

FIGHTING FOR YOUR  
*Destiny*

JACOB - YOU WORM



JOANNA BARRATT

# Fighting For Your Destiny

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# Introduction

Initially intended to make a study of the life of Joseph for he seems to be a splendid, rather than typical, example of somebody who has triumphed over unbelievable adversity, persecution and accusation, to achieve unprecedented status and position during his lifetime. I must stress Joseph is not the 'norm', but his story certainly shows what is achievable when God is allowed free access in the lives of mere mortals.

It is obvious that he did not have the same birth advantages as Jesus in that Gabriel did not appear to his mother to say,

**The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.**

**Luke 1:35**

He was born as human as you or me. Yet considering his background and family we are left with no excuse for the pathetic advancements we make in our own spiritual walks with God. But how did he do it?

DNA plays a huge part in our walk with God. Certain aspects of our DNA should be cultivated, whereas others should be ruthlessly put to death and stamped out completely. Although God, through Moses, gave the commandments 400 years after Joseph was born, his standards have always been the same. If man's conscience hadn't been so hard then it would not have been necessary for God to write his laws down on tablets of stone. He probably had to write them on stone as a prophetic visual aid to emphasise to us all how hard-hearted & stone-like the human race, without the fear of God, could become.

...for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

**Exodus 20:5**

Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

**Exodus 34:7**

## Who are we and what is our DNA?

A good way to be aware of what is potentially in us is to look at the character traits of our fore-fathers and fore-mothers. God was not joking or making bland threats when he said he would visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation, this was his just and righteous way of dealing with man's rebellion. We can be sure that the things detested in our parents will eventually find a way of manifesting in our own lives. I know this to be all too true, much to my chagrin, for this law has been fulfilled on many occasions in my own life.

Joseph was by no means perfect, even though there is very little in the bible to say where he was at fault. I've listened to many stories and views concerning Joseph from Sunday School teachers, preachers in the pulpit, plus speakers at conferences, and most views sound very similar. However, I've been studying this man and his story for quite a long time and another picture has emerged. We all see through a glass darkly, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:12, which means that no one person can claim to have the whole truth. But if we all pool what we have seen through our dim glasses we can piece the descriptions together and imagine a bigger, perhaps better picture of what we are looking at even though we cannot see it all with our own natural or spiritual eyes.

I'm going to try to relate what I have seen in the hope that it may broaden your view a little on what took place in Joseph's life. In order to do this I will need to retrace his steps to see the traits of his forefathers which have been passed down to him through DNA.

For this reason this book will be about Joseph's forefathers to show what Joseph had to overcome.

## Chapter 1

# Abraham

The promise God gave to Abraham was not for himself alone, but included his descendants Isaac and Jacob. Jacob had 12 sons so Joseph, together with his 11 brothers and 1 sister, were the 4th generation after Abraham, and from these 12 sons of Jacob we get all the tribes of Israel.

I have already written extensively about Abraham in a book entitled 'Abraham, Father of Faith' so will only touch the surface concerning him here. God seemed to have nothing but praise for the life of Abraham. I can't recall any incident where God reprimanded him, even though many preachers have accused him of disobeying God's initial instruction to leave his father's house and

family when he took Lot, his nephew, with him on his journey to the land God had promised to him; and apparently lying about his relationship with his wife, saying that she was his sister rather than confessing the whole truth. These apparent 'faults' seemed unimportant to God as we read in Psalm 105 that instead of calling Abraham to account he shielded him from blame ...

When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; he suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

**Psalm 105:13-15**

There is another terrifying scripture which we should look at very seriously before charging Abraham with sin in his life, for this is a covenant God made with him which will last forever ...

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

**Genesis 12:3**

Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

**Romans 8:33**

It would be wise for any preacher or teacher to be very careful how they portray Abraham. God made a promise

to him that he would be shielded and protected from any potential enemies. If God does not charge him with misconduct, then be sure that any slanderous or liable words spoken about him will be recorded and you will have to give an account for them either in this life or in the life to come.

Abraham didn't do a single miracle during his lifetime so was not operating in the 'gift of faith'. However, he certainly had the 'fruit of faith' (Galatians 5:22). If there is no damage or disease to mar it, a rose bud is regarded as perfect even though not fully developed. We have to go through many stages before we can reach maturity. What is the definition of sin? Well, according to 1 John 3:4, sin is the transgression of the law. Abraham, in every stage of his development in faith, was never accused of sin by God. His faith was growing and developing. God is always looking for faith so Abraham must have shown faith in everything he did, even in these questionable instances, for in Romans 14:23 we read ... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Even before the birth of Isaac when God visited Abraham at his tent, he said to the two angels with him,

Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the

LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

**Genesis 18:17-19**

God would not have said this concerning Abraham unless he had first seen the evidence of it in his life. God had witnessed how Abraham had brought up and nurtured his first son, Ishmael. He had poured his heart and soul into this boy believing that he would continue on with the promise God had given to him long after he, himself, was dead. He had no idea that his aged wife, Sarah, would bear the promised seed in years to come. Abraham proved beyond doubt his integrity to God where his wife and family were concerned, and God was well satisfied, so much so that Abraham was honoured with the amazing title, 'friend of God'.

Let me encourage you to follow Abraham's example, realising that his willing and unquestioning obedience was the very thing that delighted God and covered every imperfection you or I could possibly charge him with. The Bible states very clearly that without faith it is impossible to please God, and Abraham, because of his faith, pleased his Master so much that God started a brand new eternal spiritual nation through his seed which will continue even into the new heaven and earth when this cosmos as we know it will have passed away for ever.

Chapter 2

# Isaac – Seed of Promise

Here we have a beautiful picture of perfect obedience. Isaac was not a child when Abraham was asked to offer him as a burnt sacrifice to God. In scripture the word 'lad' could refer to any age between young boy and young man. Ishmael was 14 years old when Isaac was born, so would have been about 18 when Isaac was weaned. It was during this time that Sarah pleaded with Abraham to send Ishmael and his Egyptian mother away.

And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy

bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

**Genesis 21:12**

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

**Genesis 37:2**

From these 2 scriptures alone we can see that a lad is not necessarily a child, showing that Isaac willingly laid his life on the altar as Abraham would have had a tough job on his hands, himself being well over 100 years of age, if the lad had struggled or put up any resistance. I personally believe that he must have been over the age of 12 and able to make his own decisions. It was necessary that Abraham willingly offered up Isaac, but equally necessary that Isaac was a willing sacrifice.

If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.

**Leviticus 1:3**

And if ye offer a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, ye shall offer it at your own will.

**Leviticus 19:5**

And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the LORD, offer it at your own will.

**Leviticus 22:29**

Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass,

**Exodus 35:5**

## **Born with a silver spoon in his mouth**

To say Abraham was wealthy could be regarded as an understatement. In Genesis 13 we read that at the very outset of his journey the Egyptian Pharaoh showered him with gifts of servants, animals, gold and silver, for the sake of his beautiful wife Sarah. This scenario was to be repeated later on in his walk with God, where he feared that his wife would be snatched from him, only to be blessed with more possessions and financial blessings. His nephew, Lot, also had his own herds, flocks, and tents, and their combined substance was so great that the land could not support them both living in the same vicinity. This problem caused strife between the herdsmen from both camps so Lot and Abraham decided to separate. Indeed, with every test along the way his wealth grew and he prospered.

Yes, the blessings of God brought untold wealth to Abraham and his family of promise, but they came at a

great cost. Isaac was not the only child sired by Abraham, he was 1 of 8 children in total. Hagar bore Abraham his first child, Ishmael, but some years after the death of his true love, Sarah, he married Keturah who bore him another 6 sons, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. All these children were sons of Abraham, yet only Isaac was allowed to inherit both the promises and wealth he had acquired from God throughout his life. The other children were given gifts and sent away to live in other countries, whilst Isaac alone was allowed to remain. Is that because Isaac was any better than the other sons? No, I think not. Isaac was simply God's choice.

If we are to be chosen of God then to all intents and purposes God will consider us to be holy – separate. We always think of being chosen by God as something desirable, as though this state would bring us the utmost pleasure and satisfaction. Yes, it can do, but only if we are prepared to be wholly faithful and committed to him alone. You see, God is a jealous God and is very possessive of the things which belong to him. He wants us for himself alone, which means we need to be separated from anything and everything which could potentially come between us both. We all know that down through history the Israelites have been God's chosen people, but not every Israelite has wanted to belong to God, some have despised and hated him. Their sinful ways have caused God to punish them very cruelly in order to bring them to repentance. Indeed, I have even heard some present day Jews pray and ask God to choose another people!

Abraham understood all about love, and proved this by only ever wanting one woman, his barren wife Sarah, even though with such wealth he could have had a harem full of women. Being such a loving, tender person, his heart must have wrenched each time he had to wave one of his children, "Goodbye", knowing that it was for the sake of the 'child of promise'. Yes, being one of God's chosen always comes at a cost.

After being privy to what took place when Abraham led his son up the mountain to sacrifice to God we read nothing further concerning Isaac until, at 37 years of age, he was bereaved of his mother and 3-3½ years later Abraham sent out his trusted steward, Eliezer, to find him a bride. Abraham was still alive, with Isaac dwelling under his godly protection. Isaac was going to be blessed for sure, because God had already made a covenant with Abraham which included his son, Isaac, before he was even born.

**But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.**

**Genesis 17:21**

## **The patience of Isaac**

A beautiful young woman, brought back from the kinsmen of Abraham accompanied Eliezer on his homeward journey. As soon as Isaac set eyes on Rebekah he fell in love with her and she became his wife. This brought him

great comfort after losing his beloved mother. Even so, after marrying his father's choice he would have to wait 20 more years before children would arrive on the scene.

Isaac was a very patient man. The fact that his wife couldn't bear children did not cause him to panic. He was an extremely wealthy man but he didn't seek out other wives to provide him offspring. Rebekah was more than enough for him because he truly loved her. He intreated the Lord for his wife and, at the age of 60, God answered his prayers and they were blessed with the entrance into the world of twins, Esau and Jacob.

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived ..... And when Rebekah's days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

Genesis 25:21-26

## History repeats itself

Some years after Isaac's boys were born there was a famine in the land, similar to the one experienced by his father. Isaac, together with all he possessed, made the journey to Abimilech, king of the Philistines, in Gerar,

because the Lord had appeared to him and given him the instruction that he must not go down to Egypt but was to stay in this land and God would be with him, and bless him, for to him and his seed God had given all these countries.

**And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swear unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.**

**Genesis 26:2-4**

This was a fantastic promise. Like Abraham, Isaac stood on, and even lived in, the territory – the promised land – which God had intended for him to inherit, yet he never owned it. Isaac settled in Gerar and sowed seed in the land, and received in that very same year an hundred fold return for his labour, for the Lord was with him and had blessed him. Everything he turned his hand to flourished. His wealth increased, going on and on, until his presence in Gerar became a problem for the citizens of that country, so much so that the Philistines envied him. The Lord's blessing forced Abimelech to fear for his own future, so he said to Isaac, "Go from us, for you are much mightier than

we are!" Isaac didn't put up a fight, even though God had promised that one day these lands would be his, he simply waited patiently for the Lord to give to him what he had promised.

Every time Isaac's herdsmen dug a well the herdsmen of Gerar strove with them, gradually pushing them out of the land. Isaac didn't want to enter into conflict with these people who had initially made room for him so his herdsmen just continued digging wells until, after digging the well 'Rehoboth' the men of Gerar left them alone. The Lord again appeared to Isaac telling him not to be afraid, for the plan had not changed. They dug another well and settled in Beersheba.

It wasn't long after this that King Gerar, together with a friend and the chief captain of his army, surprised Isaac by paying him a visit. Isaac voiced his shock by saying, "Why have you come to see me seeing you hate me, and have sent me away from you?"

King Gerar was honest with Isaac, sharing his fears that he felt outnumbered, and certainly out-blessed. He recognised he was no match for Isaac because God was on his side, so he had come to make a deal with him that they would live in peace and not do each other harm. Isaac was a godly man so he made him and his companions a feast, gave them a night's hospitality, and sent them on their way the following morning with the assurance that there would be peace between them.

No fighting for the land. Isaac was not worried by the fact that he was kicked out of his promised possession because he had faith in his God, even though by this time he was 100 years old, or thereabouts. And we grumble because the Lord makes us wait a few years for something he's promised us! We know very little about patience. These men of God, who are our cloud of witnesses, deserved their recognition from God because they 'paid their dues'.

### **Even the best of us have flaws**

Yet there was something basically wrong with Isaac. Why could Isaac not see what must have been staring him in the face for years?

And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

**Genesis 25:28**

How is it possible that this godly man Isaac could prefer and love this child whom God actually hated?

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

**Malachi 1:2**

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

**Romans 9:13**

Rebekah must have shared with him what the Lord had told her when there had been problems with her pregnancy. Even before her babes were born she was warned that these children were going to be rivals and there would be a reversal in their status which would be God ordained.

And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

**Genesis 15:23**

God knew what was growing in the belly of Rebekah. He was well aware that there were two seeds growing together side by side, and one child would be the seed of the wicked one, and the other the seed of God. The same thing happened with Cain and Abel whom we read about in 1 John where the explanation is given for the way Cain reacted to his twin brother Abel. Yes, they also were twins for it says that Eve bore twice from the one conception, she did not conceive again to produce Abel – he was the younger twin brother.

Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

**1 John 3:12**

Evil doers will always oppose and hate those who live righteously. For all his faults, Jacob must have had a heart

for God because he envied his brother, and desperately wanted the blessing of his forefathers for himself. Esau, who was due this honour by default, couldn't care less about it. The bible actually goes so far as to say that he despised his birthright. How did God view that attitude? Well, I can say categorically that God did not like it at all. Esau, by his lifestyle, was constantly showing God that he didn't want to follow his designated destiny, he wanted to choose his own way of life.

The relationship which God had with Abraham did not fill Esau with wonder. Quite the opposite, he shunned it like the plague. His attitude and lifestyle proved that he hated God. So, what I can't understand is why Isaac loved Esau? Why did this godly man hold to the son who hated God so much that he was ready to hand him all the promises of Abraham on a plate? We know that Isaac had a personal relationship with God because God spoke to him at times, giving him instructions such as to where he should live, and so on. So why didn't Isaac recognise that Esau was not God's choice as the next in line for the blessing?

## **Traditions**

**Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?**

**Matthew 15:2-3**

And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

**Galatians 1:14**

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

**Colossians 2:8**

Sometimes traditions, the way we have been brought up, our conditioning, hinders us from hearing the voice of God who oftentimes asks us to contradict all we have learned to prove us, and to prove that we will put him first in all situations. Isaac knew that Esau was the firstborn and as such should inherit both the double portion and the blessing to carry on after himself. The Bible does not say that God spoke to Isaac in the same way that he spoke to Rebekah concerning the switch he had planned. Isaac may have only had Rebekah's word to go on. Nevertheless, he must have watched and noted the character traits both boys were displaying as they grew up, and this should have given rise to warning bells in his heart. He had a relationship with God, but it does not appear that he consulted God about the discrepancy he and his wife had in this matter. Perhaps he was afraid that God would say something which would go against tradition and cause him to irreparably hurt Esau, thus

cutting off his relationship with his son. Who knows? But one thing is for sure, as far as he was concerned Esau was the man for the future of their tribe.

We read that Isaac was old and had become blind. This in itself says quite a bit regarding his spiritual state. In the Old Testament it seemed that the closer you walked with God, the more physically healthy you were. There are many testimonies to confirm this if we look at Abraham, who lived to be 175 years old and fathered 6 more sons after his beloved wife, Sarah, died: Moses, at 120 years old still maintained all his natural forces. Caleb, was one of the 12 men who had spied out Canaan and come back with a good report. After being forced to tread the wilderness for the next 40 years, at the age of 80 he told Joshua that he was still as strong as he was when a young man and was able to conquer a mountain. So, why had Isaac become blind?

