see that Jacob pitched his tent near the city of Shechem. Jacob then bought the land where he had pitched his tent. This is the first recorded parcel of land that Jacob bought. Jacob later gave this land to his son Joseph because John 4:5 says, "So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph." Because of what happened in Genesis 34 we read in Genesis 48:22, "...Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow." Jacob bought the piece of land where he pitched his tent but later two of his sons destroyed all of the men of the city of Shechem with the sword. Jacob bought this piece of land from Hamor, the father of Shechem.

One of the first things that Jacob did after he returned to the land of Canaan was to build an altar where he could offer sacrifices to the Lord. This is the first recorded altar that Jacob built. Jacob had set up a pillar when he fled from his brother Esau and went to the land of Padan Aram but he did not build an altar. Genesis 28:18-21 says, "Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on

top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God...’” Although Jacob made this vow, he did not offer a sacrifice to God. In fact, that vow to God was only a vow that God would be his God if the Lord brought him back to his father’s house in peace. That peace had become real when he was accepted by Esau when they met after Jacob crossed the Jabbok Brook.

We learn a very important lesson from the name that Jacob gave to this altar. He called the altar “El Elohe Israel”. That name means *God, the God of Israel or a Mighty God is the God of Israel*. Here we see that Jacob used the new name that had been given to him by the Lord when he wrestled with the Lord. God had brought Jacob back to this land in peace and had given him a new name. Jacob had said in his vow that the Lord would be his God if God brought him back in peace. We saw that the Lord changed the attitude of Esau and he had spoken kindly to Jacob when they met. As a result, we see here that Jacob was back in the land and he built an altar to the Lord. The name given to this altar showed that Jacob recognized the true and living God as his God. Over the many years that Jacob had been away from the land of his fathers, the Lord had protected and preserved him. Jacob had known God throughout this time but now he was ready to worship God and begin to build a personal relationship with Him.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that true worship means that after we come to the Father through Christ, we want to build a personal relationship with the Father and develop true fellowship with Him. 1 John 1:7 says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand what it means to have true fellowship with the Father.

Jacob Learned Shechem had Raped Dinah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop true fellowship with the Father. Jacob built his first recorded altar and had a desire to really make the Lord his God. However, in this topic we will see what happened in the family of Jacob while they were located near the city of Shechem.

Genesis 34:1-4 says, “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her. His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, ‘Get me this young woman as a wife.’” Dinah had been born to Leah in addition to the six sons that the Lord had given to her. One day she decided to go and get acquainted with some of the young women from the city of Shechem. However, that decision had serious consequences for Dinah and for her entire family.

Jacob had bought the piece of land from the children of Hamor where he had pitched his tent. Genesis 33:19 says, “And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money.” The son of Hamor was named Shechem. He was considered the prince of the country. He saw Dinah, took her and violated her. The word translated “took” means *to take or to seize*. The word translated “violated” means *to seize, to afflict or to defile*. The word is used twice in Exodus 22:22-24 where we read, “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, *and* they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” In these verses we see that the word afflict is used both times. As a result, the words used made it very clear that he took her by force and raped her.

However, in the process of raping her he was strongly attracted to her and decided that he would like to marry her. In fact, we see that he fell in love with her and even spoke tenderly to her. Then he told his father, “Get me this young woman as a wife.” Two different words are translated “young woman” in verses three and four. The word used in verse 3 is also used in 2 Kings 5:2 where we read, “And the Syrians had gone out on raids, and had brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman’s wife.” Shechem used a different word when he talked to his father as he used a word that means a girl of marriageable age. This may indicate that Dinah was just barely the marriageable age that was allowed in that culture.

Genesis 34:5-10 says, “And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter. Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came. Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, a thing which ought not to be done. But Hamor spoke with them, saying, ‘The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife. And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves. So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it.’” In these verses, we see the reaction of the family of Jacob to the rape of their daughter and sister. Jacob heard about what had happened to his daughter while his sons were out with the livestock in the field. As a

result, he did not say or do anything until he could talk with his sons.

