

BIBLE CHARACTER SERIES

SUBJECT: JACOB

TITLE: A MAN CALLED JACOB

TEXT: Genesis 25-37

INTRODUCTION. In our series of messages on major characters of the Bible we have looked at Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac, all interesting individuals who played a major role in the Lord's plan for mankind. We now come to one of the most colorful personalities in all the Bible, or maybe in all human history. His name is Jacob, and the name itself is colorful enough. It means heel grabber, denoting one who follows another to trip him up. I think we shall see that the name fits the man.

Jacob is a good example of the two conflicting natures in heart of a believer. He was, at the same time, good and - well, not so good. There was, well into his maturity, a constant battle raging between the influence of good and evil within the man. But in spite of that, Jacob was the instrument through which God chose to continue His Abrahamic Covenant, which promised: (1) a great name for Abraham; (2) descendants beyond number; (3) a Land of Promise for his descendants; and (4) One of his descendants who would be a blessing to the nations of the world. In other words, Jacob fit into a special niche in the Messianic Covenant. In case an uninformed person should read only the first part of the Scriptural account of the life of Jacob he or she might wonder if the Lord had made the best choice in the person through whom He would fulfill his covenant with Abraham. Of course there may be other times when one might question the Lord's choice of a servant at an early point in that person's life. When Yahweh called an eighty years old shepherd out in the wilderness of Sinai in Midian, the man called Moses protested, "Lord, I am not eloquent" (not enough for that task). When He called Jeremiah and told him that He had set him aside for the office of a prophet unto Judah, the man we know as the weeping prophet, offered the excuse, "I am but a youth." And then there was a man called Paul - but you know that story.

God made the covenant, which we know as the Abrahamic Covenant (which continues the Messianic Covenant of Genesis 3), and the Lord continued it through Isaac, who was himself a son of promise, born to Sarah who was well beyond child bearing age. Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob, and the Lord chose to continue His Covenant through Jacob. Jacob may seem like an unlikely choice to us today, but we can be sure the Lord knew what he was doing. We will consider several events in the life of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. The Jews today claim Abraham as their father, but stress that their ancestry goes back to Abraham through Jacob (Israel) and not Isaac. Arabs claim Abraham as their father, but through Ishmael, or through Esau. Now, we will take a look at those twins, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah.

I. WE WILL FIRST COMPARE JACOB WITH HIS BROTHER ESAU, Gen. 25:19-24.

A. Rebekah Gave Birth to Twin Boys, Genesis 25:19-26.

Abraham was 100 years old when he fathered Isaac (Gen. 21:5), and Isaac was 40 years old when

his father Abraham sent a trusted servant back to Haran to find a wife for Isaac from among his kinsmen (Gen.24). The servant asked the God of Abraham to help him identify the person he should contact as a possible wife for Isaac. As he was praying a very special young lady appeared at the well where the servant was praying for a sign: "give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. (13) I am standing here at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water. (14) Let the girl to whom I say, 'Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,' and who responds, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also' – let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. By this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master." (Gen. 24:12-14) Did the Lord hear his prayer? You know He did.

(15) Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah – daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor – coming with a jug on her shoulder. (16) Now the girl was very beautiful, a young woman who had not known a man intimately. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up. (17) Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me have a little water from your jug."

(18) She replied, "Drink, my lord." She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. (19) When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I'll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink." (20) She quickly emptied her jug into the trough and hurried to the well again to draw water. She drew water for all his camels (21) while the man silently watched her to see whether or not the Lord had made his journey a success." (Gen 24:12-21, HCSB)

Abraham instructed his servant to (1) go to Paddan-aram to find a wife for Isaac; (2) he was not to take Isaac away from Canaan, and (3) he must not take a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites.

The Lord controlled the circumstances in such a way that he would know that (Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan-aram and sister of Laban the Aramean was the one the Lord had chosen for a wife for Isaac." (Gen. 24:24ff)

When Isaac was born Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90 years old. Sarah died when she was 127 years old Gen. 23:1) and Isaac grieved deeply for his mother. Three years later, when Isaac was 40 years old he and Rebecca were married (Gen. 25:20), so one might assume they would welcome their promised child into the world within a year or two. That didn't happen. Isaac waited 20 years for the promised son to be born, but they were still childless.

(21) Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord

heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. (22) But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. (23) And the Lord said to her: Two nations are in your womb; two people will [come] from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger. (24) When her time came to give birth, there were indeed twins in her womb. (25) The first one came out red-looking, covered with hair like a fur coat, and they named him Esau. (26) After this, his brother came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when they were born." (Gen 25:19-26, HCSB, bold added by this writer)

From the womb of Rebekah came two very different sons, each of whom would become the head of a new nation. One writer offers the following commentary:

"The parents observed the strange situation, and in view of God's oracle they commemorated the event by giving them appropriate names.

"The first of the twins was red and hairy, like a little animal, so they named him Esau. The mention of "red" anticipated the future rugged nature of Esau (vv. 27-34).

"Fascinating wordplays were used to describe the first twin. The name Esau (?e⁻s'a⁻w) has a loose connection with the word "Seir" (s'e⁻i[^]r), the early name for Edom to the southeast of the Dead Sea, where Esau later lived (32:3; 36:8). The Hebrew word "red" ('ad⁻mo[^]ni[^]) is related to the word "Edom" ('e[?]d⁻o[^]m; cf. 25:30); and "hairy" (s'e⁻?a⁻r) is similar to "Seir." Those words were carefully chosen to portray in the lad the nature of Edom, a later arch rival of Israel." [Bible Knowledge Commentary, after this, BKC].

B. Yahweh Affirmed the Covenant with Isaac (Gen. 26:23-25).

Abraham and Sarah had to wait longer for the child the Lord promised them. Now, the Lord appears to Isaac and assures him that He has not forgotten His covenant. We may wonder why it took so long for the Lord to fulfill His promise to Abraham or to Isaac. The answer to that question is as simple as it is complicated. God is sovereign. He is all powerful, all knowing, and everywhere present at the same time. We may have time restraints placed on us but God does not. First, He was in no hurry. Second, He was in complete charge. It would happen according to his Will.

(23) From there he went up to Beer-sheba, (24) and the Lord appeared to him that night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your offspring because of My servant Abraham." (25) So he built an altar there, called on the name of Yahweh, and pitched his tent there. Isaac's slaves also dug a well there." (Gen 26:23-25, HCSB)

Isaac had learned from his father, as well as from the Lord. Like his father, Isaac received a visit from the Lord and then “he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord.”

C. The Scripture Reveals Certain Facts about Esau.

1. Esau and Jacob were twins. As the first born son, even in the case of twins, brought great honor and many privileges. Esau was first born son of Isaac, which put him in line for the certain blessings, especially with reference to the Abrahamic Covenant. As we shall see a little further along, there were rules that governed the way people lived, including duties and privileges that were not totally aligned with the Law that was given at Sinai. However, many of these advantages would be included in the Mosaic Law. Laws of the day, like the Sister-Wives contracts would not be included in the Mosaic Law.