### **Spiritual blindness**

This is such a sad story where Isaac is concerned. I was brought up to believe that he was a type of Jesus, so willing to be a sacrifice, so obedient to his father's wishes, such an example to emulate. Well, I can agree with all that, his life is a tremendous testimony to the grace of God. When he was under the care and protection of his father Abraham we can see that he lived a righteous life, full of integrity. But when Abraham was off the scene I think things changed a little for Isaac, he didn't seem so

strong on his own. Isaac's boys were only 15 years old at the most when their grandfather, died so it doesn't seem likely they were able to spend much time under his influence, which is a great pity as he could have passed on to them so many valuable principles and much wisdom.

In Genesis 26 we are informed that Canaan experienced a famine similar to the one in Abraham's time, but God gave Isaac specific instructions not to go to Egypt for help, he was to go in blind faith to the land God guided him to, and there God would bless him.

**And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.**

**Genesis 26:2-6**

There was one problem with this instruction though, Isaac had a very beautiful wife and he was afraid that the men of the city would kill him to get to her. He resorted to telling everyone that Rebekah was his sister – just like

his father Abraham had done when in a similar situation with Sarai. The problem with Isaac's story though was the fact that it was a huge lie. Rebekah was in no way his sister, she was his second cousin! Abraham told people Sarai was his sister because she actually was – they had both come from the same father, Terah. But it was a complete lie when Isaac spoke the same words. Perhaps his father had shared this little testimony from his own past with him, but if that was the case he would surely have glorified God when sharing the fact that Sarai was miraculously delivered from the clutches of the Egyptian Pharaoh, proving that God could be trusted, and that Isaac should have faith. But Isaac was more afraid of men.

And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her. And Abimelech said, What is this thou hast done unto us? one of the people might lightly have lien with thy wife, and thou shouldest have brought guiltiness upon us. And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.

**Genesis 26:8-11**

Isaac was not reprimanded by God for this lie and lack of trust, but he was certainly brought to task by King

Abimelech.

At 40 years of age, Esau married outside the family, but worse still he married 2 women who were both Hittites. This was something Isaac had instilled into his sons that they must not do, and these alliances proved to be a grief of mind to both Isaac and Rebekah. Why? Because the future inheritance was now in jeopardy. Canaanite seed was about to infiltrate Abraham's seed. Isaac knew this was a big problem, but he would not deal with it. God had surely spoken to him time and time again concerning this, because it was going to have a massive impact on future generations, but Isaac must have ignored the voice, preferring to keep the relationship sweet between himself and his eldest son. Consequently, the physical and spiritual blindness began to set in. I say this because what happened when he was about to pass on the blessing to Esau is very revealing.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, "My son": and he said unto him, "Behold, here am I". And he said, "Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die".

**Genesis 27:1-4**

At this point in time Isaac was both physically & spiritually blind. He didn't even know when it was his time to go – he lived over 20 more years after this incident. All I can say is, thank God he wanted feeding before he passed on the blessing. That was a mercy of God to delay him giving everything God had promised Abraham to Satan. During this time of delay God intervened and Jacob, disguised as Esau, went into his tent with the food.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob. And he came unto his father, and said, "My father": and he said, "Here am I; who art thou, my son?" And Jacob said unto his father, "I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou bade me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." And Isaac said unto his son, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the LORD thy God brought it to me." And Isaac said unto Jacob, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not." And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are

the hands of Esau”. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau’s hands: so he blessed him.

And he said, “Art thou my very son Esau?” And he said, “I am.” And he said, “Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son’s venison, that my soul may bless thee.” And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. And his father Isaac said unto him, “Come near now, and kiss me, my son.” And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, “See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curses thee, and blessed be he that blesses thee.”

Genesis 27:15-29

## Going on feelings

Before we criticise Isaac for getting it wrong here, we need to take a long, hard look at our own lives. How often do we do something because it feels right to do it? Or because we think God is telling us to do it? If, because we cannot hear the voice of the Lord, we rely on our feelings and thoughts to find his will then we are lost. Eventually we will lose our sight, because our vision will

be clouded causing us to begin to walk in darkness. God will withhold his revelation for there will be no point in him guiding us any more.

Isaac had lived with his sons for 40 plus years. Every day he will have had some form of communication with them. Even though he was blind he would have been able to distinguish their voices apart. What on earth happened on this most important day for the future of their family? Isaac quite rightly recognised that it was the voice of Jacob, but he believed his senses – his touch, his smell – and was blinded to the fact that Jacob was feigning to be his brother Esau. How blind can you be? Surely he knew the voice? If he could do this physically with the son he was communing with on an every day basis, how easy would it have been to hear God and not recognise his voice? There was a massive break down in communication.

I am going to voice my opinion that perhaps Isaac lost his relationship with God when he decided to honour his self-willed son above God. Even before the children were born Rebekah was struggling in her pregnancy. She was in such discomfort and pain that she asked the Lord why he had allowed her to conceive if it meant she was likely to die giving birth. God shared with Rebekah that things were not going to be normal with these 2 children for already there was a battle for supremacy raging. I don't for one moment think that Rebekah would keep this information to herself. She and Isaac were besotted

with each other, totally in love. This knowledge would have given them both peace of mind thinking that God was in control of the whole situation. But this information was not something Isaac wanted to hear. It was not protocol. He was a man of principle and integrity, so this did not sit right with him. Instead of speaking to God about it, he chose to ignore his wife.

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it be so, why am I thus?" And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger".

**Genesis 25: 21-23**

This sentimentality concerning children is not an isolated account in the bible. There was a priest who acted in the same manner, and suffered the consequences of that mistake also.

And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, "Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar,

to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honour thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?" Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, "I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever:" but now the LORD saith, "Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

**1 Samuel 2:27-30**

If you have been called by God and made the commitment to serve him, then I must warn you that this is not an easy path you have chosen. Jesus is looking for 100% commitment and surrender so that he can fulfil his purposes in your life and on this earth. We all have a choice. Even as parents, we have to decide which side we are on if our children flaunt their waywardness and ungodly lifestyle. Jesus is always asking the question, "Do you love me more than these?"

He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

**Matthew 10:37**

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth,

do I hate.

**Proverbs 8:13**

Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserves the souls of his saints; he delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.

**Psalms 97:10**

## Chapter 3

# Rebekah

**T**here's something very beautiful about a love story, and the account of how Isaac got his wife Rebekah is a perfect love story arranged by God.

In Genesis 24 we read that Abraham, who had now reached 140 years of age and had buried his beloved wife Sarah 3 years before, was now concerned for the future of his son, Isaac. Sarah and Isaac seemed to share a very special bond, which is understandable seeing as Sarah had been regarded as barren for 89 years before giving birth to this precious child. His very existence had washed away all those years of stigma, failure, criticism, scorn, emptiness, inadequacy, and so many other painful hurts she had been subjected to throughout her life. She

had valued so very much the faithful love of her dear husband who had clung to her through thick and thin, and would be eternally grateful to God for opening her womb to not only give her a son, but that she should be the one chosen to provide her husband with the 'promised seed', the heir to all Abraham's promises from God. I believe no child could have been loved more intensely by both parents than Isaac. The child born by Hagar, Sarah's surrogate mother, had been sent away, ensuring Abraham's full attention was on Isaac. So at 40 years of age, some time after his mother died, Isaac still missed her terribly and sorely grieved.

And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." And the servant said unto him, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou came?" And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that swore unto

me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again." And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning that matter. And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

**Genesis 24:1-10**

## **Specific Instructions**

Abraham's chief steward, Eliezer (meaning God is help), was given specific instructions concerning how to acquire a wife for his son. Under no circumstances was he to take a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites who were close by but he was to go back to the country, and family, where Abraham had come from and choose a wife from there.

Now that was some journey! It was over 500 more miles from Haran to Canaan. That's the distance in a series of more-or-less straight lines on a map. Of course mountain paths are not straight lines. How far would it have been on ancient roads and pathways? Imagine walking that distance at perhaps 10-20 miles a day when you're really moving. The entourage would need to find food and

water for both animals and people. They must defend themselves from bandits along the road, and the people through whose land they must pass. They would also have to endure harsh weather and sandstorms.

Abraham stressed to Eliezer that if he found such a bride for his son and she refused to leave her family, then he was freed from his obligation. Knowing full well that his family was well steeped in idol worship the servant was instructed that under no circumstances was he to take Isaac to join her – she had to come away from her family, and all the idolatry and moon worship, to take her position beside his son to inherit the promises. She, too, had to be numbered among the 'called out ones'. She needed to leave her past behind her.

Abraham might be old in years, but he certainly remembered vividly where he had come from. In the first scripture below Terah (meaning 'wanderer' 'loiterer'), Abraham's father, was specifically named. God had spoken to him first, before Abraham, to make the journey to Canaan but he hadn't managed to go any further than Haran. He preferred to 'loiter' in idolatry rather than make the break and get to know the real God.

And Joshua said unto all the people, "Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served

other gods."

Joshua 24:2

"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:14-15

## No hidden agendas

This was no simple task for Eliezer to undertake. At one point in his history Eliezer had been next in line to inherit everything from Abraham as his master was childless. The very fact that he obeyed Abraham showed the tremendous measure of loyalty and respect he had for him. There were no hidden agendas when he embarked on his journey, he fully intended to succeed in what he was commissioned to do.

Eliezer walked blindly as he travelled to the city of Nahor. He had never been to this country before and had certainly never met Abraham's family so wouldn't know his relations even if he fell over them. As he asked God for help he devised a plan.

And he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."

**Genesis 24:12-14**

He had no sooner spoken his prayer to the Lord when a gorgeous young woman came to the well carrying a water pitcher upon her shoulder. Eliezer couldn't believe his eyes ... she was just what he had been looking for – beautiful, unmarried, untainted.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up.

**Genesis 24:15-16**

He ran to meet her and asked for a drink from her pitcher. Her response was immediate and extremely

generous, for the 10 camels he had travelled with had come very far and were extremely thirsty.

And she said, "Drink, my lord": and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

**Genesis 24:18-21**

Her willingness to help a total stranger had earned a generous reward from Eliezer who did not stint with the gifts he gave to her. He presented her with a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold even before asking who she was and whether it would be possible for himself and his entourage to lodge in her father's house. After revealing her identity to Eliezer she told him with confidence that in her father's house there would be every provision he would need for those whom had accompanied him and also the animals. Imagine his shock and delight to find that she was none other than the grand-daughter of his master's brother Nahor – Abraham was her great-uncle! God had led him right to the family front door! Eliezer bowed his head in gratitude to God for what he had done.

## Eliezer meets Laban

The young woman, Rebekah, ran off to tell her family what had just happened and that they were to prepare to accommodate the wealthy traveller she had just met. Her brother, Laban, was particularly interested in the gifts she was dangling before them all, so he ran out to the well to bring the visitors with him to the house.

And Rebekah had a brother, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well. And it came to pass, **when he saw the earring and bracelets upon his sister's hands**, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, "Thus spake the man unto me"; that he came unto the man; and, behold, he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, "Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore stand thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels."

Genesis 24:29-31

Laban was Rebekah's brother, not her father, and he immediately took matters into his own hands after spying the extravagant gifts his sister showed to the family. He was a very greedy man and didn't want to miss any opportunity for gain. Even though it was not the thing to do, he ran off to the well himself to greet the visitors and welcome them into his home saying that provision had already been made. It appeared that as

soon as Eliezer got to the house food had indeed been prepared and was set before them, but Eliezer would not eat until he had delivered his burden by making known the errand he was on.

He embarked on his story by stating that he was in actual fact the servant of their relative, Abraham, whom the Lord had blessed greatly; so that he had become great with: flocks, herds, silver, gold, menservants, maidservants, camels, and asses. He went on to share that Sarah, his master's wife, had miraculously given birth to a son when they were both old: and unto this son Abraham had given all that he possessed. He then explained his errand in that Abraham had made him swear, saying, "You shall not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: but you shall go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son from there."

### **Will she go?**

Sitting before Bethuel, Rebekah's father, and Laban, Eliezer explained all that he had been commissioned with before he set out on his journey and how Abraham had told him that God would prosper him on his mission, but made it quite clear that if the woman was not willing and refused to go with him back to the land where Abraham dwelt, then he would be free from his obligation to bring back a bride. But then he went on to tell the events of the day and how he had stumbled upon Rebekah

at the well, how she had been so quick to give them water when asked, and how amazed he was to find that she was in fact the very grand-daughter of Abraham's brother, Nahor! This was no coincidence as far as he was concerned, he knew that he had been guided by the Lord to this very spot and hoped that his journey had not all been in vain. He then asked Bethuel to deal kindly with him and let him know what he could say to his master, either yes or no. Bethuel and Laban looked at each other and both confessed that this thing must be of the Lord so they couldn't say anything against the match, he could take Rebekah back with him to marry Abraham's son.

Eliezer was delighted with the outcome of this conversation and openly worshipped the Lord, bowing himself down to the earth. He then brought out jewels of silver, of gold, and raiment, lavishly pouring them on Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. Then they celebrated together eating and drinking, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and when they rose up in the morning he said, "Send me away unto my master," but Rebekah's family wanted to delay his homeward journey requesting that they all stay for 10 days longer in celebration. Eliezer was such a considerate servant. It would have been so satisfying to the flesh to indulge for a few days, but he knew Abraham would be anxious wondering whether he had been successful, so made haste to get back to put him at rest. At this point Rebekah was given an opportunity to speak up. It seemed that Eliezer had painted such a

good and appealing picture of her future husband and in-laws that she did not hesitate and wanted to leave her family immediately to become the wife of this lavishly wealthy man she had only heard about. So, taking only her nurse, she willingly left everything that was familiar to her to become a 'called out one'.

### **Time to think**

However long it took for Eliezer to reach Haran he now had the same journey home, but in reverse, and it would certainly have taken a long time. Rebekah was among strangers, other than her nurse, but she needed this time in the wilderness to prepare herself for what lay ahead. She knew nothing of Isaac other than that he was the only son of her wealthy great-uncle who would one day inherit all things. She was moving forward and nearer each day trusting in what Eliezer had told her, hoping that she would be kindly treated by this man she was just about to become joined to. The fact that she was being married in the first place was not her choice, this had been decided by her father and brother, but the fact that she had decided to leave her home immediately was her choice. Why was she so eager? The culture she was leaving behind was one of extended families. I'm sure she would have envisaged that one day her mother would be there to see her get married, help her to bring up her children, and be there for her when she was going through marital difficulties. The family sent her away with a wonderful blessing saying to her, "You are our sister,

be the mother of thousands of millions, and let your seed possess the gate of those which hate them", but this move was in actual fact, cutting off all ties with her former family – she would never set eyes on her mother or loved ones again.

What a beautiful picture for us who have decided to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as he takes us to meet our future husband, Jesus Christ. Having never seen Jesus face to face, we have heard so much about him, encountered him in our spirits, and have learned to love him. As we journey through this life may we regard him as our goal, leaving all that would distract us behind, cutting off all that would tie us to this world, so that we can be joined at last to our Lord.

The journey for Rebekah was long and arduous, it will be the same for us. But the reward was great for when they approached the home of Abraham, Rebekah could see someone in the distance ...

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, "What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?" And the servant had said, "It is my master": therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her

into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

**Genesis 24:63-67**

The Bible tells the best love stories. This is every woman's dream, to be swept off her feet by the prince and loved without any questions being asked. Yes, there is such a thing as love at first sight, but it must be something very rare for so few people believe in it. Personally, I feel that if you are being prepared to meet the person whom God has also been preparing to meet you, then something spiritual will happen when you meet together. There will be a 'knowing', like a chemical reaction, something will quicken in your spirit. Ha-ha, but then I'm a woman and can readily fantasize over such things, for I am one of those blessed women who found the husband and true partner whom God had prepared for me.