Hamor went to speak to Jacob because of the desire of his son to marry the daughter of Jacob. In the meantime, the brothers of Dinah came in from the field when they heard about what had happened to Dinah. We see that four words or phrases described what they thought and felt. The first word is grieved. This word speaks of physical pain or emotional sorrow. This is the word that was used of God in Genesis 6:6 where we read, “And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.” In this verse, we see that the sins of mankind caused deep sorrow in the heart of God. This was the kind of sorrow that the brothers experienced that day. Second, the brothers were very angry. The word translated “very” means *very, exceedingly or greatly*. The word translated “angry” means *to stir up hot anger*. This is the word that is used in Genesis 31:36 where we read, “Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: ‘What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?’” Jacob was certainly very angry since it caused him to rebuke his father-in-law. That was the kind of anger stirred up in the brothers.

Third, we read that he had done a “disgraceful thing”. This same word is used when Ammon committed premeditated rape in 2 Samuel 13. In 2 Samuel 13:12-14 we read, “But she answered him, ‘No, my brother, do not force me, for no such thing should be done in Israel. Do not do this disgraceful thing! And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.’ However, he would not heed her voice; and being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.” This act brought great shame on Tamar but it made a fool of Ammon because it was so disgraceful. Fourth, they described what Shechem had done as “a thing which ought not to be done.” The four words and phrases together show that the brothers were extremely upset.

Meanwhile, Hamor had no understanding of the anger of the brothers. He was trying to convince them of all of the advantages of allowing his son to marry Dinah. He said that his son longed for their daughter and sister. He said that they could live together and make marriages with one another. He said that they could live in the land and trade in it and acquire possessions for themselves. We see that Hamor was doing his best to make a marriage sound good to Jacob and his sons. In contrast, Hamor and Shechem told the men of the city in Genesis 34:23, “‘...*Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us.’” However, the sons of Jacob were not convinced.

As a result, Shechem began to speak for himself. Genesis 34:11-17 says, “Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, ‘Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give. Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife.’ But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister. And they said to them, ‘We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us. But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people. But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone.’” Here we see that after Hamor spoke, Shechem then told them what he would do to marry their sister. Shechem offered to give whatever the father and brothers asked. The brothers were not deceived by the words of Hamor and Shechem. They were filled with anger and wanted to judge the city for what Shechem had done to their sister.

We see that the sons of Jacob spoke deceitfully. Simeon and Levi were probably the two who

spoke for the rest of the family. The brothers said that they could not allow their sister to be married to someone who was uncircumcised. They said that the only way that they would allow their sister to marry Shechem was to get all of the men of the city to be circumcised so that the men of their city would be like Jacob and his sons. The word translated “reproach” means *to place shame or disgrace on a person or a group of people*. In Genesis 17:14 the Lord had told Abraham, “...And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” The sons of Jacob twisted the meaning of circumcision so that they could deceive both Shechem and Hamor to get them to convince the other men of the city to be circumcised.

In order to deceive Hamor and Shechem, the brothers promised that if all of the men of the city were circumcised that then they would agree to let Shechem marry their sister. Then in the future they would allow the men of that city to marry their daughters and they would also marry the young women of the city and take them as wives. The brothers said that only if the men of the city agreed to this requirement would they be willing to continue to live near their city and intermarry so that they would become one people. Then the brothers also told the two men what would happen if the other men refused to be circumcised. They said that if the men refused their request, they would take Dinah and leave that area. Shechem had promised to pay whatever the men requested in order to marry Dinah. He did not realize that the request would include more than just money. However, we will see in our next topic that Hamor and Shechem did convince the men of the city to be circumcised so that he could marry Dinah.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why the sons of Jacob were so angry. Such anger can often lead to revenge. Several hundred years later in Deuteronomy 32:35a Moses wrote, “Vengeance is Mine, and recompense...” That verse was not written yet so at least the two brothers were ready to take immediate judgment not just on Shechem but on that entire city. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain what happens when we act out of anger.

Jacob Learned two Sons had Taken Revenge

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why the sons of Jacob became so angry at the sin of Shechem against their sister. In this topic, we will see how two of the brothers took revenge on the entire city because of the sin of Shechem.