2. He was a hunter who was skilled in the use of the sword and bow. Those were not unusual skills for the time, of course. I grew up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta and my father, two brothers, and I spent a lot of time in the woods, usually but not always on our land. Most of the men in our area hunted and knew something about guns. Some were especially skilled in the use of shotguns and rifles. However, when my older son John took me to see a renown marksman fire revolvers at a rifle range, I realized that I was no expert. Esau was skilled and probably had a reputation his brother never enjoyed. However, man often permits personal interests to get between himself and the Lord. I have asked from the pulpit, “What is more important to you on the Lord’s Day than the Lord?” If people would answer honestly we might hear things like: baseball, football, hunting, fishing, the mall, eating out, travel, or resting.

3. Esau’s animal appetite ruled his life. It wasn’t just a matter of his hunting because most men would have hunted for meat for their families. However, on one occasion he came home so exhausted and hungry that he was about to pass out, and his brother took advantage of the circumstances. This experience underscores what we may well have concluded about both brothers. Esau sold his birthright for a serving of stew.

(27) When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. (28) Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob. (29) Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. (30) He said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I’m exhausted.” That is why he was [also] named Edom.

(31) Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

(32) “Look,” said Esau, “I’m about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?”

(33) Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him.
(34) Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright. (Gen 25:27-34)

One commentary summarizes it like this:

"Jacob and Esau developed in accord with their initial characteristics. Esau, "the red man," was overcome by his physical appetite for red stew (v. 30) and sold his birthright. And Jacob, "the heel-grabber," cunningly overtook his brother and gained the birthright.

Though Jacob was not righteous, he was not in this instance deceptive. He was open and obvious, but he was unscrupulous. He must be given credit for knowing what was of value and going after it. Esau, however, was totally "godless" ("profane," kjv; Heb. 12:16) [The Bible Knowledge Commentary OT]

The Holman Bible Dictionary explains the birthright like this:

"Esau forfeited his birthright to his brother Jacob for the sake of a meal of lentil stew and bread (Gen. 25:29-34). The birthright consisted of the special privileges that belonged to the firstborn male child in a family. Prominent among those privileges was a double portion of the estate as an inheritance. If a man had two sons, his estate would be divided into three portions, and the older son would receive two. If there were three sons, the estate would be divided into four portions, and the oldest son would receive two. The oldest son also normally received the father's major blessing. Indeed, the Hebrew word for blessing (berakah) is virtually an anagram of the word that means both birthright and firstborn (bekorah). Legal continuation of the family line may also have been included among the privileges of the firstborn son. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 prohibited a father from playing favorites among his sons by trying to give the birthright to other than the firstborn." [Holman Bible Dictionary]

4. Polygamous marriages to heathens is an index to Esau's character (26:34-35). Marriage to people of other nations was not a major problem for pagans, but Abraham had commanded his servant not to let Isaac go back to Haran to take a wife and that he was not to marry a Canaanite wife. This command must have seemed strange or unique to a servant living in that time, several hundred years before the giving of the Mosaic Law. However, this was God's will and purpose for Isaac. After Sarah died, since the covenant had been fulfilled in the birth of Isaac, there was no law prohibiting Abraham from marrying Keturah, but those sons born to this union had nothing to do with the Abrahamic Covenant.

Esau's marriages to pagan women brought misery to his family. "When Esau was 40 years old, he took as his wives Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath

daughter of Elon the Hittite. They made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.” (Gen 26:34-35) Let us ask ourselves a question I am not sure I have heard anyone ask at this point: If not pagan women, at that time and place, to whom would Esau have married? There were no Christians living near him, or anywhere else. There were none. Israelites? There were none at the time. What could he have done? His grandfather Abraham married Keturah after Sarah died and there is no evidence that it corrupted him or turned him away from the Lord. Joseph married an Egyptian woman and they had two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh for whom two of the twelve tribes of Israel named. There is no evidence that Joseph was corrupted by his marriage to an Egyptian wife.

Esau apparently made little if any effort to convert those pagan women to faith in Yahweh. The pagan gods had a greater appeal to fallen man than to those who worshiped the one true God, the God of righteousness. This explains the continuous cycle of rebellion, judgment, repentance, deliverance, and commitment to the Lord that we see repeated over and over during the Period of the Judges. A judge would die and they would turn to pagan worship again. The fact that they were fertility cults was but one of the attractions.

5. Esau did not appreciate the significance of the birthright given to Abraham and Isaac. The covenant apparently did not mean to Esau what it meant to his father, grandfather, or brother. However, to say that Esau showed no appreciation for the birthright or the blessings of the first born son seems a bit of a stretch, as we shall see after Jacob, with their mother’s help, deceived him a second time. He definitely cared about the blessings after his brother and his mother deceived his father and stole the blessing of the first born son from him. His concern, however, was not godly.

6. Esau became the father of the Edomites. He was a horrible role model for his descendants. In the first place, he hated his brother. His descendants, the Edomites, were a cruel people who hated the descendants of Jacob (Israel). Some people have questioned God’s love for all people after reading in Malachi 1:2-3 that He hated Esau. The Scripture does say that, but that passage was written some one thousand years after Esau’s time. The passage is from Malachi, the last book in the Old Testament:

“Even so, I have loved you,” says the Lord. But you ask: “How have You loved us?” “Wasn’t Esau Jacob’s brother?” [This is] the Lord’s declaration. “Even so, I loved Jacob, (3) but I hated Esau. I turned his mountains into a wasteland, and [gave] his inheritance to the desert jackals.” (Mal 1:2-3) (HCSB)

Many have thought the Lord was saying that he hated Esau the man, but he was saying that He hated the nation of Edom, which was descended from Esau. See the introductory chapter to the Book of Amos and you will appreciate more just how vile and evil the Edomites were. They captured Israelites, bought them, or traded for them so they could sell them into slavery. There is no way the Lord had forgotten that the Edomites refused to permit the Children of Israel to pass through their region after their

Exodus from Egypt. They promised not to leave the road in order to pick their fruit and vegetables to eat along the way, and they promised not to make war against Edom. Still, they would not permit them to pass.

D. Now, Let Us Look at the Man Called Jacob.

1. Jacob was the younger of the twins born to Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac was the son of Abraham and therefore a key link in the Covenant, and the Abrahamic Covenant is the Messianic Covenant. God Galled Abraham to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and move to a distant land, which would be known in time as the Land of Promise and then in the time of Moses and Joshua as “the land flowing with milk and honey.” We know it as the Promised Land, or the land of Israel. Sarah, the wife of Abraham was well beyond child bearing age when Isaac was born, so his was a miraculous birth - he was a son of promise, whose birth and life may be seen as a promise of a greater One to come. Of course, by that I mean Jesus who was born to the virgin Mary.