## Chapter 4

# Esau

Abraham married a woman named Keturah who bore him 6 sons, showing there was nothing wrong with him and that he was still physically strong even though he was around 140 years old, but unfortunately, some of the women of this family seemed to suffer problems bearing children.

Sarah was barren – she was the wife, but also half-sister of Abraham; Rebekah was barren – the granddaughter of Abraham's brother; these women battled with the stigma of infertility & begged God to heal them. Sarah, after years of misery and hurt, conceived her one and only son at the age of 89 when God miraculously opened her womb. Rebekah, likewise, was married for 20 years

without any signs of pregnancy even though God had promised that Abraham's seed would be like the stars in the sky and the sand on the sea shore in number. Isaac interceded for his wife and eventually God answered his prayers. But even though God had seen their tears and heard their prayers Rebekah's pregnancy was a difficult period to endure, so much so that she inquired of the Lord why it should be this way.

And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it be so, why am I thus?" And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger."

**Genesis 25:20-23**

The Bible doesn't state how old Rebekah was when she was joined to Isaac, but after 20 years of being married it is certain that she was no longer a young woman. Pregnancy on the whole is not an altogether pleasant experience, although for some women even this condition is something to be relished. I am convinced Rebekah was delighted to find that she had conceived,

but from the details in the above scripture I am sure that this whole ordeal from beginning to end was endured rather than enjoyed. She was in so much distress that she tried to reason with God as to why he was allowing her to suffer so much seeing he'd answered their prayer and healed her womb. But from this very scripture we can see that God sees all, knows all, and is in control of all, concerning those he loves and has chosen for his purposes.

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

**Psalm 139:13-17**

How blessed Rebekah was for God shared with her what was going on. It didn't stop the pain and discomfort, but it greatly strengthened her knowing that there was a God-given reason for what she was experiencing. Rebekah would not have the pleasure of seeing a scan of her children leaping about in her womb so the word of

God was all that she could go on. How wonderful for her, then, when on the day she finally gave birth she found that she was the mother of twins! Not only that but they almost came into the world together for the second son to be born came out of her womb grasping hold of his older brother's foot, as though trying to grab that first place for himself. The struggle had continued right up to the point of birth! Now she knew for sure that what God had spoken to her was true. The first born son was named Esau, meaning 'hairy', because he looked as though he was wearing a hairy garment; and the second born was named Jacob, meaning 'heel-holder' or 'supplanter', because of the manner in which he was born.

Although twins, born within seconds of each other, the brothers grew up to lead completely separate lives, with completely different characters – Esau was a man of the field and a cunning hunter, with a very large outward presence; whereas Jacob who was a plain man, dwelling in tents, gave no outward indication of his inner struggle for greatness and supremacy. But Rebekah knew there was something special about the younger child, and that God had a purpose for him to fulfil.

## **Esau have I hated**

When did God's attitude towards Esau turn to hatred? Did he hate this child right from the beginning when he was yet in his mother's womb? Or did there come a day when Esau crossed a line and could not find a way back

to God, even though he had repented?

"I have loved you", saith the LORD. Yet ye say, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" saith the LORD: "yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

**Malachi 1:2**

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, "The elder shall serve the younger." As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

**Romans 9:10-15**

And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

**Genesis 25:27**

Nimrod also was a mighty hunter, and it is understood by many that this in actual fact meant that he was a man-hunter as well as an animal-hunter. He was a mighty one in the earth and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel,

in the land of Shinar. This was a man God needed to stop before he contaminated the whole earth with his insidious, antichrist ways.

He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.

**Genesis 10:9**

But when was it that Esau reached the point of no return, where there was no longer an opportunity for him to repent and receive forgiveness? The Bible sheds some light on God's assessment of Esau in Hebrews where he was classed as a fornicator and profane person. We know what it is to be a fornicator – to have sex with someone you are not married to. But what does being a profane person mean? The dictionary gives this explanation:

Showing no respect for a god or a religion, often through language: profane language. Funny, profane, and fearless.

**Cambridge Dictionary**

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

## Exposure

The character of Esau is being exposed in this scripture. Although he had been brought up in a godly environment, and was taught to have a reverent and healthy fear of God, he chose to walk on a different pathway. He proved his fearlessness and disregard for God by using blasphemous and filthy language, and abandoned himself to a degrading lifestyle, thus scorning the promises of God, and all the blessings he would one day inherit.

As the first born son he would be expected to take over from his father to both protect and increase the family fortune Isaac had already en-massed. He needed to be a wise and worthy leader who had a close walk with God to enable him to take Abraham's seed on in God's purpose and plan for their future, for he alone would have complete control. Unfortunately, Esau lived for the 'now', the future did not concern him, and this was why he was able to sell his birthright for a bowl of stew. Jacob did not rob Esau of this birthright, Esau willingly sold it to Jacob in exchange for food – they made a deal together. The fact that this birthright was reduced to the value of a plate of food showed God Esau's contempt for what greater men who had gone before him had highly esteemed. Being born with a 'silver spoon in his mouth' was a misplaced privilege where Esau was concerned.

And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, "Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint:" therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birthright." And Esau said, "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" And Jacob said, "Swear to me this day;" and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.

Genesis 25:29-34

## Following the rules

I believe Isaac would have brought up his children in the same way that his own father had brought him up, in that he would teach them God's ways, to do justice and judgement. I have absolutely no reason to doubt that both Esau and Jacob were godly children, products of good parenting. I have known parents who have been very diligent concerning their offspring, having taught them by both instruction, and personal example in their own lifestyle, thus bringing them up in a godly fashion, but then, when the children reached an age where they could make their own choices they have decided to tread on a completely different path. Our job as parents is to ... train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6). We

shall all, as parents, have to give an account for the way we have brought our children up whilst they were in our care, but we cannot be held responsible for the actions of our children once they have reached the age of maturity.

## **The way to a man's heart**

**And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison:  
but Rebekah loved Jacob.**

**Genesis 25:28**

Isaac was a godly man, he'd been brought up by Abraham in whom God had great confidence when he said, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgement". So how could such a godly man as Isaac love the son God hated?

It seems to me that Esau's attitude changed with age. Perhaps it was his appetite for both adventure and different flesh. He would go to the surrounding countries and look out for himself foreign women. He also was dissatisfied with killing for food the animals which his wealthy father owned and had reared on their own farm land, preferring rather to go into the fields and hunt, creeping up stealthily on his prey, thus regarding the need to eat as an opportunity for blood sport. He learned culinary arts which enabled him to spice up his kill and won the heart of Isaac because of it, for we read that Isaac loved to eat of his venison. Isaac could not view

his energetic and exciting son from God's perspective so overlooked his actions. Esau was a good hunter, and a splendid chef, so the satisfying of the belly clouded Isaac's godly judgement. Even in those days they knew that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach! Solomon, another fool, had much insight concerning an appetite for the good life.

When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat ... Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats: for as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: "Eat and drink", saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee. The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

**Proverbs 23:1-8**

To think that Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew, rather than a feast of spiced up meat, showed just how much he valued his future inheritance. He despised it. And this, I believe, was the point at which the rot set in. Once he had made the exchange – his birthright for this meagre bowl of stew – he realised how easy it was to compromise to satisfy his immediate needs. He was hungry, he needed feeding, he needed feeding NOW! He said he was at the point of death, but a drink of goat's milk would have given him strength enough to relieve his immediate problem. He didn't like the idea of his

brother refusing him, or having to wait for a proper meal. It hurt his pride as well as his stomach, so to get what he wanted, when he wanted it, he threw caution to the wind and compromised.

**Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.**

**Hebrews 12:16**

## **Foreign wives**

We can see this self-satisfying impatience displayed again in his choice of women. At the age of 40 he decided it was time to marry so he went against the wishes of his parents by mixing his Hebrew seed with that of foreign women in marriage. Why was this wrong? You may well ask.

We know that laws, commandments, rules, statutes, and testimonies were given to the children of Israel via Moses, but what we forget is that God laid a foundation before ever Moses came on the scene. Read the following verses spoken to Isaac during a famine.

**And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless**

thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." And Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

**Genesis 26:1-6**

God always wanted a personal relationship with individuals. Every significant step we take is intended to be ordained of God, but people usually do what is right in their own eyes, this was why Abraham was held in such high esteem by God, Abraham did everything God told him to do without question, and ended up being the 'father of faith' and 'friend of God'. You may think you're the 'friend of God' but if you consider that out of all the 4,000 years the Bible covers only one man was credited with this title, then I think your chances of being regarded so highly by God are very slim. You would need to be a very committed person indeed to claim such a relationship. God didn't only speak man to man with Abraham, he also called at his house and ate the meal which Abraham had prepared for God Almighty and the 2 angels he had brought with him. The Bible does not claim that Abraham was sinless, but it does claim that Abraham obeyed God in every single detail. Abraham set the precedent concerning wives for the descendants of the chosen seed, they were to come from

his own kindred, and they were not permitted to mingle their seed with the daughters of the Canaanites.

'And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac." And the servant said unto him, "Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?" And Abraham said unto him, "Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."

**Genesis 24:2-7**

Isaac would have instilled this principle into his own children for sure, but Esau was running his own life now that he had compromised with his birthright. He had walked out of the 'strait gate' and was off the 'narrow way' leaving the confines of his restricted family lifestyle so that he could walk on the 'broad road' and please himself.

## Un-identical twins

Even before Rebekah's children were born God had already mapped out the course each child would take. Before they had taken their first breath they were fighting for supremacy with each other in the womb. Jacob was hanging onto the heel of Esau even at the time of his birth. If God knew that the younger child would end up being the leader, and the one to carry on the line, then why didn't he just allow that child to be born first? Surely this would have saved a great deal of confusion and avoided many problems before they were encountered.

I hope this doesn't sound offensive, but I personally find that God can be very contrary. He seems to delight in making the way difficult just so that we stumble, make lots of mistakes to expose the weakness of our flesh and destroy any pride in our own achievements. And when we are on the floor battered and bleeding he picks us up, heals the hurts, then does something wonderful through us which brings great glory and honour to his name.

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea,

Esau

and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

**1 Corinthians 1:26-29**

Esau

Chapter 5

# Jacob Have I Loved

Jacob, although a twin, was certainly very different from his brother Esau, both physically and spiritually. Esau wanted to make a name for himself with his prowess, but Jacob wanted, above all else, the spiritual blessings of his forefathers. He could see the blatant disregard of Esau for everything which he considered sacred and hated the fact that just because he was fractionally older he would inherit them. If only he had been born first ...

And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison:  
but Rebekah loved Jacob.

**Genesis 25:28**

Rebekah had waited a long time for the promise God gave her to be fulfilled. She knew there was something

different about Jacob because of what God had told her during her difficult pregnancy, and even though this was an impossible promise naturally speaking, she had personally heard the voice of God – and this made all the difference. She held on, and on, and on, waiting to see how God would perform his word. It must have been a devastating shock for her to overhear Isaac instruct Esau to hunt for meat.

And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, "My son": and he said unto him, "Behold, here am I." And he said, "Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death: now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die."

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it.

**Genesis 27:1-5**

This was the worst possible conversation she could have overheard. It set all the alarm bells ringing in her heart and mind. Had God forgotten what he had told her? Where was God now in this situation? She had held on in faith for such a long time but it seemed that all her dreams were about to be shattered if she didn't do

something drastic.

## Family traits

Make no mistake, Rebekah was a woman in every sense of the word. She had come from a family who were masters of deceit, and artful at wheeling and dealing. Her father, and brother Laban, could not hide their avarice as Eliezer presented all the jewels and treasures when he had asked their permission to take her back with him as a bride for his master's son. She had not been given a choice as to whether or not she would marry this man she had never met, her choice was whether she wanted to go immediately or spend more time with her family before her departure. She opted for the first choice and readily left her mother, father, and everything familiar to go out into the unknown. Having left home at a very early age myself, this speaks volumes concerning the state of her home life to me. It seems she couldn't leave fast enough.

From the verses following in the account from the Bible we can see that Rebekah is as cunning as any woman can be, proving that these particular character traits ran in the family.

**And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, "Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, 'Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before**

my death.' Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee. Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death."

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing."

And his mother said unto him, "Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them."

And he went, and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved. And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son: and she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck: and she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

**Genesis 27:6-17**

I have no doubt that Rebekah often brought Esau's ungodly behaviour to the attention of Isaac in the hope that he would do something to go against protocol and make the decision not to leave the future of his family in the hands of this wayward son. But it is obvious that

Isaac and Esau had bonded and Isaac was blinded by his love for this boy. There was nothing for it but to take matters into her own hands and MAKE the word of the Lord come to pass.

She was so convinced what she was doing was justified that she was prepared to take upon herself any curse which Jacob could incur by following her instructions. I couldn't possibly stress how massive a deceit this was, and they both must have been extremely desperate to imagine this trick could work. Jacob and Esau were different in so many ways – not only the voice, but also the very smell and feel, one smooth whilst the other one hairy. How blind did they think Isaac was?

Jacob's heart must have been pounding like crazy but his mother spoke positive words into him all the time she was preparing the food he was to take to his father. She tirelessly worked away at cutting up the skins of the animals to cover his flesh, then dressing him in his brother's clothes. Yes, she went to great lengths to make sure this treachery would come off, and all the time she was assuring him that it would be at no cost to him personally even if he were found out, because she would take the curse upon herself. Jacob's mother convinced him that what he was doing was the right thing to do, so with that assurance he took the meal to his father's tent.

## **Isaac deceived**

And he came unto his father, and said, "My father": and he said, "Here am I; who art thou, my son?"

And Jacob said unto his father, "I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

And Isaac said unto his son, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son?"

And he said, "Because the LORD thy God brought it to me."

And Isaac said unto Jacob, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

And he said, "Art thou my very son Esau?"

And he said, "I am."

And he said, "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee."

And he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

And his father Isaac said unto him, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son." And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed."

**Genesis 27:18-27**

Something had gone dreadfully wrong in this family over the years for, not only did Isaac love and prefer the child whom God hated, but he was now so blind that he couldn't discern truth any more. When did the rot set in? He had witnessed such a godly example by his father, Abraham the friend of God, with whom he was still living when he got married at 40 years of age (although he had moved into his mother's tent with his new wife), and when he had his twins at 60. Abraham would certainly have had input, not only into the lives of his children, but also the lives of his grandchildren Esau and Jacob, who had the benefit of his wise words during their formative years until, when they were both 15, they buried their beloved grandfather who had now reached 175 years old.

How could Isaac be so deceived by this trick, especially after having a personal relationship with his sons for all these years? If one of my children called out to me in my house and they were out of my vision, I would know which child it was. If they rang me up and spoke to me on the telephone, I would know which child it was even if they didn't announce themselves. I can distinguish between the different voices of all my friends and acquaintances over the telephone and this is not a super power, millions of people share this same ability. So why couldn't Isaac tell the difference between his own children Esau and Jacob?

He could! His problem was that he KNEW the voice, but couldn't detect the counterfeit. He knew 'Esau' sounded strange that day, but doubted what he was hearing by each lie given in response to each of his questions.

Question – "Who are you?"

Lie – "Esau , your firstborn. I have done what you told me, now come and eat."

Yes, Isaac had told his son privately to take his weapons, his quiver and his bow, and go out to the field to get some venison and make him savoury meat, such as he loved. Nobody else, to his knowledge, had witnessed this conversation.

Question – "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly?"

Lie – "Because the LORD thy God brought it to me.

What a godly answer! He had to be telling the truth if he brought God into the conversation.

The words were convincing, but there was still an element of doubt in his mind. Jacob told him to come near so he could feel him and felt the skins of the goat kids upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck, which gave him another indication that this truly was Esau, but the voice still didn't sound right. Jacob then told him to come and kiss him taking this opportunity to smell his clothes. And this convinced him! The wolf

in sheep's clothing!

