

Bible Stories

JACOB

Genesis 32:26

June 18, 2022

Every story has a beginning – today we find ourselves in **Genesis 25**.

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. 20 years later, after much prayer, Rebekah was finally *“with children”*. My Jewish Bible gives us an early insight of things to come:

“The children fought with each other inside her so much that she said, ‘If it’s going to be like this, why go on living?’ So, she went and inquired of Adonai.”

- **Genesis 25:23-26** - The LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." ²⁴ When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. ²⁵ The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. ²⁶ After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

These boys could not have been more different.

- Esau was a man’s man. He was rugged and outdoorsy, “a skillful hunter, a man of the open country” – He was daddy’s favorite - Isaac loved him best.
- Jacob, on the other hand, was a quiet, stay-at-home type, who preferred to look after the sheep – He was mamma’s favorite – Rebekah loved him best.

So, we have Esau, the hairy hunter, Jacob the manipulative home body and blatant favoritism This can only end well!!

Jacob finally began to live up to his name, *“heel grabber”*, when one day, Esau came into camp, *“starving”* after a long day of hunting:

- **Genesis 25:30-34** - He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." ³² "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" ³³ But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So, he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So, Esau despised his birthright.

Jacob was a manipulator, no doubt, but by selling his birthright, Esau showed how little he valued it = one bowl of soup.

When Esau was 40 yrs. old, he married 2 Hittite women – this was a source of much grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

37 years went by ---- Isaac was now 137 years old. He was blind and thinking he was about to die, decided the time had come to bestow the birthright blessing – on Esau.

Isaac knew what God had told Rebekah, that the younger would rule over the older, but he loved Esau more, so he sent Esau out – on the QT – to bring home the birthright meal – intending to go around the express will of God.

Rebekah overheard and put her own plan into action **{Genesis 27:6-30}** – Cook up a good meal and conceal Jacob’s identity, thereby, *“helping”* God by making sure the prophecy would come true.

Jacob, for his part, did as his mother instructed – actively participating in the great deception – stealing what rightfully belonged to his brother.

He deceived his father 4 times:

- By dressing as Esau
- By claiming to be Esau
- By concealing his identity with goat hair
- By confirming that he was, indeed, Esau when Isaac asked him point blank, *“Are you really Esau?”*.

Well, it worked. Isaac was completely deceived and bestowed the birthright blessing on Jacob.

What did Esau get? Nothing.... Bupkis.... Zippo.... Nada.

- **Genesis 27:34-37** - When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me too, my father!" ³⁵ But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." ³⁶ Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?" ³⁷ Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?"

The Result

Esau hated Jacob and planned to kill him.

Jacob ran away *"to find a wife from among his mother's people"* and would not return for 20 years – he would not see his beloved mother again.

In those 20 years Jacob – the manipulator and deceiver – would, himself, be deceived, manipulated and taken advantage of.

He would end up with 2 wives and 2 concubines – even though he only really loved 1 of them.

In 7 years these 4 women would have 12 children {11 sons and 1 daughter – Joseph being the youngest}. As we will discover, this too, can only end well!!

At the end of 20 years, Jacob, having had enough of his father-in-law's shady tactics, decided {with God's instruction} to head for home – doing so in a sneaky / shady way - under the cover of darkness, while Laban was out of town.

When Laban eventually caught up with him, he accused Jacob of deception for leaving without notifying him first and of stealing some household idols {which Rachel actually took, but will lie about having}.

Turning Point

After Jacob and Laban parted ways, the past came crashing in on Jacob.

He sent word to Esau that he was coming home and Esau responded with an army.

In great fear, Jacob divided his family and possessions into 2 groups and then he prayed:

- **Genesis 32:9-12** - Then Jacob prayed, "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, 'Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,' ¹⁰ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. ¹¹ Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. ¹² But you have said, 'I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted.'"

Then Jacob sent gifts ahead – thinking to appease Esau.

Finally, the night before the dreaded meeting, Jacob sent his family across the Jabbok River, leaving him alone and defenseless. Now scripture only tells us that Jacob and a man wrestled until daybreak. How do you think this started? The man jumped out from behind a bush or casually walked out of the darkness and asked, *"do you want to wrestle?"* No doubt Jacob was jumpy. He was alone in the dark about to face an angry, vengeful brother and 400 of his closest friends. He was on the verge of losing everything..... Truth be told, all the man would have had to do was tap Jacob on the shoulder – fight or flight would have taken over.

Regardless, the wrestling match lasted all night – in fear and desperation Jacob simply refused to quit – it was a stalemate..... Or was it?

- **Genesis 32:25-28** - When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

Clearly, this *"Man"* – who had the power to dislocate Jacob's hip with a simple touch – could have cleaned Jacob's clock without breaking a sweat. So why pull an all-nighter? For whose benefit was this *"Wrestle Mania"* main event?

- ²⁶ Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. ²⁸ Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."

Jacob's 20-year struggle was over. The struggle with his past. The struggle with his future. The struggle with God of his father's. He finally found the peace and forgiveness he desperately longed for. Whatever happened now, Jacob knew that he was right with God.

What do we do with this story?

This family really does put the *“fun”* in dysfunctional.....

Isaac was a liar, showed favoritism and was sneaky.

Rebekah showed favoritism and instigated a deception.

Esau was well, Esau. He wanted the perks of the birthright, but not the responsibility.

Jacob was a coveter, manipulator and deceiver.

Laban was a deceiver, manipulator and a user.

Rachel was a thief and a liar.

Wow, wow, wow..... and yet, through it all, **God remained faithful** to the promises He'd made – first to **Abraham**:

- **Genesis 12:1-2** - The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
- **Genesis 15:5-7** - He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars-- if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. ⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it."

Than to Isaac:

- **Genesis 26:24** - That night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham."

Than to Jacob:

- **Genesis 28:12-15** - He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
- **Genesis 31:3** - Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

God **IS** faithful.

You and I? Not so much.

We make all sorts of promises – that we never keep.

We manipulate.

We deceive.

We try to *“help”* God along.

And, like Jacob, we experience the consequences of our choices, yet despite what we **DO**.... God **IS** faithful.

GOD.... IS.... FAITHFUL....

Until next time!!