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah, and they remained childless for a long time. “Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife because she was childless. The Lord heard his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived.” (Gen 25:21, HCSB) We are not told why the Lord let Rebekah go childless, just as He had let Sarah go childless until she was 90 years old. When it comes to His miracles, man’s age (or a woman’s age) could not prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose. Human beings may have time restrictions placed on them, but Yahweh does not.

Now, even though Isaac and Rebekah knew the covenant the Lord made with Abraham promised a son through whom His covenant would be fulfilled, Rebekah had no child. After Isaac prayed, asking the Lord for the promised son, Rebekah conceived and before long she was dealing with a very uncomfortable pregnancy: “But the children inside her struggled with each other, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” (Gen 25:22)

The Scripture reveals the Lord’s place in carrying out His covenant, and remember this: His covenant depends, not upon man’s ability to accomplish it, but upon God’s ability to fulfill it. Today, genuine born-again believers have entered into a new covenant with Him through Jesus Christ, who paid the supreme price for that covenant at Calvary. It is the Lord who maintains the covenant with believers, not the believer.

I have used a personal illustration to illustrate the point that God is not in my hand, I am in His hand. If my eternal salvation depended upon my ability to hold God in my hand I would be hopeless, but if He holds me in His hand that is another matter altogether. When my son John was four years old we lived in Bastrop, Louisiana and when my wife Rebekah got out of school on Friday we would drive to Monroe for a meal at a local steak house. There were not as many choices then as there is today. We

drive along Interstate 20 in West Monroe and see a long line of restaurants along what we call Restaurant Row. There were, however some good eating places back then, so we would go out to eat and then we would go to a department store and while my wife looked at things women look at, John and I would check out things in the sporting goods section, or look at toys. As long as we were in the store I would hold my index finger down and let John hold onto it. There were times when I let him break away from me, but I tried to keep him within easy reach. After pulling him out of a glass display cabinet, just before he tried to climb the glass shelves, I paid more attention to him.

While we were in the relative safety of the department store I let John hold onto me. However, as soon as we headed toward the door, I reached down and took his hand in mine - I never trusted his safety to his ability to hold onto my finger. When we came to the curb I would hold him up and set him down onto the street. As we walked across the street, if he stumbles I would simply hold him up until he got his feet back under him. When we came to a pot hole I would lift him up and set him down on the other side. When we came to the curb on the other side of the street I would lift him up and set him down on the other side. Any time there was a risk of his falling, or getting hit by an automobile, I held him and moved him to safety.

The Lord does that for us and most of the time we have no idea what He has done, and we may never know it. Sometimes we may see how His hand has protected us or blessed us, but many times we are not even aware of it. I can assure you, my sons John and Mark will have no memory of how I protected them when they were toddlers. However, their mother and I were watching over them. Our Lord is watching over us, just as He was watching over Isaac and Rebekah.

The Lord watches over mothers and fathers, not just children. When the twins struggled with each other in their mother's womb, and when Rebekah asked (or wondered), "Why is this happening to me?" She could not have known that Jacob, inside her womb, was holding onto the heel of Esau. At some point the Lord revealed to Isaac and Rebekah that she was carrying twins in her womb, and that the older would serve the younger (Gen. 25:23) When the twins were born, Esau was born first and Jacob was born holding onto the heel of Esau, hence his name, heel grasper, or one who follows another to trip him and make him fall.

2. Jacob grew into a shrewd, ambitious man. We are not given a lot of examples to support that statement, but I doubt that I am the first to reach that conclusion after reading what little we have recorded about his early life. To some, Jacob was a self-centered, self-serving mama's boy. However we may look at him, there was something of value in Rebekah's favorite son, and the main value was not in what he had done or was doing, but in what Yahweh was planning to do with him.

3. The youthful Jacob was selfish and deceitful, thanks to in part to his mother. Or was he? It certainly seems that way. However, we sometimes attribute character traits, attitudes and behavior to people with very little on which to base it. Most people, if they try, can think of a time when we have formed an on-the-spot opinion about a person only to find that we have misread him or her. I once met a group of girls in a hallway in my high school and after they passed I heard one of them say, "I can't stand him." I was surprised because I didn't know her. As I recall, I didn't even know her name. I may have spoken to her when she was a part of a group. As a Christian I was both surprised and a little bothered that anyone who did not know me would say such a thing. After that, I began to speak to her when I met her. I probably learned her name and was able to call her by name when I spoke. Within a few weeks she seemed to look forward to speaking to me. I have no idea who the girl was now. How had I offended this younger girl in high school? I finally concluded that she had not felt that I greeted her as a person. Of course, it is possible that her problem was that I was a Christian and everyone in high school probably knew that I was "going to make a preacher." I don't know how many times I heard that statement: "I hear you are going off to that seminary to make a preacher." One actually said, "I hear you are going off to that cemetery to make a preacher" (no joke!). I tried to explain that the Lord called me to preach the Gospel when I was 13 years old and I was licensed when I was 17. I was ordained when I was 19. College and seminary helped prepare me for the ministry.

That brings me back to the thought that led to this personal note: How do I know Jacob was self centered and selfish because of his mother's favoritism? It seemed to fit, possibly because I often heard someone say that my Great Aunt Ruthie favored Little Joe, while my Great Uncle Joe favored Audrey. I thought that was unfair and if that was unfair, what about the favoritism shown by Isaac to Esau and that shown by Rebekah to Jacob? I probably heard pastors make statements to that effect when I was young, and some of my Old Testament professors may have expressed the same opinion when I was in college and seminary. I know I have made comments about the Isaac and Rebekah in an effort to discourage favoritism for one child or another in the home. I still discourage that attitude as strongly as ever, but I have had to reconsider the circumstances surrounding the family life of Isaac and Rebekah. But, why would I question my earlier opinion? Isn't it obvious that Jacob cheated his brother Esau out of his blessing and his birthright?

Before Esau and Jacob were born the Lord revealed something to Rebekah which we should not overlook. I mentioned it a little earlier: "Two nations are in your womb; two people will [come] from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger." (Gen 25:23) When Rebekah learned that Isaac was about to confer the blessing upon Esau, is it just possible that Rebekah was remembering that revelation from the Lord? Was God being unfair to Esau, or did he through divine foreknowledge see what kind of person Esau might turn out to be? Is it possible that Rebekah could see that more clearly than Isaac?

4. In time Jacob developed a growing appreciation for the blessings of the Lord. At first he may have been more interested in temporal blessings. Did Rebekah motivate him to lust for the blessings that were rightfully Esau's, or did she simply know what the Lord had revealed to her. One might wonder whether if Jacob's primary interest was in spiritual blessings, or if he was motivated more by a lust for possessions, position and power.

II. NOW LOOK AT SOME COLORFUL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF JACOB.

A. Jacob Tricked Esau out of His Birthright (Gen.25:27ff).

1. This story is recorded in Genesis 25.

(27) When the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter, an outdoorsman, but Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home. (28) Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

(29) Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted. (30) He said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I'm exhausted." That is why he was [also] named Edom.