He had heard the voice, and knew that there was something wrong, but went along with the deception and had nobody else to blame but himself because he had trusted in his natural senses rather than listening to the voice. And how many of us fall for this trick? It's the oldest trick in the book. Even Jesus was tempted with this one in the wilderness when he had to discern between the 'word' of God and the 'voice' of God. If we can't discern between the 'word' of God and the 'voice' of God we'll end up as blind – physically and spiritually – as Isaac.

### **Jacob is blessed**

So because Jacob had satisfied his father's appetite by feeding his belly, and had felt and smelled like Esau, Isaac handed the blessing of the firstborn to him on a plate.

"See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed: therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

**Genesis 27:27-29**

After all those years Jacob had finally attained what he was after. He had waited such a long time to see this day

fulfilled, watching helplessly Esau's blatant disregard for the godliness of this family's future. He had schemed, yes, but had certainly waited patiently for the time to implement his plans because obtaining the blessing was what he was focussed on. And now it was his, and nobody could take it away. He was instilled with such a faith in God that he knew for certain that what Isaac had said in that tent, even though it was done in secret, was done before God, and God would bring it to pass.

Yes, God sorted out the problem of how the prophecy concerning Esau and Jacob was going to be fulfilled, but it came at the cost of exposing the ungodliness in each member of this family. Jacob was certainly not the only one at fault here.

As for Isaac and his near death experience ... Well it's very sad that a man of God did not know when his time to meet his Maker had come. He lived over 20 more years after this incident, for it is recorded that both Esau and Jacob buried him aged 180 years after Jacob returned from serving Laban bringing his 4 wives and 11 children to his own land.

### **The penny drops**

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said

unto his father, "Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me."

And Isaac his father said unto him, "Who art thou?"

And he said, "I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau."

And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, "Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed."

**Genesis 27:30-33**

Oh no, what had he done! He realised in a moment he had been deceived and it was too late to do anything about it. This was a nightmare for Isaac, he would not have believed this to be possible. Not for one moment would he have considered the idea that Jacob would come in using a false identity to steal what belonged to his brother, and he would certainly not think that his wife could have a hand in it too. It's at times like this when the scales fall from our eyes and we see where our actions have led. Perhaps this was God's kindness to Isaac before he left this world, for at least he had an opportunity to repent and turn his life around in the years that would follow.



Chapter 6

# Jacob Hears God

And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, "I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to

the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, "Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

**Genesis 28:10-17**

## **You have not chosen me, I have chosen you**

It's funny how we have this idea that we choose to serve God as though it was all our idea in the first place. I want to emphasise here that the only people with free will are the ones whom God has called. There is a big difference between free will and predestination. Jesus said:

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

**John 15:16**

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the

acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

2 Timothy 2:24-26

Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

Psalm 124:7

Without the initial call, or the snare being broken, there would be no opportunity for us to say, "Yes" to God. It's very simple to understand if I explain it this way ... unless Maurice had asked me to marry him, then I would not have had the opportunity to accept the proposal. He has to do the choosing first. If he had chosen somebody else then I wouldn't have been able to say, "Yes".

In the first of the aforementioned scriptures we read that God announces who he is – "The Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac." Up to this moment in time Jacob had only known him as the God of his fathers, but now God was about to change all that for he let Jacob know that he also had been chosen ... "And, behold, I am with you!" What a shock for Jacob! Especially since the very fact he was running away from home was to escape the fury of his brother whom he had just supplanted out of his inheritance. He was fleeing from the shame of lying, cheating, and deceiving his own father. Why, at the very time when all he could see was this mess which he had brought upon himself by his

wrong doing, would God visit him with this proposal? It didn't make sense!

God knows exactly when to turn up. This was not a random conversation as far as God was concerned. Jacob had been put in this situation just so he could see himself as he truly was. How can any of us ever really understand the grace of God unless the scales fall from our eyes? We are so besotted with ourselves that we are completely blind to what God and others see in us. Our hearts are so deceitful and desperately wicked that they deceive us into believing we are actually good. It is a mercy of God that we sink to rock bottom because it's there he reaches out his hand and lifts us up, bringing us into a new place with himself. Words spoken from experience, I might add!

### **Pierce my ear**

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

**Genesis 28:20-22**

It's easy to criticise Jacob at this juncture by saying that he was making a deal with God. I've heard preachers

remonstrate saying that this deal was all one sided, Jacob was expecting so much from God first before he would make a commitment. But I think this was pretty sensible. Up until this point he had known the Lord to be the God of Abraham and Isaac, he had no personal relationship with him. Not only that, he had heard many wonderful stories about his forefathers and was filled with admiration. It was not surprising to him that God had dealt well with them. But why would God be interested in him? He was well aware of his shortcomings. He'd made such a mess of things that he was now on the run hoping to save his life. I actually think it's very difficult for children brought up in a 'Christian' or 'religious' family to find their own footing with God because everything they know about him has been a second-hand experience passed down by their parents. And it doesn't matter whether the parents are godly or hypocrites – in fact sometimes the more godly the parents, the harder it is for the children to find God for themselves.

In September 2014 I left my 14 year old daughter, Tamar, with a group of people who had travelled to Uganda specifically to do some practical work on an orphanage we were in the process of building there, whilst I continued my journey to preach at a few conferences scheduled around the country. I knew I had left her in very safe hands, but didn't realise the battles she would experience out there. The orphanage building project had been specifically targeted by witches in the area who wanted to thwart what we were doing in every way

possible. They would surround the place with human faeces and witchcraft symbols, and also wrap unravelled cassette tape containing recorded curses around the trees and bushes belonging to the site.

On two consecutive nights apparitions manifested in front of Tamar which were intended to freak her out as she was the youngest member on the work team. The first night she had been really afraid and woke up another older member of the team who prayed with her and gave her the support she needed as I was not there, but on the second night she realised that this was something she had to face herself. She decided she needed to call on 'her' God, rather than the God of her mother and stand up to this thing which was trying to fill her with fear. Praise God, she told this thing to go away in the name of Jesus without calling on the assistance of others and was so excited to see that God had listened to her, and the apparition vanished. It really built her faith in God, and has made a massive difference to her development as a believer.

Our children need to find God for themselves. We cannot pass our God on to them. We can share all our experiences and knowledge with them, yes, but a personal relationship with our God is something they have to develop for themselves. And if God doesn't meet them on that personal level, then all they will ever have is 'knowledge', never 'experience'. Jacob was on a journey, and God had arranged all these circumstances just so that Jacob would be at his most vulnerable, feeling he'd messed up his entire

life, because now God would get his full attention.

### **Jacob, you worm!**

If there was one time in Jacob's life that you would expect God to say, "Well, Jacob, you worm, I've witnessed everything Isaac said to you when he promised you all those good things, but because of your selfishness and wickedness I'm going to annul it and you forfeit everything. The promise I made to your mother before you were born is going to be reversed and Esau will now enjoy the blessing that is lawfully his," then it would be now. But God didn't say that. In fact he told him the same thing he told Abraham, that he would give the land to him, and to his seed; and his seed would be as the dust of the earth, and he would spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in him and his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. Then he made the stunning promise that he would be with him, and would keep him in all places whither he went, and would bring him again into this land; for he would not leave him, until he had done that which he had spoken to Jacob of.

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee," saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

**Isaiah 41:14**

God knew what was in Jacob, that he was nothing better than a worm, but Jacob needed to know too. Why would

God look on Jacob as a worm? Jacob was born in sin. He came from sinful parents, who had been born of their sinful parents. The sins of the fathers were passed down to the 3rd and 4th generation, so what chance of being righteous did Jacob have? Absolutely none, but then we know the reason for that, don't we ...

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.

**1 Corinthians 1:26:29**

As far as 'foolish', 'weak', 'base', and 'despised' were concerned, Jacob fitted the bill perfectly. He certainly qualified to be on God's list of candidates to be 'called'. But remember this, the worse we are to begin with, the greater the glory that goes to God when we allow him to fashion and perfect us.

People being healed, and miracles of finance, are nothing compared to this. I know because my family all started going to church because my mother was miraculously healed after 9 years of being registered

as 'incurable' on the hospital records. She witnessed and testified to everybody who knew what she was like before her miracle, and many people were introduced to Christ and the church. However, because my parents' lifestyle had not altered and they still physically fought together like cat and dog, where many times the police needed to assist and an ambulance summoned to take my mother to hospital where they would repair the damage inflicted on her by my father who had been army trained to become a champion boxer, then the testimony was wiped out and the new 'converts' faded into oblivion.

### **Joanna, you worm!**

Don't think Jacob is the only one who can hold the title of being a worm, I made a very good 'runner up'. Some of the well read prophets of the bible also knew their worth and said the same thing of themselves.

I have said to corruption, "Thou art my father": to the worm, "Thou art my mother, and my sister."

**Job 17:14**

How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?

**Job 25:6**

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

**Psalm 22:6**

God had been really good to me when I managed to leave home at the age of 16. He had put me to work in his vineyard, my life had meaning, I thoroughly enjoyed being the Pastor's secretary, the church organist, and a singer in the church musical group, and lived to serve God. My involvement with these activities kept me out of so much trouble. God really kept me occupied. But there came a point in my life when the temptations of the world found a hook in me and I was pulled towards it.

I never stopped attending the church or fulfilling my duties, I knew in the depth of my heart that attending church was my means of spiritual survival, but I also realised that what I'd once regarded a privilege had now become an obligation which I tried to do as quickly as possible so that I had time for myself. I began to clock watch and resented every minute past the time when the service should have finished because I had to dash home and get changed before being collected in the flashy car, by my flashy companion, to be taken to the expensive clubs or discos in Manchester. Nobody in the church knew what I was up to, and was truly afraid of being spotted whilst out on my worldly expeditions and word leaked to the ears of my Pastor, as he would have felt duty bound to remove me from my positions in the church ... and then where would I be?

I was actually in a mess! Trapped! I share about how I was brought up in a hypocritical Christian home by parents

who preached one thing and practised another, but this bad apple – me – didn't fall far from that particular tree. I was a first class hypocrite! Fortunately, I did not relish this situation as I realised I was living in 2 camps, unable to really enjoy either, which left me empty and dry. I knew I was trapped and asked God to deliver me. I have already written about this in other books. This was a massive life changing event for me where I actually had a personal encounter with God. He made it clear to me he had no illusions about what I was doing, but that it was leading nowhere, and if I would repent (meaning alter my ways and walk in a different direction) then he would do something marvellous in my life.

We have to realise that nobody will ever understand the grace of God until they see themselves as God sees them. Even if we just had a peak at ourselves through the eyes of others who observe us it would shock us, how much worse when God, who knows all truth, can see right into our hearts? We are all filthy, rotten sinners with no hope of redemption outside of God. But we are blind to our own shortcomings and this is why God, in his rich mercy, allows us to fall so far, just so that he can say ... "Fear not ..."

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee," saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

**Isaiah 41:14**

## **True miracles**

The manna which the Children of Israel gathered during the first 5 days of the week was good for a day but if they presumed to allow some to remain for the next day it bred worms. But on the 6th day, when they were specifically instructed to gather a double portion which was supposed to sustain them the next day, being their Sabbath, there was not any worm therein.

Here the word 'worm' refers to caterpillars or larvae, as bred from putridity, which feed on corrupting matter. All we do in the flesh, in our own strength, using our own understanding and reasoning may sustain us for today, but will have no spiritual value in our spiritual tomorrow. It doesn't matter how much, or how little, we either work or achieve in the flesh, it will make no difference because the flesh cannot please God. In fact, doing more than God intends us to do could almost be classed as worse than not doing enough, because it will just breed worms and stink. We will certainly have nothing to show God when we face him to give an account for the deeds done in our flesh.

We have been ordained to bring forth fruit (John 15:16), but it is God's ultimate intention that our fruit remains. Only doing the extraordinary, at God's specific command like collecting that double portion on God's 6th day, will be regarded as something of value in the eyes of God. There is nothing that speaks louder to the world than a changed life. Yes, I've witnessed many miracles, but the

greatest miracle of all is that of a dysfunctional family being put back together, husband loving wife, mother loving daughter, and father loving son, and all living together in unity and peace. Now that is a true miracle!

Could God possibly use this situation and transform Jacob, this twister, this worm, so that he could get glory and honour? Our story has only just begun.

## Jacob Hears God

Chapter 7

# This Doesn't Feel Like Blessing!

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father."

And he said, "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing." And he said, "Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." And he said, "Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, "Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given

to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?"

And Esau said unto his father, "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father." And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

Genesis 27:34-38

The pain that this family went through because of rivalry between two brothers was unbelievable. Esau had done nothing wrong at this particular point in time, he had acted in perfect obedience to the instruction of his father. Having spent most of the day in the fields hunting for venison, he brought it home, cooked it, and was now presenting his offering to his father only to be told that the blessing had already been stolen.

Even though Isaac knew his blessing had been taken by trickery, his conscience towards God would not allow him to take it back and give it to the rightful owner. What had taken place, the words that had been spoken, the prophecy which had been given, were all done before Almighty God and it was more than Isaac could do to go back on what he had said. That, in his eyes, even in his sad state with God, was more than he could do even though Esau begged him with distraught tears and pleadings. He yearned for this boy and could feel his pain, but what was done was done. All he could do was give forth what the Holy Spirit was sharing with him at

that moment.

And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."

And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob."

**Genesis 27:39-41**

This meant war! There wasn't anything to look forward to with the pithy blessing his father had tried to console him with other than the promise that one day he would break off this vile yoke from his neck and no longer be servant to his brother. But this certainly did not suffice now. His hatred boiled within him and he vowed that when his father was dead he would see to it that Jacob was dead also.

## **Time to run**

Whatever Esau had said in his heart at that moment must have come out of his lips for someone came running to warn Rebekah that Esau was intent on murder, and she knew that he was well capable of performing this lethal act. Immediately she called Jacob.

And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, "Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother to Haran; and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send, and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?"

**Genesis 27:42-45**

Rebekah's brain was in turmoil and she fought hard to work on a solution, but the only thing she could think of was getting her beloved son out of the way of the wrath of Esau. Jacob was physically no match for him as Esau was a mighty hunter, full of stealth and prowess. He could easily take out Jacob whilst he was unaware just like Cain who, consumed with anger because he was full of envy, had killed his brother Abel. She knew this was a real threat and blood would be spilled unless this problem was dealt with immediately. Esau just needed time to cool down. He'd been angry before when Jacob took away his birthright, but with time had calmed down and hardly ever thought about it. The same would happen with the blessing too, for they all lived together anyway – it would hardly make any difference. But she needed to act now, so the first thing she did was approach Isaac.

And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; and give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padanaram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

**Genesis 27:46-28:1-5**

## **Finally cutting the umbilical cord**

It is also interesting to note that Jacob was not ready for marriage when Esau found Canaanite brides for himself at the age of 40. After quite a bit of research into the Bible to write this book I have come to realise that Jacob was quite old, in his 70's in fact, when he left the family nest to go in search of a wife. And this he only did because of the necessity to escape the fury of his

murderous brother. Was he tied to his mother's apron strings? She certainly had quite a hold over him to get him to agree to deceive his father the way he did. Did you know the name Rebekah means 'ensnarer'? Yes, she was one tricky woman who knew how to manipulate and get what she wanted. For years she had waited, holding on in faith that God would perform all that he spoke to her, but when it came to the ultimate test her true heart was exposed. And as Jacob was not shocked at what his mother proposed he should do, it seems that her lifestyle was not out of character with her name.

The fact that Jacob was now leaving home didn't upset Rebekah too much for in her mind it wouldn't be long before he returned with his new wife, for indeed that is what happened with herself and Isaac. Within a matter of weeks all Abraham's family had been reunited and there was great rejoicing as they indulged in the wedding celebrations together. Little did she know that she had indeed invoked a curse upon herself for this may well have been the very last time she would see his face. She would certainly have no communication with him as he would be miles away with no telephones or internet. When Jacob did return to bury his father, who died at the age of 180 years, together with Esau, there is no mention that he ever saw Rebekah. Perhaps God had found it necessary for the spiritual growth of Jacob to completely cut these ties for good.