Genesis 34:18-19 says, “And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor’s son. So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob’s daughter. He *was* more honorable than all the household of his father.” The sons of Jacob had told Hamor and Shechem that in order for him to marry Dinah after Shechem had raped her that they had to convince all of the men of the city to be circumcised. We see that the young man was eager to convince the men of the city to get circumcised immediately because he delighted in her. The word translated “delighted” means *to have emotional delight*. Shechem had strong emotional feelings for Dinah.

There is also a statement about the character of the family of Shechem. We are told that “He was more honorable than all the household of his father”. That statement does not mean that Shechem was an honorable young man. Rather it means that the rest of the household of Hamor was less honorable than Shechem. The Lord had told Abraham many years earlier in Genesis 15:16, “But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” In this verse, Abraham had completed his life, and Isaac, who was not even born at the time the Lord spoke to his father, was now approaching the end of his life. In Genesis 35:28-29 we read, “Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, *being* old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.” This death happened a few years after this statement was made about Shechem. Shechem had shown by his action of raping Dinah that he was following the sinful lifestyle of the nations that lived in the land of Canaan.

Genesis 34:20-24 goes on to say, “And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying: These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. *Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us.’ And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.” Hamor and Shechem returned to their city to talk to the men of the city. They knew that they had to convince the men of their city to be circumcised in order for Shechem to marry Dinah.

They began by telling the men of Shechem that Jacob and his sons were at peace with the men of the city. They had earlier bought the piece of land on which they were living from Hamor. Hamor encouraged the men of the city to let Jacob and his sons live in the land. He also said they should be allowed to trade in the land. He reminded the men of the city that the land had plenty of room for the family of Jacob. These words show us that Hamor told the men of the city exactly what those men wanted to hear. Hamor and Shechem also told the men of the city that they would be able to take the daughters of Jacob and his sons as wives and allow their own daughters to marry the various members of the family of Jacob. Here we see that Hamor and Shechem wanted to say whatever the men of the city wanted to hear so that the men of the

city would agree to be circumcised.

Only after telling the men of city of Shechem the benefits that they would receive by allowing Jacob and his family to settle near their city, did Hamor and Shechem mention the one requirement the sons of Jacob had mentioned. That was the fact that all of the men of the city be circumcised. They said that this requirement was necessary to get Jacob and his sons to agree to live near their city. Then Hamor and Shechem went on to suggest that the livestock, the property and the animals that presently belonged to Jacob and his sons would become the possession of the people of the city of Shechem. The first trick that Satan used to tempt Eve was to tell her about the pleasure she would get from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan never mentioned the long term consequences of satisfying herself. Here we see that Shechem used that same trick to convince the men of their city.

Then Hamor and Shechem suggested, “...Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us.” Their suggestion was followed by the men. Genesis 34:2 says, “And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.” This verse tells us that Hamor was the prince of the land so the men of the city looked to him as their leader. In addition, we see that Shechem had a strong influence on the men of the city probably because they considered him an honorable man. As a result, we see that all of the men of the city listened to them. Every male in the city was circumcised. Circumcision causes very little pain to an infant that has recently been born. However, for those who are adults, circumcision is very painful and it takes a period of at least several days to recover and the pain to lessen.

Genesis 34:25-31 says, “Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah’s brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem’s house, and went out. The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled. They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what *was* in the city and what *was* in the field, and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that *was* in the houses. Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, ‘You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.’ But they said, ‘Should he treat our sister like a harlot?’” Here we see what happened on the third day while all of men of the city were in great pain. Simeon and Levi came into the city while the men of the city were in great pain and unable to defend themselves. Then these two brothers took their swords and killed all of the men of the city so that none of the men were left alive.