(31) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright."

(32) "Look," said Esau, "I'm about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?"

(33) Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him. (34) Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright." (Gen 25:27-34, HCSB)

We are not told here, or before this time, that Jacob had any designs on Esau's birthright. There is no indication that Jacob had been planning to cheat or deceive his brother before this time. We know Esau was an avid hunter of wild game, and since his father loved wild game he may have stayed out longer than he should have. Esau had apparently gone without food for some time and he was very hungry. We are not told whether or not he had killed any wild game but we do know that he returned from this hunt hungry, exhausted, and no doubt thirsty. He would have been able to quench his thirst since most people would have been camped near water. Food was another matter.

If you wonder how Esau could have been that desperate for food, you haven't been there. My experience concerned water, not food, but I have never forgotten it, nor have I forgotten how confused I had become before the day was over. When I was around 13 years old, two friends and I got together and decided that after church and our Sunday

meal we would walk down to Six Mile Lake. It was early summer, hot but not unbearable. After we arrived at the lake someone suggested that we might walk north up the lake, through the woods, just to see how things looked up there. At first, we were having a lot of fun doing what 13 year old boys do: laughing, talking, running, jumping logs, and in general burning energy.

At some point we were all thirsty and decided to turn around and go back. I realized that I would have to walk all the way back along the lake to the main road and then walk some distance west along the road to get home. I knew I was not too far from a smaller gravel road that ran north and south and intersected with the main east-west road that ran along our property line. I could cut across to the road, turn south and walk to the cross roads and from there either walk to the east to our long driveway and then on to our house. But, more than likely, since the field was dry, I would just cut across the field to our house and save some time. Thirteen year old boys think they are very logical, whatever that is. I walked east through the woods until I came to a cotton field that had not yet been planted. I expected that so I kept walking. Then I came to the rice farm. Fresh dykes and levies had been pulled, along with new ditches around disced rice fields. What a relief. I could see where I was walking, and even though rice farms were famous for their snakes: water snakes and other non-poisonous snakes, as well as cotton mouth moccasins, which can and will inflict serious health problems on you, in addition to making you hurt yourself. I wasn't too worried because it was a little early in the season for snakes, and because the disced land made it easy for me to see any potential hazard.

I continued walking, pleased that the fields had been disced and harrowed, so would not have to worry about big clods of dirt. This was in buckshot land, hard black land we would break (row up) in the Fall and let the Fall and Winter rains dissolve the big clods before Spring planting). I began walking along those levies and discovered that there was a problem. My feet buried up in the loose dirt every step. For a short distance that would not have mattered, but after a while I was exhausted. And I became aware of the fact that I was very thirsty. I walked, placing one foot ahead of the other for a long time, sinking, sliding climbing up and down those dykes and across the disced land. Before too long I was totally concentrated on the north-south road that would lead me straight to our place, and to the point at which I would cut across the field to our home and all the water I could drink.

I walked and walked, always looking for the road. And then it was there. I had walked it many times, but that could not have mattered less now. I finally arrived at the ditch and crossed it and came up into the road, turned left and focused on the Robert Bland house some distance away. This was a house I knew very well. It was at the intersection of this farm road and the main east-west road that ran from all the way across the delta from the hills, by our house, to US Highway 61. I knew it as well as anyone could have known it. I kept walking, looking at Robert Bland's house wishing I was drawing close to

it faster than I was.

Walking had ceased to be fun, it had become a burden. It seemed like I was aware of every step I took, but not to worry, I would soon be at Robert Bland's house and all I had to do was jump over the ditch at the crossroads and head across the field to our home about 150 yards away. There would be all the water I could drink. I walked on, and on. However, the closer I came to Robert Bland's house the more I realized that it didn't really look as much like the Bland house as it did the Joe Chapman house. I didn't understand why. I had visited the Chapman boys, Herbert Joe and Johnny Harold many times and I knew their house even better than I did the Bland house. It couldn't be the Chapman house, I refused to believe it. Then, I knew it! It was the Chapman house and I had been walking away from my home. I had to turn around and walk back over the same road I had been walking for some time. The longer I walked the more aware I was of my need for water. I couldn't think of anything else. Still, it seemed that the road was several times as long as it had been all my life.

My head began to clear up as I drew closer and closer to our farm and to our home. By the time I reached the intersection I knew one thing for sure: I was not about to turn left and walk to where our driveway intersected with the main road. It was about as far from the crossroads to the driveway and from the driveway to our house as it was across the unplanted cotton rows to our house. I set a direct course for our yard and when I reached it I discovered that my mother's cousin and his family were visiting and they all asked how I was doing. I spoke and headed straight for the water. At the moment, nothing else mattered. It took me a long time to imagine what Esau was thinking when he reached the tent of his family and smelled the stew his brother Jacob was cooking. He was not thinking clearly. All he wanted was something to eat. His brother Jacob was making a stew when Esau returned from a hunt exhausted, hungry, and no doubt thirsty. He requested a serving of the stew and Jacob, sensing his opportunity, said, "First sell me your birthright."

2. Jacob conned his brother out of his birthright. In order to have done that Jacob had know his brother very well. It would be interesting to know how many times Jacob had seen Esau come dragging in from a hunt totally exhausted. I have a number of questions here. For example, if so, how could Jacob have anticipated Esau's hunger? Was Jacob the camp chef who specialized in a special stew? Was his mother coaching him at this point? After all, the Lord had revealed to Rebekah that the older son would serve the younger. Had she told Isaac that? If so, why was he still determined to give the blessing of the first born to Esau? Had she told Jacob? If so, he may have been planning with his mother to cheat Esau out of the birthright, as he would cheat him out of the blessing later. I am convinced that one of the great blessings of Heaven may well be some Bible studies in which we will get the answers to some of our questions.

One question is answered in 25:28: "Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for wild

game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” This verse answers a primary question for us: Isaac and Rebekah definitely did play favorites. This must have created some unpleasant situations in the home from the time when the twins were young. Most readers will agree with the following observation:

“The tendency of Isaac to favor Esau and the preferential feelings of Rebekah for Jacob laid the foundation for much sorrow. Parental partiality is a tragedy in any home, as is parent-child alignment against a spouse.” [Believer’s Study Bible Notes]

Jacob, as the passage tells us, was cooking a pot of stew when he saw his brother Esau coming in from a hunt, exhausted from his effort, and hungry for food. As soon as he saw his brother Jacob he pleaded with him, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, because I’m exhausted.” Those words are followed by the historical note, “That is why he was also named Edom” (Gen. 25:30) The word means, or implies red. The stew was red and it is possible that Esau had red hair.

Esau was obviously exhausted and famished when he pleaded with his twin brother to give him some of the red soup he had made. Red soup? Red soup. I am confident that it wasn’t tomato sauce, so it must have been some herbs that gave it a red color. Jacob and his brother had grown up in the home of the most godly people in the world at the time, so you would think Jacob would have offered his brother some of the soup when he saw his condition.