### **Cut off from family**

I see a remarkable similarity here with, not only myself, but also many people. If we are going to get anywhere at all with God we need to stand on our own two feet and be cut free from all other props.

At the age of 16, God told me that I would never be a Christian if I continued to live in my family home. My parents were both 'born again Christians', and as a family we had experienced God's miraculous healing, protection, and provision in so many ways, but the secret home life of our family was appalling. It would have been better to keep our mouths closed instead of talking about God and Jesus to our neighbours because by our life style we were just dragging God's name through the mud. When I left home at that early age, I was able to breathe and discover myself without their constant influence.

A similar thing happened to me at the age of 30. Circumstances were that I left my church, which also meant leaving my Pastor, the very man who had been my support and guide from the age of 14. He was such a godly, holy man, I hung on to his every word and action because he was the real deal, nothing remotely like all the other hypocrites I knew. I was so covetous of his relationship with God. I wanted so badly what he had. But it was only when I left the church, and his influence, that God was able to reach me. I had to let go of all the props to have a real personal relationship with God.

Whether the influence is good or bad, if it's a prop, and you are relying on that support, then somewhere along the road it has to be taken away for you to know God properly, yourself.

When a child is born it is attached by the umbilical cord to its mother. She has been its life support. She has provided food, a home, safety, security, breath, everything. But once that child is born it has to be cut free. If it isn't cut free then the mother who once gave it life will end up killing it. The child needs to be freed from its mother. The child can't cut the cord, but the mother can. Unfortunately, the mother all too often needs help herself in this area for she is totally exhausted after just bringing the child into the world, so others are required to give a hand to cut the cord. And if, when you are all grown up and truly seeking a personal relationship with God, you find that you can't cut yourself free from family, all the supports, and things that are tying you down, then God in his mercy will do it for you. There's no other way.

## **The parental role model**

Taking matters into our own hands is never a good idea. My mother was one of those women who always wanted to know where she stood so forced my Dad's hand to marry her at the end of the 2nd world war, using the threat that she wouldn't be there waiting for him if there was no ring on her finger.

Dad had found his niche in the army for he had worked his way somewhat through the ranks and commanded respect. Being an orphan and coming from poverty he found this position to be what he needed to feel like a real 'man' so decided to make a career of the army even after the war had ended. Unfortunately, my mother was still living with her parents as a married woman with two young children.

No matter how much she pleaded with my father he would not leave his job. After many years she told me how she had written to his superior officer explaining her situation, stating that she needed her husband to help her raise the children as she couldn't do it alone – or words to that effect. But whatever she had written it transpired that my father was discharged and she got her wish granted. But it was the worst thing she could have done for he never forgave her, and the bitterness was a permanent undercurrent throughout their marriage.

Unfortunately, Rebekah was a role model for her children whether she liked it or not. Whatever her children saw her doing, they would do. What she said, and the way she said it, would be indelibly printed on their hearts and minds and would come out of them when she least expected it. It's no different for us in our own households. In the Bible we read:

**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for**

instruction in righteousness.

**2 Timothy 3:16**

God has graciously allowed us to see not only the strengths in the lives of those he has called, but also their weaknesses, so that those with eyes to see and ears to hear may benefit from their experiences. There is a way to please God and it's certainly not via taking matters into our own hands. Rebekah's practical example showed her children that it was fine to lie, cheat, and steal if it was all in a good cause. A far cry from her uncle Abraham's example of patience and faith which was ultimately rewarded by a massive miracle when his barren wife Sarah finally produced the promised seed. There is a 'right' way to win our victory, everything must be 'above board' so that our witness and testimony is not brought into question, and our God is not dishonoured.

**And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.**

**2 Timothy 2:5**

We must show our children by our daily lifestyle that God will reward faith, for he certainly does. We must not portray a false image of God to them, no matter how much our faith is put to the test. It's so important to maintain godly principles for that old 'Adamic' nature of ours is always on the prowl looking for a licence to get away with things that please 'self'.

## Smacked bottom

I remember years ago being in a store with a dear friend of mine, a fine Christian whom I respected. As we walked down one particular aisle she spotted a broken packet of raisins and, smiling cheekily at me, grabbed some in her hand and started to eat them. She grabbed another handful and put them into my hand motioning for me to eat them too. I did, even though I was initially stunned that she had done such a thing in front of me, especially as she was a 'Christian'! But this action started a snowball rolling and it wasn't long before I was on the lookout for broken packets of dried fruit, sweets, and chocolates myself whenever I shopped. And all the while I told myself that the store owners made a massive profit from all its shoppers so I wasn't doing them any harm.

Some years later, after coming home from a week long ministry trip with my husband, the people looking after my children announced that my son, Isaac, had something to confess. Apparently, whilst out together on a shopping expedition, he had 'stolen' some sweets from a broken packet and eaten them! He was threatened there and then that his actions would be reported to me when I got back home, so he could expect trouble.

As I listened to the account of this 'terrible sin' I looked at my 8 year old son feeling unbelievably uncomfortable.

I knew that I had brought this on him because of my personal behaviour. He was only copying what he had seen me do. I had become so used to doing it I didn't even realise I was doing anything wrong. I felt so ashamed that I had set my children such an abysmal example. Instead of my son getting into trouble I felt that God was actually smacking my bottom, and determined there and then that my children would see a different 'me' in future.

Rebekah tricked her husband into doing what she wanted instead of waiting for God to fulfil the promise in his own time and own way, but in doing so she actively encouraged her son Jacob to disrespect and dishonour his father. If the prayers of the husband are hindered because he doesn't treat his wife correctly, how much more will the wife's prayers suffer the same fate?

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price ..... Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

**1 Peter 3:3-7**

We can easily criticise Rebekah for what she did, but I'll bet there's an ensnaring Rebekah lurking in most

of us if we're honest – and she needs dealing a death blow!

### **All things ...**

I'm amazed, when reading this account, at how calm Isaac was in all this. I think this is one of the most dishonourable deceptions recorded in scripture, where a wife and son plot together to steal the inheritance. This inheritance was going to effect the whole future of God's chosen people yet there is no mention anywhere in scripture to say that Isaac, or God, rebuked either Jacob or Rebekah for their scheming.

I have thought about this long and hard. What is going on here? Why was there no reprimand? Why was Jacob allowed not only to get away with this behaviour, but also be blessed in the process? I'll tell you why ... he wanted that blessing! No, you don't understand ... he REALLY wanted that blessing! It consumed him. It's all he could think about. He wanted the blessing of God in his life so much that he was prepared to go to any lengths to get it. He risked everything to go through with this deceit, it could have turned out so badly for him if God had been judging his actions rather than his heart. He overcame his fear because in his mind this was the opportunity which would never present itself again. He had to act now or forget it forever.

Hundreds of years later we read where the Israelites had their opportunity to inherit the promised land.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, "Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them". And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel.....

And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, "Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: and see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many; and what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds; and what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the time of the firstripe grapes.

And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong

## This Doesn't Feel Like Blessing!

that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan."

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

But the men that went up with him said, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we." And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."

And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

Numbers 13:1-3, 16-20 & 25-14:1

You know the story well. The Israelites were so filled with fear that they not only cried all night, but also wanted to stone Moses and Aaron, and vote in new leaders! They would do anything but fight for what they wanted. Why? Because they didn't really want it.

They still had the 'slave mentality' and were not up to fighting for what they wanted. Their circumstances had been changed, but their minds had not been renewed. They had been freed from slavery but their spirits had not been revived by all the miracles which they had seen with their own eyes. What did God have to do to wake these people up? Well, if the bomb doesn't wake you, it will surely kill you. These people will have rationalised every miracle God did – especially when they saw that the Egyptian magicians could also replicate what God did. Some people just can't see God – even when he's standing right in front of them.

Don't ever think that you will get anything from God unless you really, really want it, and are prepared to fight for it. And I'm not talking about fighting physically. We are firmly told in Ephesians 6 to get that armour on and not allow the devil to divert us from our calling. We will never inherit the promises of God if we don't do battle, and for us the battle is in our mind. We must bring every thought into captivity – analyse every thought to see where it has come from so that we don't fall for the wiles of the enemy and become subject to fear instead of faith.

Even though the actions of Jacob and Rebekah were very wrong, I believe the intents of their hearts were very right, and only God can judge those. He could see that Rebekah held on to the promise and was not prepared to let it go. Her faith was rewarded, even though she went about it in the wrong way. Just because

they couldn't envisage an alternative for Jacob receiving the blessing rather than Esau, doesn't mean that God couldn't have had another plan. Who would have thought of opening up the Red Sea as an alternative for Moses and the Israelites to escape the Egyptian army? Never underestimate our God. When we take matters into our own hands we rob him of the pleasure of amazing us.

Can you spot the obvious difference between these two scriptures?

**And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.**

**Mark 11:12**

**Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

**Luke 12:32**

This Doesn't Feel Like Blessing!

## Chapter 8

# Rachel

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. And he said unto them, Is he well? And

they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep. And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

**Genesis 29:1-11**

## Buying a bride

**A**lready God was showing Jacob that he could rely on his promise to be with him because he brought him, like he did with Eliezer, to the very spot where his mother's relatives lived. It's no wonder Jacob should be overcome with emotion as he was proving for himself that the promises God made were to him personally, and they were very real.

It's quite amazing that even after managing to obtain the birthright plus the blessing of the most wealthy man in

his country of birth by stealth he now found himself a pauper. Unlike Eliezer who was sent to seek a wife for his father, Jacob was so busy trying to save his own skin by fleeing from the fury of his brother that he had not been able to prepare a dowry to take with him for his future bride. When making his commitment to God at Bethel he spoke these words ...

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God...

**Genesis 28:20-21**

He reached the house of his future in-laws with nothing. Even though his father, who inherited everything from his own father Abraham, had vast wealth, Jacob had nothing to show of his family heritage other than the fact that they were all related. He was penniless and was even prepared to work for his Uncle Laban just so he could survive. After only one month's trial period Laban could see that Jacob was special and made a difference in the work place, and that it would be to his own personal advantage to make sure Jacob remained as part of his work force.

Laban was not a stupid man and could see with his own two eyes what was going on in the heart of Jacob concerning Rachel. Considering the character of Laban it's a wonder his conscience would not allow Jacob to work for him for nothing, but he asked Jacob to tell him

what he thought his wages should be. Jacob, who was well into his 70's and certainly not thinking of going anywhere other than where the love of his life was, said that he would work for 7 years to buy his bride? Now that's a huge price to pay! I suppose the fact that he said 7 years was like saying he was going to give his life for her as 7 is the number representing completeness – proving the value he placed on Rachel.

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be? And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

**Genesis 29:13-20**

At last the day finally dawned for Jacob to become one with his betrothed. He ran to Laban saying, "Give

me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her!" Oh yes, he had surely been counting the days and knew exactly when to claim his well earned wages. And true to his word Laban set about paying what was due.

What excitement and anticipation must have filled Jacob's heart that day as all the preparations were being made for the wedding feast. He'd never experienced a day like this in the whole of his life. After 7 years of exercising self control and discipline, which the bible says seemed to him like just a few days because of the love he had for Rachel, these hours must have been long as he exercised yet more patience waiting to hold this precious woman in his arms. The feast went on and on until finally, in the evening when it was dark, Laban presented his daughter to Jacob, fitly veiled as a bride should be allowing the bridegroom to be the first to unveil her.

They entered the dark bridal chamber. Words were not important now, they were at last able to touch, smell, taste. Jacob's eyes and gentleness had told Rachel many times, in many ways, how much he loved her, but now it was time to touch and become intimate. How blessed Jacob must have felt to at last be one with his love. That night's sleep must have been the most satisfying and blissful sleep he had ever experienced.

## **Tasting your own medicine**

And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

**Genesis 29:24-25**

Whoa! Would you believe it? The tables had been turned on him and he was now the one to experience what it was like to be tricked! What a turn of events. A word of warning for everyone reading this book, this is what Samuel the prophet says concerning how God deals with people ...

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unsavoury.

**2 Samuel 22:26-27**

Jacob was getting his 'just desserts'. Just because God had made a covenant with him and promised that he would bless him and be with him, did not mean that he was prepared to leave him as he was. When God decides to adopt us, we are taken out of the family we once belonged to (Satan's, because the whole world has been sold under sin) and we begin a new life in God's family. But then he will do what is necessary to change

our unsavoury character so that it reflects him rather than Satan. The only way any one of us can prove that God is our father is by our lifestyle. There has to be change. One of the most effective ways to change a person is to deal out the medicine they have been administering so that they know what they're putting everyone else through.

Some years ago Maurice and I lived in Holland for a period of 6 months whilst we preached and helped in a practical way a Christian Organisation. Nathan, our eldest child was 2 years old at this point in time and, as the organisation ran a crèche to take care of the full time worker's children, they asked if I would like to take Nathan along. What a blessing. Nathan was able to mix with all the other children and mingled easily, as children always seem to do, even though they spoke Dutch and he was only hearing English from my husband, Maurice, and myself. How shocked I was when he asked for things in this 'funny language'. I thought he was trying to speak in baby talk, but he was now speaking Dutch to me!

Things went great for a few weeks but then I noticed some marks on his upper arm. They looked like bruises with small indentations, but couldn't recognise what they were. One sunny day Nathan and I were outside with all the workers' children in the little playground the organisation had made in the compound when one of the parents made mention of the mark on Nathan's upper arm.

"Do you know how he got that mark, Joanna?"

"No, I have no idea. I've noticed a couple of them over

the past few days."

"Do you see that little boy over there?" She pointed to the little boy who actually belonged to the head of the organisation. "He was biting Nathan on the arm. In fact he's been making quite a habit of biting all the children in the crèche."

I looked at the little boy and as I did so I saw quite a big red mark on his cheek.

"Yes, Nathan got sick of him biting so he bit back – that's what that mark is – and we're so glad because that little boy has not bitten another child since. Your little Nathan is a hero!"

None of the parents had made any impression complaining to the head of the organisation about his son because all he would do was tell him off saying it was a "naughty thing to do." But Nathan took action, as only a guileless child can, and dealt with the situation for good. Sometimes it's only tasting our own medicine which makes us realise the pain and torment we put other people through. Jacob had dealt treacherously with his own family – God now decided he needed to know how it felt.

### **The innocent suffer with the guilty**

His pain, however, was not only experienced by himself, but Rachel also felt the devastation. She too had been waiting with longing for this day only to find that she'd been robbed at the last moment, by her father of all

people. I can't imagine the pain she felt in her heart during that first night following the marriage feast. Whilst Jacob was experiencing perfect bliss and happiness, she must have been broken hearted, sobbing into her pillow without any relief. Oh, the pain a human soul can experience. But nobody would have given Rachel a second thought that night as she hid in shame because –

1. Jacob had his wife.
2. Laban felt completely justified giving Jacob his eldest daughter as that was the custom of his land (the eldest should be married first). Besides, he had a plan up his sleeve.
3. Everybody had enjoyed a good day of feasting.

Yes, all was well ... But that was the worst night of Rachel's whole life.

You know, when we lead selfish lives we have no idea how many other lives we ruin. A man who selfishly drinks his earnings to satisfy his desire and habit has no concern for the pain he inflicts on his family. He doesn't worry about the fact they can't afford other things because he has spent all the money; he doesn't remember falling around, vomiting, or beating his wife and children in his drunken stupor; he has no recollection of the foolish expletives he verbalised to those in the bar where he drank, or the women he played around with.

His concern was entirely to please self, and he did it at the expense of others.

Drink may not be your particular problem, but when you will do anything to get what you want then you can be sure you will be trampling over other people in the process. All our actions have consequences and many innocent people suffer.