Simeon and Levi then went to the houses of Hamor and Shechem, killed them and took Dinah from the house of Shechem and returned her to their home on the land that Jacob had purchased from Hamor. Then the other sons of Jacob also went with Simeon and Levi back into the city and saw that the men had all been killed because Shechem had defiled their sister. The word translated “plundered” in verses 27 and 29 means *to seize or take all of their possessions*. First, we see that they took their sheep, oxen and donkeys. That included both the animals that were in the city when they came and also those animals that were out in the fields. All of the animals of that city became the possessions of the sons of Jacob. Second, we see that the sons of Jacob took all of the wealth that was in the city. This would have included the gold, silver and anything else in the city that had any value. Third, the brothers started going from house to house and took their young children and wives as captives. Then they took everything of value that they found in the houses.

Jacob was upset but for the wrong reasons when he heard what had happened. Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, ““You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land.”” The word translated “troubled” means *to disturb or trouble*. The word translated “obnoxious” means *to make something stink or have a bad smell*. By using these words, Jacob told his sons that they had caused trouble for him and made his name like a bad smell. Jacob went on to say that his family was only a small group. Then he said that the rest of the Canaanites and Perizzites who lived in the land would gather together and come and fight against he and his family because the brothers had destroyed the city of Shechem and killed all of the men of that city. Jacob was upset because he expected that he and his entire household would be killed by the people of the land because there were very few of them to fight.

In contrast, Simeon and Levi had their whole thought on what Shechem had done to their sister and told their father, ““Should he treat our sister like a harlot?”” The word translated “harlot” means *to be a prostitute or harlot*. The word translated “treat” means *to make or do*. Shechem had satisfied his own sinful desires by treating a young girl just like she was a prostitute instead of a young girl who went to get acquainted with the other young girls that lived in the city. Genesis 34:1-2 says, “Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land. And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.” Shechem saw her alone, took her and raped her even though she was probably only about 14 or 15 years old at the time. That is why Simeon and Levi said that they had killed all the men of the city. They took revenge into their own hands and killed all of the men with their swords. However, they chose to commit one sin to judge another sin by taking revenge and also destroyed many others in the process.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that rape was already being treated as a very serious offence more than 4,000 years ago. We want to help them learn to explain that rape has consequences that often affect entire extended families for many years. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how this event affected an entire family and an entire city.

Jacob Renewed the Covenant at Bethel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that rape is a very serious offense that can affect entire extended families in addition to the one who was raped. In this topic, we are going to see that the Lord told Jacob that it was time for him to return to Bethel where he had seen the Lord in a dream.

Genesis 35:1-4 says, “Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.’ And Jacob said to his household and to all who *were* with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that *are* among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.’ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.” In these verses, we see that Jacob began to exercise real spiritual leadership in his family and lead them to separate themselves from the false idols that they had brought with them from Haran.

God had told Jacob while he was in Haran in Genesis 31:13, “...I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.” In the first verse here in chapter 35 we see that God told Jacob what he was to do now that he was back in the land. He was to return to Bethel and live there. In addition, he was to make an altar there to God. The Lord reminded Jacob that Bethel was the place where He had appeared to Jacob when Jacob fled from his brother Esau. Suddenly we see that Jacob begins to take real spiritual leadership in his family. First, he told his family that it was time for them to get rid of their foreign gods. He had taught them some things about the True and Living God but at the same time his family had also continued to worship their idols. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 says, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God...” True repentance is turning to God from idols and serving him.

Second, Jacob told his family to purify themselves. The word translated “purify” means *to be clean or to purify*. In these verses each person in the family of Jacob was to take a bath as an outward sign that they were turning from their idols and turning to the True and Living God. Third, they were to change their clothes. It is possible that some of their clothing was also associated with the worship of idols, particularly the earrings that were in their ears since they removed those as a part of changing their clothes. We see that Jacob buried both the idols and the earrings under the terebinth tree. Jacob also told his family that then they would go to Bethel and build an altar to God at Bethel. Jacob said that Bethel was the place where God had answered him during the time of his distress because of the fact that he was fleeing from his brother Esau. Jacob also explained to his family that God had been with him throughout the time since the time that he had seen the Lord in his dream and the Lord had spoken to him. Then the family gave their idols and the rings in their ears and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree.