After my brother James had surgery for cancer that had wrapped itself around his spine and then wrapped itself around everything, included arteries until it covered the back side of his heart, he spent time in the hospital and then spent weeks trying to recuperate at home. I drove over two hour to take him some oatmeal raisin cookies my wife made for him. He wanted oatmeal raisin cookies and we made sure he got them. There is no way I would have denied him those cookies. I also drove him around the area so he could see where he liked to fish and hunt. How could a brother do what Jacob did? How could he have done that to a neighbor, not to speak of his own brother? But he did.

No doubt, Rebekah had told Jacob that the Lord had revealed to her that the younger of the twins would be the blessed one and the older would serve the younger. So, when Esau begged for the stew, “Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.” (35:31). Jacob was close to his mother, who had obviously told him that the Lord had revealed to her that he, not Esau, was the one through whom He would continue the covenant He had made with Abraham. He, not Esau, would be the head of that great nation. He may well have been looking for an opportunity to take the birthright from his brother. Esau, on the other hand, may well have simply taken it for granted.

Esau asked his twin brother Jacob for some of the stew he had made and Jacob immediately responded, “Sell me your birthright.” It tells us a little about Esau when he

responded, ““I’m about to die, so what good is a birthright to me?”

(33) Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to Jacob and sold his birthright to him.
(34) Then Jacob gave bread and lentil stew to Esau; he ate, drank, got up, and went away. So Esau despised his birthright.” (Gen 25:33-34)

Jacob had the stew ready and Esau may not have seen anything else prepared to eat and his hunger had become the driving force in his life at the moment. Jacob used his brother’s hunger and his self-indulgence to deceive him and take his birthright. Esau despised his birthright, but he would despise his brother more. What Esau did was inconceivable, but what Jacob did was even more inconceivable. Esau forfeited his birthright to his brother Jacob for the sake of a meal of lentil stew and bread (Gen. 25:29-34). The birthright consisted of the special privileges that belonged to the firstborn male child in a family. Prominent among those privileges was a double portion of the estate as an inheritance.

“If a man had two sons, his estate would be divided into three portions, and the older son would receive two. If there were three sons, the estate would be divided into four portions, and the oldest son would receive two. The oldest son also normally received the father’s major blessing. Indeed, the Hebrew word for blessing (berakah) is virtually an anagram of the word that means both birthright and firstborn (bekorah). Legal continuation of the family line may also have been included among the privileges of the firstborn son. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 prohibited a father from playing favorites among his sons by trying to give the birthright to other than the firstborn. ([Holman Bible Dictionary]

B. Jacob Then Stole the Blessing of the First Born Son from Esau (27:1-46).

In the past I may have judged Rebekah unfairly, without considering all the Bible reveals about her. It seems that Isaac spoiled Esau and Rebekah spoiled Jacob. However, I would like for us to consider another factor. Yahweh, as we have already seen, had revealed something very special to Rebecca when she was pregnant with those twins: “And the Lord said to her: Two nations are in your womb; two people will [come] from you and be separated. One people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” (Gen. 26:23) Is it possible that Rebekah was trying to protect the Lord’s promise to her concerning her younger son? Of course, it is possible that her knowledge of what the Lord planned for her sons led her to act on her own to favor Jacob over Esau. It is also possible that Isaac simply favored Esau and Rebekah favored Jacob. That does happen. How does that kind of situation develop in a home? For one thing, a father and one son may be avid hunters and fishermen, whereas the mother and another child enjoy music, painting, or cooking more.

There is one thing we should not lose sight of here and that is the promise the Lord had

made to Rebekah before the twins were born: The older would serve the younger (and I am aware of the repetition). Earlier, Rebekah and Isaac may have discussed with Isaac how Jacob had cheated Esau out of his birthright. However, no matter what he knew of that he was prepared to follow tradition and give the older son the blessing of the first born. This was a special time for Isaac: he would enjoy a meal made from game Esau would kill and then he would give him the blessing of the firstborn son.

(1) "When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could not see, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he answered, "Here I am." (2) He said, "Look, I am old and do not know the day of my death. (3) Take your [hunting] gear, your quiver and bow, and go out in the field to hunt some game for me. (4) Then make me a delicious meal that I love and bring it to me to eat, so that I can bless you before I die."

We are told that Rebekah was listening to what Isaac said to his son Esau (27:5). Did she accidentally hear this conversation, or was she snooping? You could make a case for either, but at this point Isaac, because of his blindness and age, was limited in the things he could do. He had obviously concluded that it was time to bestow the blessing of the first born on his older son. Isaac

"was in his 137th year; and sensing that death was near, he prepared to make his last will – an act of the gravest importance, especially as it included the conveyance through a prophetic spirit of the patriarchal blessing." [NEW COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE - after this, NCWB]

Not only was Isaac 137 years old, he was blind, and felt that he did not have a lot longer to live. He knew it was time to give the blessing to Esau, so he asked him to go hunting and bring back game and prepare a meal from his kill. After eating the meal he would bless Esau.

As we have seen in verse 5, Rebekah was listening when Isaac asked Esau to go hunting, kill some game, and prepare him a meal. Had Isaac told her what he was about to do? If so, was that the reason she was listening? Was she just listening or was she eavesdropping? Was she simply playing favorites or was she remembering the Lord's promise that her older son would serve the younger? It is possible that she was doing both, favoring Jacob, but in this case making sure that Esau didn't receive the blessing the Lord promised Jacob. Regardless of her motives, when Esau went out to hunt game, Rebekah called Jacob to herself and explained what she had heard. Then, she said,

"Listen! I heard your father talking with your brother Esau. He said, (7) 'Bring me the game and make a delicious meal for me to eat so that I can bless you in the Lord's presence before I die.' (8) Now obey every order I give you, my son. (9) Go to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, and I will make them into a delicious meal for

your father – the kind he loves. (10) Then take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.”

Jacob reminded his mother that while he had smooth skin, Esau was a “hairy man.” He knew that if his father touched him he would know it was Jacob and not Esau.

(11) Jacob answered Rebekah his mother, “Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, but I am a man with smooth skin. (12) Suppose my father touches me. Then I will be revealed to him as a deceiver and bring a curse rather than a blessing on myself.” (13) His mother said to him, “Your curse be on me, my son. Just obey me and go get them for me.” (Gen. 27:11-13)

Using the skins of young goats and some of Esau’s old clothes, Rebekah disguised her son Jacob so that he was able to deceive his father (see Gen. 27:14-17). When she had done her part to deceive her husband she sent Jacob to do his part. He greeted his father (vs. 18) and identified himself to his father, saying “I am Esau, your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may bless me.”

Isaac was surprised that Esau had returned from the hunt and prepared the meal so quickly. However, Rebekah’s disguise worked and Isaac asked, “Are you really my son Esau?” And he replied, “I am.” Isaac asked him, “Please come closer and kiss me, my son.” (27) So he came closer and kissed him. When Isaac smelled his clothes, he blessed him...”