I'm just thinking of the time Joshua had just seen a mighty victory at Jericho when all the walls fell flat, miraculously, only to be defeated by a few men at Ai. Instead of sending his whole army to fight against the men of Ai he sent about 3,000 men because he knew they would easily contain the situation. But in actual fact, these few men of Ai chased the 3,000 soldiers killing 36 Israelites in the process, leaving the other 2,964 warriors trembling in fear. Joshua was baffled! Why had this happened?

And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads. And Joshua said, "Alas, O Lord GOD, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? would to God we had been content, and dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the

earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

**Joshua 7:6-9**

There was a serious problem going on here. It doesn't sound so bad that 36 men were killed in battle, but the fact is that this little group of people from Ai had filled the Israelites with fear. This was a really big deal, especially as the miracle of the Jericho walls completely collapsing had only just taken place and everyone in the surrounding countries were living in fear of the Israelites. Joshua was shocked at this turn of events.

God heard Joshua and answered immediately because this was at the very beginning of a revival in the Israelite camp. They had been on a death march for the past 40 years, but it was now the day of the Lord when he was going to work his wonders again amongst his people. There was a battle on. The enemy wanted to cause havoc in the camp by getting the people to sin, which would in turn stop God fulfilling his plans. God had to do something immediately – just like he did in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. Joshua had asked, "...and what will you do to your great name?" Meaning, "how will you get your reputation back now?"

**And the LORD said unto Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled**

also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."

**Joshua 7:10-12**

"Joshua, surely you know me by now! How can I stand by and let my people revolt against me and go unpunished? Surely you don't expect me to be with you when there is a rebellion going on? You ask me how I will get my reputation back? Well, I'll tell you. Sift out that rebel in the camp because I am going to nip this thing in the bud. I need Israel to know how I deal with rebellion so they won't follow his example."

Sure enough Achan was found to be the one guilty of disobeying God's command to not take any of the spoil from Jericho because God has stated that it was an accursed city. All he did was see something he wanted ... the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, had caused him to covet.

And Achan answered Joshua, and said, "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: when I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are

hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it."

**Joshua 7:20-22**

You would think that this loving God would hear this confession, forgive Achan, restore him back into the camp, and everything would go on as before now that he'd been publicly shamed. But no. Everyone and everything belonging to Achan were condemned to a brutal death because of one man's selfish action.

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, "Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day." And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day.

**Joshua 7:22-26**

## **A bride at last**

Jacob was furious with Laban for his deceitful dealing, but Laban had already anticipated this and presented the card he had been hiding up his sleeve.

**"Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years." And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.**

**Genesis 29:27-28**

Laban was one tricky character. With just one act of deceit he had now managed to secure another 7 years of labour from Jacob. Jacob hadn't wanted 2 wives, he would never have made the initial deal to work for Leah. He had been stitched up, and the only way he could now get Rachel was to agree to Laban's proposal. So Jacob spent 14 years working for Laban to buy his brides and was still a pauper! But now not only he, but his whole family were all in debt to Laban for they were relying on him for everything. Jacob had received exactly what he had asked God for – food and clothing.

For Rachel this wedding feast should have been the happiest day of her life for she had envisaged being the wife of Jacob. But I am absolutely certain that the week Jacob had spent being the husband of her older sister cast a very heavy shadow, bringing with it terrible rivalry between the 2 sisters who had at one time shared a very special bond.

Leah had been placed in an impossible situation. What say had she had in this whole affair? Women didn't have rights, and daughters had even less. Their father had manipulated both sisters to achieve his own ends and they were just pawns on the chess board being pushed around according to his will. The fact that Jacob loved Rachel with a love he couldn't possibly simulate with Leah didn't help at all, in fact it made matters worse because God could see this too.

And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, "Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me." And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, "Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon." And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, "Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi." And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, "Now will I praise the LORD:" therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing. And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister...

**Genesis 29:31-30:1**

To compensate for the fact that she couldn't give birth Rachel gave Jacob her handmaid Bilhah to be a surrogate

mother who presented him with 2 boys. After giving Jacob 4 sons Leah retaliated by giving her handmaid also, thus producing another 2 sons for Jacob.

How sad that Jacob and Rachel were not equally yoked. What! Where did that statement come from? Well, we see here that Rachel blamed Jacob for the fact she had not conceived. When Jacob arrived on Laban's doorstep he made bold verbal statements referring to the God of his fathers, and even had a personal encounter with him when he left home, but he couldn't pray with, or for, his wife who did not know his God or share his beliefs. The next verse shows Jacob's response ...

And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die". Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb."

**Genesis 30:1-2**

This response is such a contrast to that of his father, Isaac, who suffered a similar situation ...

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

**Genesis 25:21**

Chapter 9

# Witchcraft in the Family

And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes." And she said unto her, "Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also?" And Rachel said, "Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes." And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, "Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes." And he lay

with her that night. And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. And Leah said, "God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband:" and she called his name Issachar. And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. And Leah said, "God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons:" and she called his name Zebulun. And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

**Genesis 30:14-21**

*M*any people living in the West cannot make much sense of this story. What does the mandrake have to do with pregnancy? Since ancient times it has been used in recipes as an aphrodisiac and as an aid for impotency, to induce visions and free the spirit, to calm down nerves and to sedate patients in pain with severe wounds and to assist with rheumatisms. Of course, it has also been used extensively in magic. A word of caution though, it is poisonous and internal consumption is not recommended. At higher doses, this plant can cause delirium, madness and even death, and it has to be respected in all ways. The mandrake root was consumed in very small amounts, cut into an amulet to wear on the body, or put beneath the bed. Mandrakes have unusually large, forked roots that sometimes resemble a human body with open arms and legs, & is widely used in witchcraft. Mandrake has a long and frequently bifid

taproot whose shape sometimes resembles the body of a man and 'have gender' – if they find one that looks like a male, then it is more precious. These are named 'love apples' in Bible dictionaries, but they actually are used to bring sexual desire and fertility.

In early peoples, the mandrake was associated with the superstitious belief that it promoted fertility and conception in barren women. Believing this to indicate reproductive power, our ancestors took to sleeping with them under their pillows at night. The Genesis story revealed that Rachel and Leah believed that mandrakes promoted conception. For Reuben to find this plant, he needed to know what it actually was, and this must have been so much more important for Rachel, than just spending another night with Jacob. And it was after that night that Leah started having children again.

At this time Jacob spent his nights with Rachel knowing she wanted children. Both Leah and Rachel wanted children. Leah wanted additional children to win the regard and affection of Jacob. Rachel wanted children to validate herself as a woman. Rachel was so desperate to have children that she was willing to have Jacob spend a night with Leah to get possession of the mandrakes. We are not told whether Jacob believed that mandrakes promoted fertility, but Rachel certainly did because she didn't know Jacob's God!

From reading the account of what happened in the scripture we find that obtaining the mandrakes did

not help Rachel one little bit, but Leah had 3 more children without them! Rachel could not manipulate her fertility by believing in the superstitious power of a plant.

### **At last God remembers**

For 6 long years Rachel suffered humiliation. In the beginning she had imagined marriage with Jacob as the perfect state to be in – one man, one woman, with lots of little children to follow. Not for one moment did she envisage her sister taking her place on her wedding day, herself becoming the second wife the week later; neither had she anticipated that both Leah's and her own handmaid would also share her husbands' bed and have the pleasure of giving him children. Laban's house was now filled with the laughter of his 11 noisy grandchildren, Jacob was fulfilled being a father to his boisterous brood, Leah and both handmaids all took delight in sharing and comparing mother stories, whilst Rachel remained just a wife. What a mess! How this situation had escalated out of control. What a stigma to carry around for all these years.

It was God who gave Rachel fertility after she prayed to him. We do not know if Rachel's fertility would have occurred earlier if her husband — God's chosen man, and the son of the patriarch Abraham — would have prayed for her. We simply know that when Rachel finally turned to God, God responded by granting Rachel's

request for a son. What a son she received! Rachel's first son was Joseph, one of the greatest men of the Bible whose life is an example for every Jew and Christian.

And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, "God hath taken away my reproach:" and she called his name Joseph; and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

Genesis 30:22-24

What a relief it must have been for this poor woman to be remembered by God. She only had one child but this was a really big deal, her shame was removed instantly, she had produced a son for her beloved husband and was no longer inferior to the other women in his life. Jacob witnessed the fact that God had healed his wife after all her distress. This was the child he had wanted all along, this child was special. When desiring to marry her in the first place he must have dreamt of their unity and the blessed children who would follow. He had only wanted one woman, like his father and grandfather before him, but he had been tricked into being a husband to 3 other women whom his spirit was not at one with. What a delightful day for Jacob to hear the cries of this child, to see the radiant smile on Rachel's face, to know that her sorrow had passed and she was fulfilled, especially at this time when the 7 extra years dowry was at long last paid in full.

## Serving his sentence

He certainly had something to show his family for all the time he had spent away. They would be so blessed to see how fruitful he had been during these past 14 years. One delighted man entered his father-in-law's dwelling to inform him of his intention to return to his own family and country, all he needed to sort out now was his wages for all his services.

And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, "Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee."

And Laban said unto him, "I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake." And he said, "Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it."

And Jacob said unto him, "Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?"

And Laban said, "What shall I give thee?"

And Jacob said, "Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock: I will pass through all thy flock to day,

removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire. So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me."

And Laban said, "Behold, I would it might be according to thy word."

And Laban removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons. And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

**Genesis 30:27-36**

Laban knew that Jacob had made a massive difference to his business since he started working for him. He had little when Jacob came, but now he had a multitude of cattle and Jacob had made him wealthy. Instead of appreciating all that Jacob had done for him and sending him away with his blessing, he contrived another plan to make sure Jacob was unable to support himself and his large family on their journey back to Canaan. He had made a verbal agreement with Jacob to give him all the speckled, spotted, and ringstraked animals amongst his flocks, but he deceitfully went behind Jacob's back and,

together with his sons, removed those specific animals to graze in fields 3 days journey away. He was determined that Jacob would not leave.

But God was with Jacob, even though the treatment he was receiving was very harsh. Jacob had manipulated his brother when he made the deal to buy the birthright for a meal – Laban was used to manipulate Jacob into an extra 7 years of labour to get the woman he really wanted. Jacob had cheated his brother out of the blessing from his father – well, Laban was now being used to cheat Jacob out of his hard earned wages.

Don't think for one moment that God lets his children get away with sin. No, we need to learn our lessons and very often the learning process takes a very long time, in many cases years, to make sure we have thoroughly been so sickened by the consequences that we never again want to go down that path. Again, I am speaking from experience, and I'm so glad God deals with us this way because when he has finished his work in us we are totally immunised against the temptation to sin in those particular ways again.

God revealed to Jacob what he should do to earn his wages, and this divine strategy was so effective that Jacob ended up with bigger, stronger flocks than his father-in-law. During the next years Jacob suffered at the hands of Laban who tried his best to rob Jacob by changing his wages 10 times, but eventually, after another 6 years, God

finally gave him permission to leave. Jacob had been with Laban for a total of 20 years, that's what I call serving a hard sentence, or 'hard labour' in prison terms, to pay for his sins. We will never walk in newness of life until the old man has been dealt with.

### **Bearing a grudge**

To get away from Laban Jacob had to 'do a moonlight' – in other words he had to go when Laban was occupied with business miles from home with no notion of what he was intending to do otherwise he would have been hindered, yet again!

Rachel and Leah were more than willing to leave their 'beloved' father, even expressing the fact that they were not under any illusion that they meant anything to him as he had just used them for his own ends – to keep Jacob working for him for as long as he possibly could. I don't think they ever forgave him for his treachery surrounding their marriages. Rachel had been robbed of having first and only place in her husband's life, and Leah had been given to a man who didn't love her and knew that he was just fulfilling his obligation and duty as a husband when with her. It was abundantly clear to Leah that Rachel's relationship with Jacob was totally different to hers, and both sisters envied each other for different reasons. And all this had been brought about by their greedy, covetous father. No, there was certainly no love lost between father and daughters in this family.

Jacob made as much headway as he possibly could but it was quite an ordeal travelling with his 4 wives, 12 small children (11 sons plus 1 daughter all aged between 6 and 13 years of age), his servants, and the massive wealth of animals he had accumulated whilst serving his sentence in Laban's camp. He knew that Laban would be furious when he found out what he had done and tried to put as much distance as he possibly could between them but progress was slow. Laban was informed of Jacob's actions after only 3 days and consumed by rage followed in hot pursuit for the next 7 days, together with the rest of his family, until he finally caught up.

And Laban said to Jacob, "What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying,

Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?"

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee." For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

**Genesis 31:26-32**

It's amazing how the tongue can speak sweet, honeyed words when all the time a persons' spirit is raging inside. Jacob was no fool and would not trust this man. He had served his time, given far more years than he had initially intended, made him wealthy, but had been aggressively hindered so many times from going back home to his family. He knew Laban would have no pangs of conscience to forcefully rob him even now of his daughters, and must have been so relieved to hear Laban say that God himself had intervened and warned Laban to take great care when talking with him. As far as he was concerned this talk of stealing his gods was just another ploy to make them all return.

But Rachel was just as bad as her father ... Well, it's obvious really, isn't it? They were all injected with the same DNA! Why expect that Rachel would be good if her father was such a rotten apple? Why expect Jacob to be perfect when his mother was the sister of Laban? They all had the same DNA running through them – what chance did any of them have?

Rachel was so mad at what her father had done to her that she contrived a way to really and truly hurt him. She knew that Leah and herself held no place in his heart, this man only had room for himself ... and his gods. Yes, he was an idol worshipper, and full of superstition. But so was Rachel! She actually 'sold' her husband for a period to buy the magic mandrakes from her sister which she believed would enable her to conceive. When they made their escape she had stealthily stolen all his gods and left with them. She wanted to hurt him, yes, but she also wanted to ensure future conceptions. When she heard the raucous and heated conversation going on between her father and Jacob she had to act quickly.

Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me." And he searched, but found not the images.

**Genesis 31:34-35**

Wow, she was one tricky woman, and could be just like her father. After hiding the idols in the camel's furniture and sitting on top of it, she pretended to be on her monthly menstrual cycle because she knew that at this particular time she would be safe. Considering her to be unclean nobody would want to defile themselves by touching her, or touching anything she was sitting upon.

Rachel looked the picture of innocence as the men rummaged around, her lies totally undetected. And her scheme worked – she got away with it!

## Enough is enough

Make no mistake, a massive confrontation was taking place between Jacob and Laban. Jacob's frustration and resentment poured out as he exposed Laban's attitude. This man was not worthy of them. During his 20 years of oppression Jacob had at last grown up. He was no longer the 'Mummy's little boy' who could be manipulated and cajoled. He was a man in his own right and was now standing up to Laban and fighting lawfully to protect himself and his family. God had done a great work in Jacob's life.

And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, "What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by

night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."

**Genesis 31:36-42**

There's one thing we must never forget, if God has called a man, or a woman, then he marks his own. God deals with each of his children as he sees fit because we all have different characters and personalities. We all get individual treatment. Jacob may have often felt he was on his own in a strange land, but God was not only watching everything, God was initiating everything because he wanted to make a new man out of Jacob.

At last Jacob felt as though he had Someone on his side. After all the years of abuse and violation he had experienced at the hand of Laban, God was now saying, "Enough!" Jacob had served his sentence, paid his dues, and as far as God was concerned it was time to build this broken man and make something of value out of him which would bring glory to himself. Yes, there comes a day in our lives, if we have allowed God freedom to do what is necessary to rid us of our pride, self-worth, and rebellion, that things begin to

change and the tables are turned. He will only allow our oppressors to do their work for as long as it suits his purposes, and after that he steps in and they no longer have access in our lives or circumstances. This was now the time to cut off Laban's hold over Jacob. God was setting him free.

Laban was now the one to go back home yelping. He had lost his best worker, his 2 daughters and all his grandchildren, plus a multitude of 'his' animals, but worst of all his precious false gods. Now what was he supposed to do?

