

Jacob and Joseph (*Genesis 28-33 and Genesis 37, 41-48*)

Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. There above it stood the Lord, and He said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. Genesis 28:12-14 NIV

Isaac, son of Abraham, had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Esau was an outdoorsman who loved hunting. Jacob preferred to stay among the tents, possibly tending livestock. Isaac loved Esau and Rebecca loved Jacob. The Bible tells us that Esau was the firstborn, but Jacob was born holding onto his brother's heel. God told Rebecca that there were two nations in her womb and that the older would serve the younger. Rebecca believed God's promise and decided to make it come true for Jacob instead of trusting God and believing that He would do what He said He would do.

When Isaac was old, blind, and about to die he asked his son, Esau, to go hunting, fix the wild game he loved to eat, and then Isaac would give Esau the blessing. Rebecca wanted Jacob to receive the blessing so she dressed him up to look like he was Esau. After Jacob cheated Esau out of the blessing he had to flee for his life. Rebecca should have trusted God that He would make the prophesy come true. When she and Jacob resorted to trickery they put Jacob's life in danger. Have you ever resorted to trickery or deceit to get something? How did it work out?

Isaac and Rebecca sent Jacob to Haran, the land of his uncle Laban, to find a wife among their people and to protect him from Esau. Laban didn't treat Jacob fairly but God blessed Jacob with wives, children, flocks and herds. When Jacob returned to Canaan many years later Esau forgave him. Jacob had cheated his brother and his father-in-law cheated him. In later years his older sons lied to him about his Joseph. When we lie and cheat they can cause consequences that follow us generations to come.

Jacob had twelve sons, but his favorite was Joseph, the son of Rebecca. The older sons of Jacob resented Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt letting their father believe that a wild animal had killed him. When he was sold to Potiphar, Joseph served him faithfully, rising to become a trusted servant. When Potiphar's wife lied about him, he was thrown into prison. While in prison he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh's chief baker and chief butler. Joseph said that God gave the meanings of the dreams.

Joseph said, "And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Genesis 41:33, 38 NIV

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, wanted someone to tell him what his dreams meant. The chief butler told Pharaoh about Joseph. Joseph interpreted the dreams, telling him what needed to be done for the coming famine. Pharaoh placed Joseph over all the land of Egypt. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt for food, he told them that they had sold him as a slave for evil, but that God used it for good. God wants us to trust that even when bad things happen in our lives that He can make good come out of it. He tells us that all things will work for good to those who love Him. Trust that He will do what is good in your life.

Filmmakers and even news reporters often take the liberty of adding their own opinions and ideas. The movie, *The Story of Jacob and Joseph* is fairly accurate, but there are things that have been added. Two examples are: When Jacob talks about Joseph being successful because he knew how to read and count, he probably did but it doesn't say in the Bible that it was the reason for his success. Also, in the movie Joseph asked to read the records of the Nile before seeing Pharaoh. This wasn't part of the Biblical story at all. In the Bible Joseph gave God all of the credit for interpreting the meaning of the dreams.

Dear Lord, we thank You for Your promise that You will make all things work together for the good of those who love You. Help us to never rely on deceit and trickery to get what we want, but instead help us to trust that You will watch over us and keep us in Your loving care. Bless and keep Your people all over the world. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.