Genesis 35:5-8 says, “And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob. So Jacob came to Luz (that *is*, Bethel), which *is* in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who *were* with him. And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother. Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below

Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.” To get to Bethel, Jacob and his family had to travel near other cities that had heard what the sons of Jacob had done to the city of Shechem. That could have produced anger and revenge. However, we see that the terror of God was on all those cities. This is the only place where the word translated “terror” is used in the Old Testament and it speaks of the supernatural terror that caused the people of the area to be so fearful that they were afraid to try and do anything to the family of Jacob.

When Jacob had been given the dream by God, Genesis 28:19 says, “And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.” Until this time, only the family of Jacob called this place Bethel so everyone else knew it by its old name of Luz. “Luz” means *almond tree* while “Bethel” means *house of God*. We see that Jacob built an altar there and this time called the place “El Bethel” which means *The God of the House of God*. We see that he used this name because that was where God had appeared to him when he fled from Esau. We also see that Isaac was near Bethel at that time because of the fact that, Deborah, the nurse of Jacob’s mother died and was buried near Bethel. Then the name of the place where she was buried was called “Allon Bachuth” which means *oak of weeping* because she was buried under an oak tree.

However, something else that was also very important in the life of Jacob happened to him at Bethel this time. We read that the Lord appeared to him again at Bethel. Genesis 35:9-15 says, “Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, ‘Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.’ So He called his name Israel. Also God said to him: ‘I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.’ Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him. So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.”

The Lord had changed the name of Jacob to “Israel” when the Lord wrestled with Jacob the night before Jacob met Esau. That name means *God rules or God prevails*. However, except when he met his brother Esau, Jacob continued to act like his old name nearly all of the time. Here we see that the first thing the Lord said to Jacob when He appeared to him this second time at Bethel was “Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.” However, we see that a change had happened in the life of Jacob. He had begun to take the spiritual leadership in his family. He told them to give him their idols and he had buried them. His family had also taken a bath and changed their clothes. Then he had come to Bethel and had called on the name of the Lord. As a result, when God appeared to him He reminded Jacob that his name was now Israel. This time God told Jacob, “Your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name.” This time God told Jacob that he should not be called by his old name any longer. Jacob had done what God had told him to do when he returned to Bethel and built an altar. Now it was time for him to be called by his new name as he was beginning to let God rule in his life.

However, the Lord did more than just remind Israel of his new name. The Lord also renewed the promise that had originally been given to Abraham. First, God reminded Israel that “I am God Almighty.” That name points out the fact that God is the One who is all powerful. As a result, He is the One who can do whatever He chooses. Then he told Israel, “Be fruitful and multiply.” Israel already had eleven sons and would have one more in the future. However, his descendants would continue to multiply. Even today in spite of the efforts of many rulers and nations to try to destroy his descendants, they continue to multiply. Then God said, “...a

nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you.” Even though his descendants have been scattered throughout the world, they have had a great impact on many nations throughout the world. God also told Israel, “...kings shall come from your body.” That has happened also. In fact, One descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ, will rule forever.

God also reminded Israel of the promise of the land as we read, “The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.” In spite of the fact that most of the descendants have been out of that land for more than 2,500 years, in the last century the Lord has begun to bring part of those descendants back into that land. God has certainly been faithful to the promises that He made to Israel that day. Then God went from the place where He had appeared and reminded Israel of his new name and passed the promises made to Abraham and Isaac on to him.

We also see the response of Jacob (Israel) after the Lord had talked to him and went up from him that day. The fact that the verse says that the Lord went up from him probably indicates that in some way he saw the Lord leave him to return to heaven. Jacob set up a pillar in the place where the Lord had talked with him. Many years earlier when Jacob was fleeing from Esau, he set up a pillar and poured oil on it. This time he did two things. First, he poured a drink offering on the pillar of stone that he set up. Then he poured oil on the pillar. A drink offering was usually offered along with other offerings. This is one time when it was offered alone. Exodus 29:41 says, “And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD.” In this verse, we see that the evening sacrifice also included a grain offering and a drink offering as a sweet aroma to the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the purpose of the drink offering was to be a sweet aroma to the Lord. Jacob offered this offering to the Lord when he returned to Bethel in obedience to the Lord. In this way, his offering of a drink offering was an offering that was pleasing to the Lord as it showed his submission to the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain why Jacob offered a drink offering to the Lord.