There was no other way around this problem than to make a covenant between themselves that they would not meet again in the future for harm. In Laban's own words he made a promise using everything sacred he could think of ...

"The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee."

And Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us."

And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

**Genesis 31:49-53**

Chapter 10

# Righting All The Wrongs

And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's host": and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Genesis 32:1-2

How blessed it is to know that you're in God's will. God had freed Jacob from Laban at last but he needed strengthening for what lay ahead. He had no idea what sort of a reception he would get when he reached his homeland but he knew that it would take more courage than he was personally capable of. There were so many loose ends to be tied up, so many things to put right, so many hurts to be healed. He now had first hand experienced of what he put his own brother through

because of the way he had been treated by Laban. How could he ever make amends for that? Esau had every right to hate him, but what was done was done and could not be reversed. How could this situation ever be healed?

And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, "Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and men servants, and women servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight."

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him."

**Genesis 32:3-6**

This was not the sort of news Jacob was hoping to hear from his messengers. Esau, coming with 400 men! He must still be fuming after 20 years! Jacob began to quake. He had to quickly devise a plan because he knew his brother was capable of murder and he was surrounded by women and children, whereas Esau was coming with an army.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, "If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the

other company which is left shall escape."

**Genesis 32:7-8**

## **Is God still there for me?**

There's nothing quite like adversity to drive us to God. This situation certainly made Jacob turn to God and pray in desperation ...

And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

**Genesis 32:12**

It's strange how at one point Jacob could believe God for himself and had proved in his own experience that God could be trusted to fulfil his promises, but now he was a man with responsibilities and found that he had to start building up his faith all over again. He realised his faith was not strong enough to include his dependants, he needed to sort this out with God. I find it interesting to note that instead of referring to God as 'his' God, he went backwards & addressed him

as ... God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac. He knew God had respect for Abraham and Isaac, but he wasn't sure whether he personally still featured in God's plans.

What Jacob was going through is what each of us will have to face at some point. I've been actively serving God in the ministry since I was 15 years old and during all these years have grown very strong in faith because I had practical experience of God providing for my every need in every circumstance. When I became a mother, however, my attitude changed. I began to get worried about all sorts of insignificant things, thinking that I was just being responsible. For instance, I would rush round to the doctors and fret over every little pain or cough the children had telling myself that I was just checking things out so that nothing serious was going on. I had become totally reliant upon the doctor's considered opinion, even though I didn't administer the drugs and antibiotics he tried to get me to use, I just needed him to put my mind at rest.

I remember vividly one occasion when Maurice and I had booked to take the family to a conference. Because we had 3 children all under 10 years of age we had booked to use 2 rooms, but both had double beds rather than the twin beds as arranged. I got so stressed about it that I wanted to rush round to the office and get everything changed, even though I already knew that the facilities were all booked up and we'd been told when getting the

keys to our rooms that these were the only ones available.

Oh, I was so upset, hot, and bothered, complaining that this situation just wasn't suitable and, "Surely they should have known we would need something more practical for the family?"

Suddenly Maurice turned round to stare at me with a look of complete bewilderment on his face. "Honestly, Joanna, I can't believe how negative you've become. You used to be so full of faith!"

It was horrible to hear. The words cut through me because in that instant I could see myself. My words were ringing in my ears and I knew that what he had just said was perfectly true. I didn't want to be like this. What had happened to me? Well I'll tell you what happened to me ... the cares of this world – in this case my fears concerning the children – were like weeds which had grown up and were now choking that beautiful fruit of faith which had been growing so strongly within me during my idyllic years of independent freedom. But they were choking me because I was allowing them to do so. I hadn't recognised that they were weeds, I thought this was part and parcel of being a concerned mother, that it was my duty to feel like this. But I was wrong! The best gift I could ever give to my children is for them to know by my words and lifestyle that our God can be trusted. If God Almighty says he will look after us, then we can be sure that he will keep his promise.

## Where did the axe head fall?

Jacob didn't need to be afraid. God had led him to this very place because he needed to go back to where the problem began. It's not always enough to feel remorse, very often we need to do something about it because we have left behind hurting people. There is an incident in the book of Kings where one of the sons of the prophets was out doing some work in the woods when the axe head detached from the handle and fell into the river. He ran to the man of God, Elisha, and told him the problem explaining how serious this was because the axe had been borrowed. Elisha knew exactly what to do and asked him to show him the place where it fell. As soon as he was shown the spot Elisha threw a stick into the water and, miraculously, the iron axe head floated to the surface. But it was necessary for him to throw the stick in exactly the right place.

Jacob needed to put right what was wrong, and because this was all part of reconciliation – something very dear to God's heart – there was no need for Jacob to worry. God would help every step of the way if he could just put his trust in him. Without any further ado God spoke very clearly and assured him there was a future in his mind for Jacob to look forward to. Yes, God had special plans, and he would bring him through this difficulty also.

**And thou saidst, "I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be**

numbered for multitude."

**Genesis 32:13**

Knowing that God was aware of all that was going on in Jacob's life he prepared a very large present of assorted animals – 200 she goats, 20 he goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 milch camels with their colts, 40 kine, 10 bulls, 20 she asses, and 10 foals – to give to his brother Esau in the hope that this would soften his heart towards him. He instructed his servants to take the animals drove by drove to his brother, allowing plenty of space between each drove, and with each drove to inform his brother that these were presents for him from his servant Jacob who was following on behind. This procedure went on for most of that day.

During the night as he was lodging with his company he gathered his wives and children together and sent them also over the brook to meet with his brother Esau. So now Jacob was left alone, everything he possessed was at Esau's mercy. He needed this time to prepare himself to face the inevitable.

### **Just one touch from the king changes everything**

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh."

And he said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

And he said unto him, "What is thy name?"

And he said, "Jacob."

And he said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

And Jacob asked him, and said, "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name."

And he said, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" And he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

**Genesis 32:24-31**

So, you want a touch from God, do you? Jacob didn't know what had hit him when he came into contact with that spiritual being. Whether it was God personally, or an angel, it didn't make much difference. His life, and body for that matter, could never be the same again. The priests under the Old Covenant were not allowed to touch anything unclean as it would defile their holiness, but it was different with Jesus. Anyone who reached out and touched him, wanting something from him, was changed in an instant and Jesus would feel virtue leave him rather than uncleanness defile him. Something surreal and unbelievable had just taken place in the life of Jacob. The bible states that he 'wrestled'

with this man for some hours – until day break. The astounding thing about this account is that Jacob would not submit and let go, even when this being touched him in the hollow of his thigh and put it out of joint. The fundamental character of this man had not changed in the slightest. He had been prepared to cheat, twist and connive to get the promise in the first place, there was no way he was letting go now. In Jacob's desperation he defied the command to release his attacker saying, "No way, bless me first!" He was so desperate that what had been promised should be fulfilled, that he was prepared to even fight with a spiritual being. Yes, he was actually fighting for his destiny!

Wow, how dare he speak with God like that? Wow, I can't believe that God would let him get away with it! Who is this man, and what relationship did he have with God for this scene ever to take place? He was a chosen vessel, that's who he was. He was the servant of the living God who had been called to head up God's chosen people. It doesn't matter whether we approve of his lifestyle or not, he was God's choice and we had better be careful how we speak or think about him.

Saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

1 Chronicles 16:22

Saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

**Psalm 105:15**

To criticise these people we do so at our peril. They are there for our example to see the way God deals with his children. Yes, Jacob was a worm, but God was going to make him a mighty, threshing instrument.

**But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.' But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.**

**Psalm 22:6-10**

No, this was no ordinary man, God knew this man when he was in his mother's womb. He foretold of the events that would take place in his life when his mother couldn't understand the distress she was going through whilst pregnant. God informed her, without the midwives knowing or seeing on a scan, that she was carrying twins, indeed 2 nations in her womb, who would war and fight against each other in years to come, and that this child who was to be her last born would end up taking the place of the first born. Yes, this was a special man who was earmarked by God for something special.

He prevailed with God and stood his ground in his desperation for a blessing even though it cost him dearly and he would forever be disabled and walk with a limp. It cost him dearly, but it was certainly worth it, because God himself approved him and changed his name (character). He had passed the tests, he had learned many hard and arduous lessons, he had suffered and not complained realising that he was nothing better than a worm. For the love of a woman, and the faith that believed that eventually God would sort things out, he had endured his years of torture and now God was going to bless him.

## Facing Esau

And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids. And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost. And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

**Genesis 33:1-3**

This was the moment he had been dreading. Yes, he'd had an encounter with God, but this was a challenging sight to say the least. If Esau had come alone he would have been worried enough, but here he was leading 400

men. He quickly divided up his handmaids and wives with their respective children into groups and made them pass before him, keeping Rachel and Joseph at the rear just in front of him if there was a need to run. As he passed before them he bowed to the ground 7 times in the hope that this act of respect and submission would appease his brother.

Oh, bless the Lord, Jacob was not the only one to have changed, God had also been working on Esau. Getting down from his beast Esau ran to meet Jacob, embraced him, and fell on his neck weeping as he kissed him. This must have been a fantastic sight to behold for everyone who knew how much Jacob feared this meeting. The joy in that camp must have been infectious as the relief overwhelmed them all.

Esau was eager to know about Jacob's life and who these people were who were accompanying him. Jacob enthusiastically shared how God had been gracious to him by blessing him with all these wives and children, and expressed his desire that he would accept his gift of all the animals which he had sent before him. After much urging Esau accepted the gift and wanted very much to accompany Jacob back to their family home, but Jacob made excuses saying that the children were young and couldn't travel too far in one day, they would probably follow on shortly.

Mission accomplished, he had done what he set out to do. It had been a frightening prospect but he had faced

his fears and tried to put things right between himself and Esau. He decided not to go to his father's house but to travel on to Succoth where he built a house and made booths for his cattle. Seeing his brother after all these years, and making peace at last was enough. Brothers are brothers, and Esau was his only brother. But he was well aware that continual contact with him could only ultimately lead to disaster for they were not serving the same God.

**Can two walk together, except they be agreed?**

**Amos 3:3**



Chapter 11

# Jacob You Are Blessed

Just reading the bible, or hearing friends and kind people quote scripture to encourage us cannot be put in the same category as hearing God speak to you personally. The words spoken to Jacob were the words he was building his future on because God had already shown him, through Laban and Esau, that God had a plan and was going before him to fulfil it.

## **Faith comes by hearing the word of God**

Jacob was at last on his own with space in his mind and heart to search for what God wanted him to do next. He had heard the word of God when seeing the ladder and angels in his dream, and was convinced that God had spoken a specific word to him. Words from God

spoken into our spirits are the only words that can give us true faith.

And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, "I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

**Genesis 28:13-15**

As Jacob meditated on what God said to him he truly believed that God would bless him now. But what does it mean to be blessed? How does God view blessing? Have we got a wrong idea of this lovely word where we think it's a state of being happy and contented all the time? These are the words of Jesus ...

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called  
the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

**Matthew 5:3-11**

Our idea of being blessed, and God's idea of being blessed, are 2 different things entirely. You only have to read through this list of beatitudes to realise this. Who, in their wildest dreams, would consider being poor in spirit a state of blessing? Or mourning, or being hungry and thirsty, or being persecuted for that matter? These are strange words to read to our understanding, but God's ways are not our ways.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

**Acts 24:16**

Jacob was a blessed man (in God's eyes) because he had suffered humiliation at the hand of Laban. His humbling had rendered him 'poor in spirit' enabling him to bow 7 times before his brother, even though he had power over him according to the blessing of his father Isaac. He

was also a blessed man (in God's eyes) because he had realised the pain and suffering he'd put others through – his brother, his father – and now wanted to put things right so that there was peace between them.

Unless we can see who we really are we will never get to the stage where we can be blessed in God's eyes. Jacob now knew he was a 'worm', he'd been exposed. He had seen what everyone around him had seen and it was a bitter pill to swallow. But it's a very blessed pill which God would love to administer to his children if they would only allow him to because this is true health giving medication of the most spiritual kind.

### **Vision of the worm**

Some years ago whilst praying God gave me a vision of a worm ...

I saw a worm standing up on its tail clothed like a man, wearing a hat, glasses, coat, etc., and he was standing with a group of men acting as they did, conversing with them, and feeling equal to them. He didn't know he was a worm, the men did, but nobody pointed it out. The men were discussing people in the bible and the worm was identifying himself with the characters. He even spoke to God on a man to man basis and yet he was only a worm.

I saw God look at the worm and instead of disgust and indignation, I could see pity on his face. He

produced a mirror and put it before the worm. At first the worm had no knowledge that what he saw in the mirror was a reflection of himself, but slowly it dawned upon him and he fell flat on his belly to the ground at the feet of God. All his disguise had been stripped from him and he was just a worm.

But as God looked at the worm in this real, unpretentious state, compassion seemed to fill his soul and love flowed out of him for this low creature. He joined the head of the worm to its tail and made a circle of it, then he placed the worm upon his finger and cast out devils.

God wants worms. God can use worms. We are all worms but the sad thing is that we're deceived into thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought.



Chapter 12

# Jacob – The Family Man

In Genesis 33 we read that, rather than going back with Esau to Canaan where his family dwelt, Jacob travelled to a place named Succoth and built a house there. We are not sure how long he remained in this place but in the very next verse we are informed that he moved camp and bought a piece of land.

And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called Succoth. And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of

Canaan, when he came from Padanaram; and pitched his tent before the city. And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money. And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel.

Genesis 33:17-20

### Curiosity only defiled the cat ...

I imagine Jacob and his entourage would have remained in Succoth for quite a number of years having built a house and making booths for his animals, for when he removed to Shechem his children had all grown up and his daughter, Dinah, became very curious about what the city dwelling girls got up to in their spare time.

And Dinah the daughter of Leah, which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

Genesis 34:1

It doesn't really matter what advice you give to your children, they are going to want to find out about the world for themselves sooner or later. Dinah was no different to any other young girl growing up. She was the only daughter among 11 brothers and wanted to see what other girls did. It was of interest to her what they wore, where they went, how they entertained themselves. I can only imagine that Dinah was a very wilful girl for it appears that she went out on this expedition alone,

without telling anybody what she was going to do, for the outcome was very serious.

And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her, and lay with her, and defiled her. And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel.

**Genesis 34:2-3**

Maybe Dinah had been very naïve and wasn't aware of the situation she could have been forced into being alone, or maybe she'd been warned and dismissed it. It was a heady feeling to be noticed and treated like a lady for once, brothers can be very cruel and certainly would not treat her with the respect a woman deserved. To them she was just their sister. In this community she had been singled out as a beautiful foreign woman, not just by anybody, but by the very prince of the country, who knew how to flatter and charm her into submitting to his desires! On one hand it was a blessing that this young man found Dinah to be everything he craved and loved her, even after he had de-flowered her, but on the other hand she was no longer a virgin and her family would be furious – rightfully so.

Prince Hamor begged his father to speak to Jacob to ask for Dinah's hand in marriage, which he did, but that meant that Jacob heard all about what had taken place and realised his only daughter had been defiled. He

couldn't give an answer to Shechem immediately because his sons were out in the fields with the sheep. Once the brothers were informed they were both grieved and extremely angry saying that Hamor had wrought folly in the Israelite camp and this thing should never have been done.

In Hamor's defence I feel he acted very honourably in asking his father to talk with Jacob and Dinah's brothers to express the fact that his soul longed for Dinah to be his wife. Shechem went even further to extend friendship by suggesting that marriages were made between his people and Jacob's people in order that they may all dwell together and profit from one another by trading. To convince Jacob and the brothers how genuine he was he asked them to name their price for the dowry to buy his bride as he truly wanted to make what seemed very wrong to them right. It was then that the deceitful brothers made their demands.

And the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father deceitfully, and said, because he had defiled Dinah their sister: and they said unto them,

"We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that were a reproach unto us: but in this will we consent unto you: If ye will be as we be, that every male of you be circumcised; then will we give our daughters unto you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you, and we will become

one people. But if ye will not hearken unto us, to be circumcised; then will we take our daughter, and we will be gone."

