

Peace be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

In our last lesson, we read about the twins which Isaac begot, that is, **Esau and Jacob**.

Esau despised the promises which God made to his grandfather, Abraham, and exchanged his firstborn inheritance for a bowl of food! While Jacob valued God's promises.

Even though this was true, it does not mean that Jacob was without faults! Jacob's very name means *deceiver*.

Today then, we plan to continue in the Torah and see **how God changed Jacob the deceiver, into Jacob the man of God**.

Jacob was a real deceiver. The Scriptures, which do not hide the shortcomings of the prophets, record for us how Jacob deceived his older brother Esau twice in order to take his birthright from him.

It was for this reason that Esau, in his anger, planned to kill his younger brother.

When their mother, Rebecca, realised this, she called Jacob in secret, advised him to flee to his uncle Laban, who lived in Haran, and to stay there until his brother's anger subsided.

Now, let us read in the book of Genesis, chapter twenty-eight, to see what happened after Jacob left his father Isaac's house and headed for his uncle Laban's house.

The Scriptures say:

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran.

(Now Haran was the country in which Abraham lived before God called him)

When Jacob reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set.

Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep.

*He 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.

I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land.

I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it."

He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, which means "the house of God".

Thus, **God** appeared to **Jacob** in a dream and **promised the same thing** He had promised his grandfather **Abraham** and his father **Isaac**, that is, to make of his offspring **a great nation**.

Therefore, we see that the firstborn inheritance which Jacob stole from his older brother was given to him by God in the end.

Jacob did not deserve to become the father of the new nation which would bring the Redeemer into the world.

But God is a God of mercy and grace, who gives good things to those who do not deserve them.

What did Jacob see in his dream?

The Scriptures say he *"saw **a ladder** resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."*

In his dream, Jacob saw **a ladder**. The ladder which Jacob beheld was an unusual ladder, a very tall ladder, reaching from **earth to heaven** and entering the presence of God!

Through the dream of the tall ladder, God was showing Jacob that He wanted to have a close personal relationship with him.

God also wanted to show him that **the Redeemer** who was to come into the world would be **like that ladder** which stood between heaven and earth - **the Mediator between God and man**.

To this day, many think that a person can climb up and enter Paradise based on his own good works. However, God's Word tells us that there is **only one "ladder" between God and man** and that "ladder" does not come from man but from God.

We the children of Adam have no means in our own strength to climb up and enter the presence of God.

The reason for this is our utter sinfulness and our total inability to please God the Holy One.

But God, who is full of mercy, because of His great love for people, has opened a way of salvation for Adam's descendants.

Therefore, the ladder which Jacob saw in his dream symbolized the Mediator whom God had promised to send into the world to save sinners.

The Mediator is like the ladder which Jacob saw between heaven and earth. That is what the Scriptures teach when they say: *"There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men...so that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

God's Word is clear on this matter: No one comes to God, except through the holy Mediator that God sent from heaven.

Now, let us see what happened after Jacob arrived at his uncle's house.

God's word says that *"a man reaps what he sows."* (Gal. 6:7) We have already heard how Jacob deceived his older brother. Now we will see how Jacob's uncle deceives him.

His uncle's name was Laban and he was a crafty man.

We are reading in chapter twenty-nine.

The Scriptures say:

After Jacob had stayed with Laban, his uncle, for a whole month, Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be."

Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful.

*Jacob was in love with **Rachel** and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It's better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me."*

So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her."

*So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. But when evening came, he took his daughter **Leah** and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her...*

When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, did I not? Why have you deceived me?"

Laban replied, "It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter's bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work."

And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife... Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah.

And he worked for Laban another seven years."

Thus we see how Laban deceived his nephew Jacob. What happened was not a good thing, but you can be sure that God had His hand upon the things happening in the life of Jacob and would make them turn out for Jacob's good.

Eventually, Jacob became the father of **twelve sons**.

Jacob lived in his uncle's house for twenty years. During those twenty years, God, in His love, allowed Jacob to pass through some very painful trials, so that He might discipline him and purify his faith, just as fire purifies gold.

However, there came a day when God appeared to Jacob and said, *"Return to the land of your grandfather, where you were born. I will be with you."* (Gen. 31:3).

So Jacob arose, packed up and moved out, both he and his family.

They headed in the direction of the land of **Canaan**, the land which God had promised to give to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants.

As Jacob and his family were on the way to Canaan, God appeared to Jacob in a very special way and changed Jacob's name. Listen to what the Scriptures say in chapter thirty-two.

So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.

When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.

Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

The man asked him, "What is your name?"

"Jacob," he answered.

*Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but **Israel**, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome."*

Jacob said, "Please tell me your name."

But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?"

Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel which means "face of God", saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

This is an amazing story full of important lessons.

We see God appearing to Jacob as a man and wrestling with him.

And why did He wrestle with Jacob?

Because God wanted Jacob to recognize his weakness before Him. God wanted Jacob to know that all true strength and wisdom comes from God alone!

God had wonderful plans for Jacob, but **God's best blessings can only come to those who know that they cannot please God in their own strength.**

Jacob was beginning to realize just how weak he was before God.

On that night, God gave Jacob a new name, that is, **Israel**. Jacob means *one who deceives*. But Israel means **one who reigns with God**.

Israel would be the name of the new nation God promised to bring forth from the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As you know, it is from the twelve sons of Jacob that the nation of Israel arose. And it is through the people of Israel that the Redeemer came into the world.

Someone might ask: Why did God choose a deceiver like Jacob and make him the father of the nation which would bring the Redeemer into the world?

Listen to the answer of the Holy Scriptures:

"God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him."

Jacob was a deceiver. In his own strength, there was no way that he could please God.

There was nothing good in him, except for one thing: **Jacob believed the Word of God**. Jacob treasured God's promises. Receiving God's blessings was more important to Jacob than anything else in the world.

Because of this God made Himself known to Jacob and blessed him. God, in His eternal purposes, changed the heart of **Jacob, the deceiver**, into **Israel, the man of God**.

How about you dear friend?

Like Jacob, have you recognized your inability to please God?

Listen to what the Word of God says about this. It says:

*"Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* those who are poor in spirit are those *who know their lack of ability to please God*.

"God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time."

Thank you for listening.

In our next study, God willing, we will begin to look at the amazing story of Joseph, one of Jacob's sons....

God bless you. We leave you with this verse from the Word of God:

"Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!"

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