The Deaths of Rachel and Isaac

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the drink offering Jacob offered to the Lord was pleasing to the Lord because it showed his submission to the Lord. In this topic, we will learn about the consequences of the sin of Reuben and the deaths of Rachel and Isaac.

Genesis 35:16-20 says, “Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored *in childbirth*, and she had hard labor. Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, ‘Do not fear; you will have this son also.’ And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem). And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is* the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.” After spending a period of time in Bethel, Jacob and his family continued their journey toward the place where Esau lived because Jacob had promised Esau that he would visit him.

When Joseph had been born to Rachel, she had said in Genesis 30:24, “So she called his name Joseph, and said, ‘The LORD shall add to me another son.’” She had become pregnant a second time and when they were near Ephrath went into labor for childbirth. In her case, she had hard labor. That meant that it was difficult labor and we see what happened as a result. The midwife said to Rachel, “Do not fear; you will have this son also.” The midwife was right and the baby was born. However, the hard labor also led to the death of Rachel as we see that she died. In her last recorded words, Rachel gave the name “Ben-Oni” to the baby which means *son of my sorrow*. However, we see that Jacob named his final son “Benjamin” which means *son of my right hand*. Since Benjamin was several years younger than any of the other brothers, he had the opportunity to spend more time with Jacob while the other brothers were taking care of the flocks. The name of the place where she died was close to Ephrath. Ephrath is another name for Bethlehem. “Ephrath” means *place of fruitfulness* while “Bethlehem” means *house of bread*.

Jacob set up a pillar on the grave of Rachel. That pillar was still there at the time Moses wrote the book of Genesis. That meant the people of Israel saw that grave after they conquered the land of Canaan. 1 Samuel 10:2 says, “...When you have departed from me today, you will find two men by Rachel’s tomb in the territory of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say to you, ‘The donkeys which you went to look for have been found. And now your father has ceased caring about the donkeys and is worrying about you, saying, ‘What shall I do about my son?’”” Here we see that after the people of Israel conquered the land of Canaan several hundred years later, they were still aware of the place where Rachel was buried.

Genesis 35:21-26 says, “Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder. And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard *about it*. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve: the sons of Leah *were* Reuben, Jacob’s firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun; the sons of Rachel *were* Joseph and Benjamin; the sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s maidservant, *were* Dan and Naphtali; and the sons of Zilpah, Leah’s maidservant, *were* Gad and Asher. These *were* the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.” The tower of Eder was a shepherd’s watchtower near Bethlehem and means the tower of the flock. During the time of the Bible, it was common to build watchtowers near the vineyards or near the places where the flocks of sheep would often be taken to find grassy fields. As a result, this is an example of such a tower.

This type of tower was mentioned many years later as Micah 4:8 says, "...And you, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem."

While Israel was in the area of this tower, we see "...that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine..." One of the things we see in the Bible is that the Lord does not hide the sins of any individual. Instead, the Lord showed the long term consequences of those sins. Here we see that Reuben committed fornication with Bilhah, the concubine of his father. Bilhah was the maidservant of Rachel. When Rachel did not have children during the early years of her marriage to Jacob, she said to Jacob in Genesis 30:3-5, "So she said, 'Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear *a child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her.' Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son." Then Genesis 30:7 adds, "And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son." In these verses, we see that those two sons were Dan and Naphtali. Jacob heard about the fact that Reuben had gone into Bilhah and lay with her.

We see one of the consequences of that sin in Genesis 49:3-4 when Jacob spoke about what would happen to his sons in the future. Those verses say, "'Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled *it*—he went up to my couch.'" Here we see that Jacob said Reuben would not excel even though he was the first son of Jacob. In the following verses, we also see the consequences for Simeon and Levi because of the fact that they killed all of the men of the city of Shechem. Genesis 49:5-7 says, "'Simeon and Levi *are* brothers; instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place. Let not my soul enter their council; let not my honor be united to their assembly; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce; and their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.'" Here we see that the consequence of their sin was the fact that they would be scattered because of their anger and wrath. The Lord shows that sin always has consequences. We are then given the names of all of the sons of Jacob.