(29) May peoples serve you and nations bow down to you. Be master over your brothers; may your mother’s sons bow down to you. Those who curse you will be cursed, and those who bless you will be blessed.”

Thus the blessing intended for Esau now belonged to Jacob and for the second time Jacob received a blessing intended for Esau. Very soon after Isaac had blessed Jacob, Esau appeared before his father and asked him to eat some of the game and bless him. Both Isaac and Esau were in shock at what Jacob had done. And this time the shock must have been much more intense than when Jacob pressured him into giving him the birthright. We know Isaac was mortified by the deception by his son Jacob. Esau’s reaction was much more intense:

(34) When Esau heard his father’s words, he cried out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me too, my father!” (35) But he replied, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.” (36) So he said, “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me twice now. He took my birthright, and look, now he has taken my blessing.” Then he asked, “Haven’t you saved a blessing for me?” (27:34-36)

Esau learned that the blessing was irrevokable, but his father said, “Look, your

dwelling place will be away from the richness of the land, away from the dew of the sky above. (40) You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you rebel, you will break his yoke from your neck." (27:39-40) Esau knew his father would soon die and "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." (27:41)

When Rebekah saw the reaction of Esau to the deception and knew Esau planned to kill Jacob she sent him away, back to her family:

(43) So now, my son, listen to me. Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, (44) and stay with him for a few days until your brother's anger subsides – (45) until your brother's rage turns away from you and he forgets what you have done to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back from there. Why should I lose you both in one day?" (27:43-45)

Rebekah explained to Isaac that she had sent Jacob back to her family to keep him from taking a wife from among the Hittite women (27: 46).

C. Jacob Left Canaan with His Father's Blessing, (Gen. 28:1ff).

Rebekah told Jacob to flee to the land of her father and brother, to Haran.. Interestingly, Jacob did not flee in the night. Instead, he met with his father Isaac and received his blessing and a command,

"Don't take a wife from the Canaanite women. (2) Go at once to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father. Marry one of the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. (3) May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you so that you become an assembly of peoples." (4) May God give you and your offspring the blessing of Abraham so that you may possess the land where you live as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham." (28:1-4)

After blessing his son Jacob, Isaac sent him on his way to Paddan-aram, where he would meet to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau. Interestingly, Esau did not try to slay Jacob near their home or near their parents. However, after observing how Isaac sent Jacob off to Paddan-aram to get a wife there, and the command not to marry Canaanite woman, Esau reacted by rebelling against his father's wishes, thus proving that he was not the right one to receive the blessing and the birthright. Also:

(8) Esau realized that his father Isaac disapproved of the Canaanite women, (9) so Esau went to Ishmael and married, in addition to his other wives, Mahalath daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son. She was the sister of Nebaioth." (Gen 28:1-9)

D. Jacob Meets the Lord at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22).

Jacob left his home in Beer-sheba and went started out for Haran, also known as Paddan-aram. He stopped at a place to spend the night and when he had prepared a place to sleep he lay down with his head on a rock. It was a night he would never forget:

(12) And he dreamed: A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching heaven, and God's angels were going up and down on it. (13) The Lord was standing there beside him, saying, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your offspring the land that you are now sleeping on."

The Lord had made a covenant with Abraham. Actually, it is said that God "cut a covenant" with certain people. The picture, as I recall from Old Testament classes at Mississippi College or New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, is that of two parties killing a calf or bull and splitting into two halves, from north to south (or nose to tail). The two parties entering a covenant with each other would pass between the two halves, in essence saying that the bullock might be divided into two halves, but you and I cannot be separated with reference to the covenant. When we look at the Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant it is obvious that the covenants were broken - but never by the Lord - by fallen man, but never by Yahweh. The Lord reaffirmed the covenant He had made with Abraham years before: "Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out toward the west, the east, the north, and the south. All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring." (28:14) In addition, He said: "Look, I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land, for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." (28:15)

When Jacob awoke, he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." (28:16) We read that Jacob was afraid. When we hear anyone joking about receiving a visit from the Lord you must not be deceived, for in the Bible those who received a visit from the Lord or heard His voice were always afraid. The type of fear experienced was a reverential awe. They knew they were in the presence of the one true God; Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. In a state of reverential awe, Jacob declared, "What an awesome place this is! This is none other than the house of God. This is the gate of heaven." (28:17) I am sure Isaiah could have identified with the fear Jacob experienced (Isaiah 6).

Jacob, early that morning, took the stone that was near his head and set it up there for a marker. "He poured oil on top of it (19) and named the place Bethel, though previously the city was named Luz." (28:19) After which, "...Jacob made a vow:

"If God will be with me and watch over me on this journey, if He provides me with

food to eat and clothing to wear, (21) and if I return safely to my father's house, then the Lord will be my God. (22) This stone that I have set up as a marker will be God's house, and I will give to You a tenth of all that You give me." (Gen 28:10-22)

D. Jacob Met His Match When He Met Laban (Chs. 29-30).

1. Jacob met Rachel at a well where they watered sheep. He stopped at the well on his journey from Canaan to Haran. He met some men who were waiting for all the herds to get there before they removed the cover from the well.

"(4) Jacob asked the men at the well, "My brothers! Where are you from?" "We're from Haran," they answered." (5) "Do you know Laban grandson of Nahor?" Jacob asked them..." They did know Laban and assured Jacob he was well. "Yes," they said, "and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with his sheep." (31:4-6). While Jacob was speaking to the men, Rachel came with her father's sheep (10) "As soon as Jacob saw his uncle Laban's daughter Rachel with his sheep, he went up and rolled the stone from the opening and watered his uncle Laban's sheep. (11) Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept loudly. (12) He told Rachel that he was her father's relative, Rebekah's son. She ran and told her father." (Gen 29:10-12)

2. Jacob was welcomed by Laban. He received Jacob like a member of the family. The story of Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel is well known to children and young people in Sunday School, so I will not spend a lot of time on this passage. The Scripture explains the circumstances well enough for us:

(16) Now Laban had two daughters: the older was named Leah, and the younger was named Rachel. (17) Leah had ordinary eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. 18 Jacob loved Rachel, so he answered Laban, "I'll work for you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." (Gen 29:16-18)

(20) So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel, and they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. (21) Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed. I want to sleep with her." (22) So Laban invited all the men of the place to a feast. (23) That evening, Laban took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and he slept with her. 24 And Laban gave his slave Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her slave.

25 When morning came, there was Leah! So he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Wasn't it for Rachel that I worked for you? Why have you deceived me?" (Gen. 29:20-25)

Laban explained that it was their custom for the younger daughter to be married before

the firstborn daughter. Then Laban added, "Complete this week of wedding celebration, and we will also give you this younger one in return for working yet another seven years for me." (29:27) Jacob agreed to the condition and finished the week of celebration Laban gave him his daughter Rachel for a wife. The marriage was consummated and Jacob fulfilled his agreement and worked for Laban another seven years (Gen. 29:28-30)

Laban had deceived Jacob as blatantly as Jacob had deceived his brother Esau. By the time Jacob worked a second seven year period for Laban he would have paid a heavy price for Rachel.

