

Jacob's Life

Scripture Reading: Genesis 25:19-34

Commenting on the biography of Jacob, found in Genesis, could fill a large book. The purpose of this study is to highlight six things in Jacob's life and draw some applications from Scripture. We will be noting:

- Jacob's Life Begins
- Jacob's Lie
- Jacob's Ladder
- Jacob's Loves, Labors, and Lessons
- Jacob's Limp
- Jacob's Legacy

Jacob's Life Begins – Genesis 25:19-34

The first two highlights are presented together, in the same lesson, because we need to see the relevance of things, early in Jacob's life, that set the stage for the big lie.

Destiny – Genesis 25:19-23

Jacob had a very important pedigree. The Messianic lineage is developing. Rebekah sensed turbulence in her womb while carrying twins – Esau and Jacob. The Lord told her that these two sons were the beginning of two distinct nations – one greater than the other. Contrary to normal tradition, the elder son would serve the younger.

Delivery – Genesis 25:24-26

Esau was born first – red and hairy. The descendants of Esau would be called Edom, which means “Red” (Genesis 25:30 – Note the red stew for which Esau sold his birthright. The land of Edom was also known for its red sandstone.). Jacob was next. It is to be noted that, as he was born, he grabbed the heel of his brother, Esau. The name Jacob means “Supplanter” – one who is deceitful (i.e. a heel-grabber).

Distinction – Genesis 25:27-28

These were not identical twins. They differed in practically every way. At birth Esau was red and hairy. Jacob was smooth-skinned. Esau loved the outdoors and was a skilled hunter. Jacob was content to live among the tents. He was a domestic, civilized person – mild mannered and quiet. He is called “plain / ordinary.” By contrast, Esau could probably be described as a bit rough and impulsive – more on the wild side. The homelife between these two brothers had to be difficult. Not only were they very divergent, but the parents showed favoritism. Isaac, the father, favored Esau. Rebekah, the mother, favored Jacob. This is a formula for conflict and disaster.

Deal – Genesis 25:29-34

Rivalry, jealousy, and who knows what Rebekah told her Jacob about God's explanation of the situation while she had her twins in the womb (Genesis 25:22-23) – The "heal-grabber" saw an opportunity to best his brother, Esau. Jacob had made a lentil stew. Esau had over-extended himself on a hunting trip and was very weak and hungry. He asked Jacob for some stew. Jacob did not act in brotherly love. He offered a deal – sell his birthright for some stew. The birthright meant that Jacob would get a double portion of the inheritance and become the family chief and priest. How cruel for Jacob to do that! How shallow for Esau to accept the deal. Scripture defines Esau's decision as worse than shallow. He is called a profane (worldly, godless, unholy) person who despised his birthright (Genesis 25:34; Hebrews 12:14-17).

Jacob's Lie – Genesis 27:1-46

At the end of Isaac's life, he is blind and ready to impart the blessing of the birthright on Esau. Consider Isaac, as he disregards the prophetic word that had been given to Rebekah (Genesis 25:23), and the fact that Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob for some stew (Genesis 25:33), and that Esau had made unsatisfactory choices for marriage (Genesis 26:34-35; 27:46). Nevertheless, Isaac was determined to confer the blessing of the birthright upon Esau. He sent Esau out to hunt and to prepare another one of his wonderful dinners of venison stew (**Genesis 27:1-4**). Rebekah heard her husband talking to Esau. While Esau was gone, she conceived a plan and conspired with Jacob to deceive Isaac and to trick him into giving the blessing to Jacob instead of Esau (**Genesis 27:5-13**). Rebekah's scheme worked. Jacob had to deliberately lie to his father to receive the blessing (**Genesis 27:14-29**). Esau returned and learned of his brother's deception. He wept and asked for a blessing, which Isaac gave. It was not the same as the birthright blessing, though. Isaac acknowledged the deception of Jacob. At the same time, he acknowledged that the blessing was settled and in the hands of God. Esau was angry and vowed to kill his brother after the death of Isaac (**Genesis 27:30-41**). Rebekah heard about Esau's threat and sent Jacob to her brother's homeland. She hoped Esau would calm down and that it would be safe to send for Jacob to return. She also had a concern that Jacob would find a wife that was more suitable than Esau's wives. Sadly, Rebekah never saw Jacob again (**Genesis 27:42-46**).

Conclusion / Questions

Does knowing God's will about something allow us to take matters into our own hands and try to make it happen? Remember the example of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah about having a son. They first tried to use a concubine to produce a son (Many sorrows from that decision – Genesis 16:1 – 18:15; 21:1-21). Knowing what God said of Jacob did not give Rebekah or Jacob permission to deceive, lie, and manipulate (Deuteronomy 29:29 cp. Acts 2:23). **Do our natural affections and desires cause us to forsake discernment of spiritual truth?** (Isaac's love for Esau cp. Matthew 10:37-39; II Corinthians 5:14-17).