Genesis 35:27-29 says, "Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that *is*, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, *being* old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." Isaac had planned to give the blessing to Esau many years earlier because he had thought that he would soon die. Instead, Jacob had deceived his father and received the blessing with the result that Esau planned to kill Jacob. That was the reason why Jacob was forced to flee to the land of Padan Aram and to the city of Haran in that land. Instead of dying at that time, we see that Isaac continued to live for many years after that time. Genesis 25:26 says, "Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them." This verse tells us that Isaac was sixty years old when Esau and Jacob were born. As a result, Jacob and Esau were one hundred and twenty years old when their father died.

The fact that Rebekah is not mentioned after Jacob came back to the land probably meant that she died while Jacob was in Haran. In his travels Jacob finally came to the place where his father lived. Mamre was the name of a large grove of terebinth trees. Genesis 13:18 says, "Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are in* Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD." The city was already called Hebron during the time of Abraham. However, Kirjath Arba was another name that was given to Hebron during the time that the Israelites were in the land of Egypt. Joshua 14:15 says, "And the name of Hebron formerly was Kirjath Arba (*Arba was* the greatest man among the Anakim). Then the

land had rest from war.” Here we see that the reason for the name change was due to the fact that Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. Once Israel conquered the land the city became known as Hebron again.

Isaac breathed his last breath when he was 180 years old. This meant that Isaac lived for many years after Jacob had come back into the land of Canaan. Instead of dying soon after he gave the blessing, the Lord gave Isaac many more years for his life. The phrase “gathered unto his people” is used several times in the Old Testament to talk about death. This is illustrated in Genesis 49:33 says, “And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.” However, an earlier verse in that chapter gives an even greater significance to that phrase. Genesis 49:10 says, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.” This is an Old Testament prophecy about the coming of Christ. This phrase “gathered unto his people” may point to that future resurrection. This phrase is also used of Moses and Aaron in Deuteronomy 32:49-50 where we read, “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which *is* in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people...” At various places in the Old Testament we see that this hope of a future resurrection was understood in the Old Testament by those who followed the Lord.

We read that Isaac was old and full of days when he died. He had lived a long and full life. We also see that both Jacob and Esau were there to bury him. By this statement, we see that the brothers were together again at the time that they buried their father. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain about the hope that we have for the future that is found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Family Line of Esau

In the previous topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the resurrection is taught in both the Old Testament and New Testament. In fact, that hope was also taught by those who were not descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Job said in Job 19:25-27, “For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this *I know*, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How* my heart yearns within me!” That hope gives those who follow the Lord peace as they face death. In this topic, we will see that we are given the family line of Esau.

In Genesis 36:1-8 we read, “Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom. Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; and Basemath, Ishmael’s daughter, sister of Nebajoth. Now Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, and Basemath bore Reuel. And Aholibamah bore Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah. These *were* the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan. Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau *is* Edom.” Here we see the children that were born to Esau while he was still in the land of Canaan.

Esau moved from Canaan to Mount Seir during the time that Jacob was in Haran. Genesis 32:3 says, “Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.” Jacob also promised Esau that he would visit him in Seir. Genesis 33:14 says, “...Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir.” In this verse, we see that Jacob promised that he would come to Mount Seir to visit Esau sometime in the future. Then Genesis 33:16 adds, “So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.” The Bible does not record when Jacob made one or more visits to Esau in Seir. However, we saw in the previous topic that Esau came to Hebron at the time of the death of Isaac so they saw one another again at that time.

The north edge of the land of Edom begins at the south end of the Salt Sea (today the Dead Sea). That meant that the north edge of the land of Edom was only about 30 miles from the city of Hebron. We see that the reason that Esau had moved to Edom was due to the fact that their flocks were so large that it would have been impossible for them to find adequate food for all of their cattle and sheep if they lived close together. Both Jacob and Esau had accumulated a large amount of animals and other possessions. Just the gift of animals that Jacob had given to Esau showed that because the Lord had blessed Jacob, he had gained many animals. Genesis 32:13-15 says, “So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.” Just this gift gave Esau 580 additional animals. To give that many animals showed that the Lord had blessed Jacob with a huge number of animals.