You may have studied the account of Jacob's experience with Laban, how they entered a covenant that involved Laban's gift of Rachel to Jacob as a wife in exchange for seven years of service. They agreed on terms, but it was not long before Jacob discovered that he had been deceived by Laban. What I want to share next is proof that Laban was a much bigger rascal than Jacob could have imagined. An interesting part of this story is that Jacob had learned a few things on his own, and combined with the deception he had learned from his mother in deceiving his brother Esau, he would in time have Laban in a state of panic.

In order to make my point, and then to expand on it, I would like to share some information I found in a book by my good friend, Dr. Bill Cooper of Middlesex, England. What he has written is not something you will find every day in Bible commentaries or text books in the field of Archaeology. The following notes are from Dr. Cooper's very interesting book, *The Authenticity of the Book of Genesis*. I have read this material several time and I have elected to include most of two pages which have information not normally found in commentaries I have seen on the book of Genesis. What you are about to read is amazing. I have read commentaries, study Bible notes, various translations of the Scripture, and listened to Old Testament scholars discuss the Book of Genesis, but I found some things in Dr. Cooper's books that have not found elsewhere. He has spent over 40 years doing research in places like the British Museum which houses rare historical artifacts, including hundreds of thousands of cuneiform tablets and other finds not readily available in most countries. Dr. Cooper, in the example of a marriage contract I have copied (below), takes an ancient contract from the time of Jacob and Laban and substitutes their names for those in the original document. Dr. Cooper will make a similar statement, but this is worth repeating. [bold will be added for emphasis by this writer]

Now, for Dr. Cooper's amazing work:

"Amongst the legal tablets of Nuzi, there is one that is catalogued G51. It has been translated, of course, and reveals itself to be a contract of adoption between one Nashwi, the adopter, and one Wullu, the adoptee. The tablet bears three other names,

those of Arshenni, the father of Nashwi; Nahuya, Nashwi's daughter; and Puhishenni, who was Wullu's father. Now the terms and conditions of the contract bear such a close resemblance to the state of affairs between Jacob and Laban which Genesis describes, that we present its full text below, with the Biblical names of Jacob, Laban, Bethuel, Isaac and Rachel substituted for those of the original parties. This exercise is perfectly legitimate as contracts of all ages tend to be more or less standard in the field that they deal with, and it will give us an excellent idea of just how close and faithful the Book of Genesis really is to the laws and customs of the Patriarchal Age. So, if Nuzi Tablet G51 had been drawn up between Jacob and Laban instead of between Nashwi and Wullu, it would have read as follows:

"The adoption tablet of Laban, son of Bethuel. He adopted Jacob, son of Isaac. As long as Laban lives, Jacob shall give him food and clothing. When Laban dies, Jacob shall be the heir. Should Laban beget a son, the latter shall divide equally with Jacob, but only Laban's son shall take Laban's gods. But if there be no son of Laban's, then Jacob shall take Laban's gods. And Laban has given his daughter Rachel as wife to Jacob. And if Jacob takes another wife, he forfeits Laban's lands and buildings. Whoever breaks the contract, shall pay one mina of silver and one mina of gold."

"Interesting, isn't it? The contract explains so much that is mentioned by the Book of Genesis, revealing the true antiquity, as well as the historical authenticity and accuracy, of the story of Jacob. It also highlights the reason for and nature of Laban's deceit when he so craftily substituted Leah for Rachel at the wedding. The contract above, which would have been very close indeed, if not identical, in content to that between Jacob and Laban, states emphatically that if the adoptee marries any other woman than the contracted wife, then he loses all the lands, goods and chattels which he would have inherited by right of contract. Penalty clauses such as the fine of one mina (sixty shekels) each of silver and gold also explain why Jacob had to work for Laban an extra seven years before he could take Rachel. Quite simply, he would have had to work off any debt which such a penalty clause would have imposed upon him.

"The contract also refers to the household gods, or teraphim, which belonged to the head of the household and which gave him in law his authority. Thus, when Jacob finally left Laban's household, the removal of the household gods robbed Laban of his lawful authority and transferred it to Jacob, and explains the desperate pursuit that followed. Before they fled Laban's household, however, Rachel and Leah asked Jacob a most interesting question:

"Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money." (Genesis 31:15).

"What interests us here is the word that they use for money. It refers to the "bridal-price" that was set aside for them at their separate marriages to Jacob. The normal

Hebrew word for this price (or dowry) is mohar, but they do not use that. They use instead the more legally-specialized word keseph, which is straight out of the Nuzi tablets.

“The fact that Jacob was married to two living sisters at the same time is yet another hallmark of this account’s antiquity. By Moses’ day, when God Himself was giving Israel the laws by which He wanted her to live, such unions were roundly condemned and forbidden (Leviticus 18:18), being described by God as a pollution for which nations had been uprooted and destroyed. It is inconceivable, therefore, that any ‘priestly editor’ would ever have charged Jacob—who gave his very name to Israel—with such iniquity.” [The authenticity of the Book of Genesis, by Dr. Bill Cooper, Published by the Creation Science Movement, est. 1932, England, pp 116-117]

Anyone interested in the Authenticity series, as well as other books by Dr. Cooper may go to the sites below for information:

Bill Cooper PhD ThD

Vice President Creation Science Movement

Adjunct Professor Master Faculty ICR School of Biblical Apologetics

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Bill-Cooper/e/B0034O27IC/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1

http://www.amazon.com/Bill-Cooper/e/B0034O27IC/ref=ntt_athr_dp_pel_pop_1

I am honored to have been mentioned in each of the Authenticity volumes, along with Dr. Gene Jeffries (whom he calls his go-to person in Greek) and Dr. James J. S. Johnson (his go-to person in Hebrew) - and no one wants to know what he calls me! One of the six volumes in the Authenticity series has been dedicated to each of the men mentioned above (Dr. Jeffries, Dr. Johnson, and to this writer). I have no doubt that they are as honored as I.

E. Jacob and His Family Returned to His Home Land (Chs. 31-32).

1. The departure from Haran was not pleasant. The more the Lord blessed Jacob the more Laban and his sons resented him (Gen. 31:1). In verse 2, we read, “And Jacob saw from Laban’s face that his attitude toward him was not the same. (3) Then the Lord said to him, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.” (Gen 31:2-3) The Lord had not forgotten Jacob, and in all those years that he lived with, or near Laban, Jacob had not forgotten God:

“In that dream the Angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ (12) And He said, ‘Look up and see: all the males that are mating with the flocks are streaked, spotted, and speckled, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. (13) I am the God of Bethel, where you poured oil on the stone marker and made a solemn vow to Me. Get up, leave this land, and return to your native land.’” (Gen 31:11-13, bold added)

for emphasis)

I am inclined to agree with those who translated the Holman Christian Standard Bible in that where they capitalize the words Angel of God or Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son of God is intended.