And their words pleased Hamor, and Shechem Hamor's son. And the young man deferred not to do the thing, because he had delight in Jacob's daughter: and he was more honourable than all the house of his father.

**Genesis 34:13-19**

At last Hamor knew what to do – fulfil the condition and the answer would be yes. As soon as he and his father returned to Shechem they spoke to the men of the city declaring that the Israelites were a peaceful people who had agreed to live together with them in harmony, and that they were willing to give their daughters for wives to Shechem, and would take daughters of Shechem for wives themselves. Their only condition was that the men of Shechem be circumcised as this was a commandment from their God. To convince the men of how beneficial this would be they were reminded of the multitude of cattle belonging to the Israelites and how wealthy they could all be.

The whole country heard with gladness what their king and prince shared and agreed to be circumcised, thus implementing the condition immediately

**... But killed everyone else**

Unfortunately the brothers had an underlying motive behind the suggestion to impose circumcision upon all the males of the country. After 3 days they decided to put their plan into action.

And it came to pass on the third day, when they were sore, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brethren, took each man his sword, and came upon the city boldly, and slew all the males. And they slew Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem's house, and went out.

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and spoiled the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their sheep, and their oxen, and their asses, and that which was in the city, and that which was in the field, and all their wealth, and all their little ones, and their wives took they captive, and spoiled even all that was in the house.

**Genesis 34:25-29**

Simeon and Levi were sons of Leah, and Dinah was their youngest sibling to the same mother. They didn't take kindly to the fact that their sister had been defiled but took matters into their own hands regarding the outcome of this whole scenario. They could see that Jacob was ready to come to 'terms of peace' with the residents of Shechem but determined that they would not make any alliance with these people.

They devised this plan concerning circumcision because they knew they would have the upper hand when the men were sore and they could vent their fury without resistance. At the time appointed the 2 brothers armed themselves with swords and boldly walked into the city, killing every male they came across as they were all too weak to put up a fight. It was so easy! This cutting off of the flesh had rendered these foreigners powerless and just 2 young bloodthirsty men took advantage of the whole city. They slew King Shechem and his son Prince Hamor and took their sister Dinah out of Hamor's house.

The other brothers were waiting for the signal and came rushing into the slaughtered city, not to kill, as this had already been done by their older brothers, but to prey upon the spoil taking sheep, oxen, asses, children, women, and all their wealth. Jacob had raised some vicious sons who were a force to be reckoned with. They justified their actions by saying it was because their sister had been defiled and treated like a harlot.

Jacob was horrified at what his 2nd and 3rd oldest sons had done. In one act they had ruined his reputation among the inhabitants of the land. Nobody would want to deal with him or his family again as they wouldn't be able to trust them. His children were causing him much grief, and he had nobody else to blame for that other than himself and his wives. They all had the same DNA running through them.

And Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me; and I shall be destroyed, I and my house." And they said, "Should he deal with our sister as with an harlot?"

**Genesis 34:30-31**

Already Jacob was afraid of what his 2 boys were capable of. When giving out his blessing upon all his children prior to his death, these are the words he spoke concerning Simeon and Levi.

"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

**Genesis 49:5-7**

## **Special place**

But Simeon and Levi were children of Jacob and allotted their portion as patriarchs. God found a special use even for this cruel and blood thirsty characteristic when establishing the priesthood. The children of Levi

were to deal with everything concerning the sanctuary in the wilderness. They were to take care of the outer court, the inner court, the holiest of holies, and the ark of the covenant. It was their job to bear it upon their shoulders on poles and transport it from place to place wheresoever the Lord would lead them. It was their duty to instruct the people from the Law of Moses and slaughter the animals which were being offered as a sacrifice to God.

**And I, behold, I have taken your brethren the Levites from among the children of Israel: to you they are given as a gift for the LORD, to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation ...**

**But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.**

**Numbers 18:6 & 23**

Why was this cruel son of Jacob allowed to be in such close proximity to the most holy things of God upon this earth?

We know so very little about God, we just imagine that he is some benign being who wants to bless and encourage, a father who delights in the fact that we are his children, and will indulge us because we are so special and delightful to

him. It all sounds so wonderful, and many people have gone to church, heard this unbalanced message, become Christians, and accepted this god because this is the type of god they have been looking for. One who is there to love them, protect them, forgive them, and serve them. But in actual fact that makes them the god, and the being they have accepted no more than a genie they just pull out of the bottle when they are in need.

## Phinehas

Our problem is that we don't really have a true picture of our God. We have no real understanding of what our God wants from us. Most of those who would call themselves 'Christians' have a god who fits with their ideals and what they imagine he should be like. But the real God is very different, as the story of Phinehas shows.

And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

And the LORD said unto Moses, "Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel." And Moses said unto the

judges of Israel, "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor."

And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel. And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel."

**Numbers 25:1-13**

Yes, we serve an awesome, powerful, gracious, just, fierce, almighty God who wants to be worshipped in spirit and

truth. We want God to be passionate about us, yet we find it so hard to reciprocate that passion and resolve to just being 'nice' little people who will not do anything to upset the apple cart or rock the boat. We only need to read the gospel of John to see that nearly everything Jesus said was taken as a direct taunt by the Scribes and Pharisees of his day. No, Jesus was the light of the world – a direct confrontation to the works of darkness, absolutely intolerant to the works of evil.

In John 15:14 it is stated very clearly by Jesus that we have not chosen him, he has chosen us. Just because a person is circumcised it does not give them a special relationship with Almighty God. He is the one who brings people into his family, and it was never intended that it should be the other way around. Simeon and Levi acted in a very bloodthirsty and cruel manner, but I believe that they were acting under the instructions of the Holy Spirit, to emphasise to us all that God's family is not just a little social group where we can invite our friends to enjoy the same privileges as those he has ordained and chosen to call his children. He is very protective of his family and will go to great lengths to keep it pure.

God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD  
revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance  
on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

Nahum 1:2

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot:  
I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou

art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

**Revelation 3:15-16**

## **When will these troubles end?**

God might have had a plan for the son's of Jacob, but they certainly brought many troubles upon their father. The cruel actions of Simeon and Levi made it impossible for Jacob to live in the neighbourhood, he had to flee the area and pitch his tent elsewhere. But God was manipulating everything that went on where Jacob was concerned. Every incident which took place, every action his family performed, were all being monitored and used to place Jacob exactly where God wanted him to be. There were things taking place in Jacob's household which he had not been able to supervise properly and God decided it was time for some divine intervention. The family had to be cleaned up. It wasn't only Dinah who had been defiled, the whole Israelite camp was unclean.

And God said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother." Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who

answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.

**Genesis 35:1-4**

The Bible doesn't state whether Rachel ever confessed to Jacob that she had stolen her father's idols, but one thing was sure, she and the rest of the camp had to put all witchcraft influences behind them. If they were going to get out of this mess and travel any further with God Almighty they had to get rid of all the filthy and ungodly implements they had accumulated over the years. God is a very jealous God and will not share his glory with flesh ... or false gods! Now Jacob had cleaned up the camp he was ready to leave this place, and as they journeyed the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, so that they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

Chapter 13

For Israel To Live  
Jacob Has To Die

Jacob had been forced out of the area – something he would not have chosen to do at this time with his precious Rachel being pregnant again with their second child. Already Deborah, his mother's elderly nurse, had died and needed to be buried in Bethel as the journey was so arduous. But this was to be a new journey for Jacob as this was when God decided to fulfil prophecy ... but at what cost!

And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto

him, "Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel." And God said unto him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land." And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.

And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, "Fear not; thou shalt have this son also." And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day.

**Genesis 35:9-20**

What should have brought ecstatic joy to both Jacob and Rachel did the very opposite. The journey was too arduous, Rachel was not in a fit condition and her body could not cope with the constant bumping of the

animal drawn cart on the uneven ground. She went into hard labour and gave birth. All she could feel was pain. She had suffered so much throughout her lifetime. The constant friction and rivalry with her sister; the despair of barrenness and taunting; the years of waiting for God to grant her another child; and now when the promise is being fulfilled to lose the fight ... She named the child Benoni (son of my sorrow) with her dying breath.

At this point in the story my heart broke. I can't explain the emotion that suddenly overwhelmed me as through my sobs I took in the full impact of what had just taken place, realising that in order for Jacob to inherit the promise God had just made to him the love of Jacob's life had to be taken away.

I don't think we truly understand this God we serve. For every promise God makes to us there is of necessity a condition following. If he gives something to us, then we have to forfeit something of ourselves. He is a God of ultimate grace, but this grace comes at a cost. If he is going to give himself to us, then we must give ourselves to him. There is no middle line. God allows what he hates to achieve what he loves – and he wanted Jacob to die in order that Israel could live. Losing Rachel killed something in Jacob, he was a broken man. He not only carried the limp, he now had a broken and contrite heart which made him very vulnerable and tender to God. It was the same for Abraham. God would not allow Ishmael and Isaac to live in tandem. Abraham had to

send his first born child Ishmael and his mother away in order for Isaac, the seed of promise, to receive the blessing of God. And that was only the first test, he then had to be willing to offer his remaining son Isaac as a burnt offering to God. Our God is a jealous God who promises great things for those who will give their whole-hearted devotion, but it all comes at a great cost.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

John 12:24

Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die:

1 Corinthians 15:36

## Israel lives - but how?

But something new rose up in Jacob. As he watched his precious Rachel leave this world he realised that he was holding new life in his hands. Rachel had named the child Benoni because of all the pent up emotions she had gone through. He was the son of her sorrow. But for Jacob he was looking at a child with promise. He was the father of this newborn babe. It was his right, not the mother's, to name the boy. He would not look on this child as a failure, this was the child of his old age from the wife he loved dearly. For Jacob this experience would not be remembered forever with sorrow, he chose to see this

child as a blessing. That's what Benjamin means – son of my right hand, the very hand which carries the blessing. He'd sought the blessing his whole life, he would not stop battling now. God changed Jacob's name when they wrestled together and named him Israel, now Jacob was changing the death wish from his beloved wife because he couldn't live in depression, he had to look forward not backward. No, this child would be blessed.

Although God changed Jacob's name to Israel when he wrestled with the angel this new name was never used, until Rachael died, and we see in the very next verse following the death and burial of Rachel the name Israel is used for this man is forced to change. It's almost like his life – his self life – had died, and now he had to live the life that God had called him to. He hadn't wanted to leave his family home, he'd been forced out. He hadn't wanted to marry Leah, he'd been tricked on his very wedding day. He hadn't wanted to leave Shechem, but his cruel sons had caused his name to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites. He hadn't wanted the love of his life to die, but here he was looking deeply into her eyes as he watched her spirit flicker within her body before returning to God.

So many things had been back to front in Jacob's life – God had placed 'the call' in his heart, and yet it was his brother, his senior by moments, who was the rightful heir of the promises. He'd been so determined to get

what he wanted that he bargained for the birthright, then stole his father's blessing. As a result of his selfish actions God had given him a taste of his own medicine and his beloved bride had been switched with another woman on his wedding day. God had allowed him to suffer under the hand of Laban for 20 years because God loved Jacob. Yes, God loved him, despite his despicable old nature, for God knew that when he had finished with him he would be Israel ('God prevails', 'triumphant with God'), the man whom God intended he would be when he spoke over him in the womb.

### **All things work together for good**

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

**Romans 8:28-30**

Do we actually believe these scriptures, or are they just words that we can quote verbatim? Let's take a look at the situation Jacob now finds himself in...

1. At around 70 years of age he is no longer tied to his mother's apron strings for God forced him out of his

home to escape being murdered by Esau whom he had swindled – was that God's way of directing him into his divine will and purpose for his life?

2. He ended up working for a truly greedy, covetous, avaricious man who changed his wages 10 times in the hope of swindling him completely out of what was due to him. And he had to run away from him – was that God's way of directing him into his divine will and purpose for his life?

3. Without asking whether he wanted her or not he was given Leah as his 1st wife who presented him with 6 sons and 1 daughter, whilst the love of his life, the only woman he really wanted, was barren – was that God's way of directing him into his divine will and purpose for his life?

4. When God did finally open Rachel's womb for the 2nd time after years in between, his beloved wife died giving birth – was that God's way of directing him into his divine will and purpose for his life?

Well, let me tell you, that was exactly what God was doing. He was directing Jacob into his divine will and purpose for his life. I have found from my own experience that the things forced upon us are actually the very things which drive us to God. And when God takes things from us, they are usually the things in our lives which are distractions, keeping us from committing

ourselves fully to God.

"What are you saying?" you may ask. "Are you suggesting Rachel may not have been God's chosen woman for Jacob?"

Well, let me ask you something. Which of the 2 sisters were used to carry on the chosen seed which brought forth our Christ? The sister who was beautiful and beloved, or the sister who had dove's eyes yet was hated when her own father had abused her to get 7 more years of unpaid labour from Jacob? Judah was the son of Leah not Rachel, and he was so named because Leah praised the Lord for noticing her, and seeing her affliction. She was desperate for the love of her husband, but the Lord gave her children and respect. And she had to bear this until the death of Rachel.

And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, "Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me."

And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, "Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also:" and she called his name Simeon. And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, "Now this time will my husband be

joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi." And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD:" therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

**Genesis 29:31-35**

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas (Judah) and his brethren; and Judas (Judah) begat Phares and Zara of Tamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;

**Matthew 1:1-3**

And who was buried in the family grave along with Jacob's forefathers?

And he charged them, and said unto them, "I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace." There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

**Genesis 49:29-31**

## **Fighting for your destiny**

God always knows what's best for his view of events is totally different to ours. From his seat in the Heavens he can see the whole plan being played out and the different pieces coming together – all things DO work together for good. We may not understand, but we must learn to trust.

This book about Jacob's life seems to be filled with trouble, sorrow, misunderstanding, treachery, confusion ... but at the end of it all God brings about his plan and purpose and the Old Testament is filled with the history of how God dealt with his people who are known as 'the children of Israel' rather than 'the children of Abraham' or 'the children of Isaac'.

Do you know your calling? Do you know what you are destined for? Whatever it is I am convinced of one thing, God will not share his glory with flesh. For God to fulfil the plan he designed for your life you will have to die to your old selfish ambitions, hopes, and dreams for with God there is no contingency plan.

You come God's way, or you go your own. You will need to be humbled before Almighty God and see your complete inadequacy in the flesh. You will need to learn what God loves and what he hates so that you can be conformed to the same image, and have the same mind. For Jacob to reach his potential there was no fight. He did not do battle against enemies who were attacking

him. His problem was his own heart, and during his lifetime he just reaped what he had sowed, which is a divine principle. It was so hard for him to accept what God was doing in his life. When Jesus FOUND himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8), but when Jacob FOUND himself married to Leah instead of Rachel he hated her.

Under sufferance as a new husband he was required to fulfil his duties to Leah for one week before he was able to also marry Rachel, and he made sure he let her know his feelings. And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but closed Rachel's.

Be careful how your heart handles the situations God deals out to you. If you have wrong attitudes, anger, or complain you may well be fighting against your destiny!

God knew how much to put Jacob through before he could learn his lessons and die to self. His only battle was within, submitting his will to the will of God. It was a painful process for him, and it will be for us because self will resist to the uttermost giving up self. Jacob squirmed just like a worm for most of his life, and at the end of it all he was truly humbled. But God said to Jacob, as he says to us ...

**Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy**

**One of Israel.**

**Isaiah 41:14**

Put off the boxing gloves and cease all the fighting. Make your peace with God. Stop resenting what he's doing and allow him freedom to perform his will in your life. God is looking for unpretentious, honest worms, because ... God can use worms.

Joanna is a professional singer and has recorded over 15 Albums. They can be downloaded as MP3 files, or ordered as CDs from

**[www.barrattministries.org.uk](http://www.barrattministries.org.uk)**

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