We go on to read about the family of Esau. Genesis 36:9-19 says, “And this *is* the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. These *were* the names of Esau’s sons: Eliphaz

the son of Adah the wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz. Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife. These *were* the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

These were the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon. And she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah. These *were* the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn *son* of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz, Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, *and* Chief Amalek. These *were* the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. They *were* the sons of Adah. These *were* the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah. These *were* the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom. These *were* the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. And these *were* the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife: Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, and Chief Korah. These *were* the chiefs *who descended* from Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah. These *were* the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these *were* their chiefs." We see a key statement about Esau in these verses. We see that he became the father of the Edomites and they settled in Mount Seir.

Mount Seir is actually a range of mountains that extends from the area to the south and east of the Salt Sea to what today is called the Gulf of Aqaba. That area became known as Edom. God gave that area to Esau and his descendants because Deuteronomy 2:4-5 says, "And command the people, saying, 'You *are about to* pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. Therefore watch yourselves carefully. Do not meddle with them, for I will not give you *any* of their land, no, not so much as one footstep, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau *as* a possession.'" Later Joshua told the people of Israel in Joshua 24:4-5, "To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. To Esau I gave the mountains of Seir to possess, but Jacob and his children went down to Egypt. Also I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to what I did among them. Afterward I brought you out." These two statements were made to Israel when Israel was ready to pass through Edom on the way from Egypt to Israel and later when Joshua came to the end of his life.

Genesis 36:20-30 says, "These *were* the sons of Seir the Horite who inhabited the land: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These *were* the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom. And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister *was* Timna. These *were* the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam. These *were* the sons of Zibeon: both Ajah and Anah. This *was the* Anah who found the water in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon. These *were* the children of Anah: Dishon and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah. These *were* the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. These *were* the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan. These *were* the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran. These *were* the chiefs of the Horites: Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibeon, Chief Anah, Chief Dishon, Chief Ezer, and Chief Dishan. These *were* the chiefs of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir." In these verses we see that Seir was the name of the person and his descendants that had lived in that area before Esau and his family arrived. We see that they were considered Horites. The name "Horite" originally meant *cave dweller*. As a result, these people were probably given that name when they first moved into that region because of the fact that they lived in caves rather than immediately building houses. We are given a list of their leaders.

Finally we are given a list of the kings that ruled the land of Edom before there were any kings ruling in the land of Israel. From the time that Esau moved to that area and it became known as Edom, until the time that Saul became the first king of Israel, was a period of about 800 years. This included the time of more than 400 years that the nation of Israel developed from the

family of Jacob to a nation of more than 2,000,000 people. In addition, it also included the 40 years that Israel was in the wilderness plus the period of time during which the events recorded in the books of Joshua and Judges.

Genesis 36:31-43 says, “Now these *were* the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel: Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah. And when Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place. When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place. And when Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who attacked Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. And the name of his city *was* Avith. When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place. And when Samlah died, Saul of Rehoboth-*by-the-River* reigned in his place. When Saul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. And when Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died, Hadar reigned in his place; and the name of his city *was* Pau. His wife’s name *was* Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. And these *were* the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their families and their places, by their names: Chief Timnah, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth, Chief Aholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon, Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar, Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram. These *were* the chiefs of Edom, according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. Esau *was* the father of the Edomites.” Here we see that Esau was the father of Edom so the names of the kings during this period would have been descendants of Esau. This gives a summary of the family of Esau and the primary way we will learn more about his descendants will be when they have conflict with Israel and are mentioned in different places throughout the Old Testament.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children be able to understand and explain that when the name of the nation of Edom appears in other passages in the Old Testament that it is the nation that descended from Esau. This also is a part of the fulfillment of the prophecy made to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand and explain these things.