

Name _____

The Story of Jacob

Use your Bible to answer the following questions about Jacob.

Abraham and Sarah had a son named Isaac. When Isaac was 40 years old, he married a woman named Rebekah (Gn 25:20). She became pregnant with twins. The first to be born had skin that was colored red(dish) (Gn 25:25) and he had a lot of hair (Gn 25:25) all over his body. He was named Esau. When his brother Jacob was born, he came out holding Esau's heel (Gn 25:26).

Esau became a skillful hunter (Gn 25:27) while Jacob remained a simple man who stayed among the tents. Of the 2 sons, Isaac preferred Esau (Gn 25:28) while his wife preferred Jacob (Gn 25:28). Once Jacob was cooking some stew and Esau came in from the field exhausted from hunting. He begged Jacob for some of the stew but Jacob would not let Esau eat until he sold him his right as firstborn/birthright (Gn 25:31) as the firstborn son (a guarantee of a position of honor and a greater inheritance). Esau was so desperately hungry that he did so.

When Isaac was old and near death he had lost his eyesight (Gn 27:1). He called for his son Esau and told him to go hunting for some food and then to prepare a meal for him so that he (Isaac) could give Esau his blessing (Gn 27:4). Isaac's wife listened in on the conversation and came up with a plan to trick Isaac. She told Jacob to take 2 goats from the flock so that she could prepare a meal for Isaac. Jacob would then bring the meal to Isaac and ask for his blessing, pretending to be Esau. Jacob was worried, however, that Isaac would feel that his arm had no hair (Gn 27:11) and would know it was not Esau. Jacob put on some of Esau's clothes and his mother put goatskins (Gn 27:16) on his arms and neck so that they would feel like Esau's rougher, hairier skin. When Isaac reached out to feel his son's arms and felt the rough, hairy skin, he was fooled into thinking it was Esau and he offered his blessing, not knowing he was giving it to his younger son, Jacob. When Esau returned and learned of his brother's deception he was furious and demanded his father's blessing. Isaac explained that he had already given his blessing to Jacob and that the words could not be taken back. For years, Esau held a grudge (Gn 27:41) against his brother Jacob.

Sometime later, Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway/ladder (Gn 28:12) reaching from the ground up to heaven on which angels (Gn 28:12) were traveling up and down. God spoke to him in the dream and told him that he was the God of Abraham and Isaac (Gn 28:13) and he repeated the promise he made to Abraham that the land he was standing on would be given to him and his descendants and that, through his descendants, all the families of the earth would find blessing (Gn 28:14) This story is often referred to as “Jacob’s Ladder” and teaches us that God reaches out to us to make a connection (a covenant) between heaven and earth.

Jacob then got a taste of his own medicine. He went to work for his mother’s brother Laban (Gn 29:10) and asked his uncle if he could marry his younger daughter Rachel. They agreed that if Jacob worked for him for seven (Gn 29:18) years, he could marry Rachel. After the agreed upon time, however, Jacob’s uncle arranged for his older daughter Leah (Gn 29:25) to wear a heavy veil during the wedding to fool Jacob into thinking he was marrying Rachel. When Jacob discovered that he had been deceived, he was heartbroken because he wanted to marry Rachel. Since in those times, men often married more than one woman, Jacob’s uncle agreed to allow Jacob to marry Rachel as well in return for seven (Gn 29:27) more years of work!

Years later, Jacob was told that his estranged brother Esau was on his way to meet him. Jacob was frightened that Esau would kill him because of the way Jacob had deceived him of their father’s blessing. Jacob prayed to God that his brother would not kill him. That night, a mysterious man came and wrestled (Gn 32:25) with Jacob through the night until daybreak. The man could not defeat Jacob so he injured Jacob’s hip (Gn 32:26), dislocating it at the socket. The man then pleaded to go but Jacob insisted that the man give his blessing. The man agreed but told Jacob that he would no longer be known as Jacob but as Israel (Gn 32:29). This became the name of all of Jacob’s descendants. Jacob and Esau met and, to Jacob’s surprise, Esau greeted him with kindness. The mysterious man is thought of as an angel.

Jacob (Israel) was the father of twelve (Gn 35: 22) children after whom the tribes of Israel were named.