



Jacob had left his family and went to live in Haran (*HAY-ran*) with his uncle Laban. There he was tricked into marrying Laban's daughter Leah instead of her sister Rachel. A short time later, Jacob also married Rachel. Jacob worked for Laban for fourteen years for his two wives.

During these years Jacob's family grew. Jacob and Leah had many children. But Rachel had been unable to have children, and this caused much trouble between the sisters. Finally, "God remembered Rachel," and she bore Jacob a son named Joseph.

Jacob told Laban that he wanted to go back home. Laban told Jacob that God had blessed him because of Jacob. Laban agreed to give Jacob a share of the sheep, goats, and cattle if he continued to care for Laban's flocks. God exceedingly blessed Jacob with "much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses."

One day Jacob heard Laban's sons complaining to their father about how rich Jacob had become. Jacob knew that trouble was coming! God told Jacob to gather his family and possessions and return to the land of Canaan. God promised to be with Jacob.

Jacob sent for his wives and told them all that had happened. Jacob spoke of how Laban had changed his wages ten times. Then he told how the angel of God had given him instructions to return to the land of his family.

While Laban was away, shearing his sheep, Jacob and his family left, taking all their cattle and possessions. Before they left Rachel stole her father's idols and took them with her. Jacob and his family were gone three days before Laban was told of it.

When Laban learned that Jacob had left without telling him, he was angry. Laban and his relatives chased after Jacob and his family for seven days. God warned Laban in a dream, "Watch out what you say to Jacob, don't give



Church of God Sunday School

JACOB RETURNS HOME

Genesis 29:31 — 35:29

him your blessing and don't curse him" (*The Living Bible*).

When Laban caught up with Jacob, he accused Jacob of stealing away secretly, before Laban could kiss his grandsons and daughters goodbye. Laban also accused Jacob of stealing his idols. (Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.)

Laban looked through all the tents, but he did not find the idols. Before he came to Rachel's tent, she hid the idols in the camel's saddle. Because she was sitting on the saddle, Laban did not search it. (Why do you think Rachel wanted the idols? Were they going to help her?)

When the idols couldn't be found, Jacob was angry. He reminded Laban how he had served him faithfully for twenty years. Laban had cheated him often. If it had not been for God's help, Jacob would have been poor. Laban knew Jacob spoke the truth.

Jacob and Laban put stones in a heap as a witness of the agreement made between the two men to do each other no harm. Laban said, "The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." The next day Laban kissed and blessed his daughters and grandchildren and returned to his own land.

Jacob knew God had certainly helped him, but he had one more fear: he was afraid of meeting Esau, his brother! Jacob sent messengers to find Esau so that he could make peace with him. The messengers returned, telling Jacob that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men! Fearing that Esau was still angry,

Jacob prepared a present for him and divided the camp to protect his family.

That night, as Jacob was left alone, a man wrestled with him until dawn. Jacob kept a firm hold on the man, even when he pulled Jacob's thigh out of joint, making him lame. The man kept asking Jacob to let him go, but Jacob said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

The man asked Jacob for his name. When Jacob told him, the man said he would no longer be called *Jacob* (a

supplanter, one who tricks another) but *Israel* (one who prevails with God), because he had power with God and with men and had prevailed. He blessed Jacob. Then Jacob knew this was not just a man; he had come face to face with the Son of God!

In the morning Jacob saw Esau and his men coming. To show Esau he wanted to make peace, Jacob bowed himself seven different times to Esau. Esau ran to meet Jacob, hugged him and kissed him. Although Esau had many possessions, at Jacob's urging he accepted Jacob's present of animals as a blessing and peace offering.

God appeared to Jacob later and told him to go back to Bethel and make an altar to Him. Jacob told his household to put away their strange gods, for they were going to Bethel to worship the Lord. Jacob took all their strange gods and buried them under a tree.

At Bethel God confirmed His promises to Jacob again. Soon after they left, Rachel died after giving birth to her second child, Benjamin.

Jacob finally came to Mamre (*MAM-ree*), where

Isaac lived. Isaac was a very old man by this time, but Jacob and Isaac were glad to be together again. Isaac died at the age of 180, and he was buried by his sons, Esau and Jacob.

Long ago, when Jacob had first fled from his brother's anger, God had made a promise to him to keep him and be with him wherever he went. Jacob's deception brought much grief to him and his family, but God did not leave him.

God also promised that someday He would bring Jacob back to his homeland. God kept His word, and Jacob was reunited with his family. Years later, men spoke of God's love for Jacob (Psalm 47:4; Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13). How wonderful to know that God still loves you, even if you have done wrong. He wants to help you and be with you, as He was with Jacob.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places . . ."* —Genesis 28:15