I had the opportunity in my very first board meeting with LifeWay Christian Resources to meet with the General Editor of the HCSB, Dr. Ed Blum, who was in Nashville to meet with the Broadman and Holman Committee. Dr. Blum impressed members of our committee and others who met with him, including LifeWay President and CEO Dr. Jimmy Draper. A few years ago someone thought it was a good joke to say that HCSB stood for Hard Core Southern Baptist. I pointed out to someone that Dr. Ed Blum is hard core Presbyterian. He is also one of the most impressive Christian gentlemen I have ever met, and as I observed the way he was received by then President and CEO, Dr. Jimmy Draper, and his whole team I felt that they agreed with me. Dr. Blum led some 100 translators in this endeavor. For the first time all translators were able to use computers to check for accuracy and

consistency and the Internet to communicate with each other. They agreed on places in which the words “the Angel of the Lord” was found the word Angel should be capitalized because those words denoted the pre-incarnate Son of God. I found their argument very convincing. Thus, every aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant was under the influence of the One to whom it pointed, Jesus of Nazareth, the Second Person of the Godhead. And for that professor who so strongly insisted that he wished people would stop using the word Trinity because the word does not appear in the Bible, I would like to remind him that the words automobile, electricity, and computer do not appear in the Bible, but I believe in them.

Laban’s sons may have turned against Jacob but Leah and Rachel stood with Jacob, declaring that Laban had sold them and spent all the money he got for them. Jacob planned the journey and organized his family, including Leah, Rachel, the slaves, and the children the Lord had given him in Haran.

During all those years God protected Jacob, and Jacob never forgot the Lord of Bethel. Now, they were underway to the land the Lord had given to Abraham and affirmed it to both Isaac and Jacob. We will remember that the Lord gave the land of Canaan to Abraham but assured him that they would not possess the land until after they had lived in a foreign land for 400 years. They would actually live in the Land of Goshen in Egypt for 430 years before they were miraculously delivered by Yahweh.

2. Laban overtook Jacob on the way back to Canaan. He learned of Jacob’s departure after three days and then pursued him for seven days before he overtook him. Before he

overtook Jacob the Lord warned him not to say anything to Jacob, good or bad (don't start a fight with him - 31:24). He searched for his household gods but Rachel hid them from him. Remember that Dr. Bill Cooper noted that "the removal of the household gods robbed Laban of his lawful authority and transferred it to Jacob, and explains the desperate pursuit that followed." Before Laban left Jacob and his daughters and grandchildren, Laban suggested a covenant between himself and Jacob in which they promised not to not to attack each other.

3. Jacob prepared to meet his brother Esau (Gen. 32). Jacob sent some impressive gifts to Esau to prepare him for their first meeting in some 20 years. He instructed his servants in what they should say to Esau when they met him.

III. JACOB SURRENDERED TO THE LORD AT PENIAL (Ch. 32).

A. He Wrestled with an Angel at Penial.

It had been some twenty years since Jacob had passed this way on his long journey to Haran. Jacob the trickster, the heel grabber, had been the victim of such trickery at the hands of Laban, his father-in-law. He had been tricked into working for 14 years for his wives, Leah and Rachel. After six more years he is returning to the Land of Promise as the Lord had instructed. Many sermons have been preached on this passage, but here the Scripture will stand on its own:

"Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that He could not defeat him, He struck Jacob's hip socket as they wrestled and dislocated his hip. Then He said to Jacob, "Let Me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me."

"What is your name?" the man asked. "Jacob," he replied. "Your name will no longer be Jacob," He said. "It will be Israel because you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked Him, "Please tell me Your name." But He answered, "Why do you ask My name?" And He blessed him there.

Jacob then named the place Peniel, "For I have seen God face to face," [he said,] "and I have been delivered." The sun shone on him as he passed by Peniel – limping because of his hip. That is why, to this day, the Israelites don't eat the thigh muscle that is at the hip socket: because He struck Jacob's hip socket at the thigh muscle" (Gen 32:24-32).

B. Jacob, the Supplanter, Became Israel, Prince with the Lord.

1. God's covenant was alive and active. However, it was not Jacob that kept it alive, it was YAHWEH. It was not by Jacob's might, cunning, or scheming, but by the intervention of the Lord that the covenant was maintained. God was the Author of the

covenant, as well as the power and wisdom behind it. Abraham's seed would indeed be a blessing to the world, and the Seed of the woman (Gen 3:15) was, and is the hope of the world.

2. From this time on Jacob would live a far more godly life. He had anticipated a major confrontation when he saw his brother Esau, but his meeting with his brother was more of a reunion than a confrontation. Jacob would move back into the land Yahweh had given to Abraham. He would no longer be the trickster or deceiver he had been before he left his home after tricking his brother out of the birthright and the blessing of the first born son. Jacob would watch his sons grow to maturity, even if he did show the same kind of favoritism for Joseph, son of his beloved Rachel, that his mother had shown for him and Isaac had shown Esau. That created serious family problems, but we must remember that the covenant never depended upon the righteousness of Isaac or Jacob, but upon the righteousness, power, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence of Yahweh.

CONCLUSION. Kiel and Delitzsch described Abraham as "the man of world conquering faith, as Isaac was the man of quiet faith, and Jacob was the man of wrestling faith." There are many lessons can learn from Jacob's blunders, mistakes, and sins, and that is no doubt one reason they are recorded in the Book of Beginnings. However, we should remember that the Lord chose Jacob to continue the covenant of hope which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our hope today. America has grown more worldly since 1963 when the Supreme Court took prayer out of public schools, and after that, the Word of God. William Bennett, a number of years ago, wrote a powerful book dealing with what has happened to our country after prayer and Bible reading were taken out of or schools. He showed through his Moral Index that lawlessness, crime, delinquency, and rebellion began escalating very soon after those two rulings. The chart on which he portrays the shocking rise in lawlessness and immorality among the youth of that day is mind boggling. It has continued to rise, even though American citizens have tried to produce their own version of character, integrity, and morality. Today, homosexual marriage is being legalized in state after state. Louisiana passed a law that should have protected biblical marriage, but yesterday (9-23-14) the local newspaper carried the story of a judge who declared our law unconstitutional.

There is still one hope for America and God is that hope - the only hope for our salvation. He died on the cross in our place and Peter declared that His is "the only name known among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). God established the Old Covenant, and He alone had the power, wisdom, and sovereignty to fulfill it. It was not Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, but our Creator, redeemer, and Lord who established it, maintained it, and fulfilled it. Jesus established a New Covenant, written in His blood, and He will protect, defend, and bless that covenant until He returns to receive true

believers unto Himself. You cannot control or maintain that covenant but I want to tell you what you can do. As Adrian Rogers used to say, "You can get in on what God is up to." How do we do that? Love Him, Believe in Him, trust Him, follow Him, and obey Him.