

Jacob-Israel



SABBATH—MAY 28

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 32:22–31; Genesis 33; Genesis 34; Genesis 34:30–Genesis 35:15; Genesis 35:16–29.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then the man said, ‘Your name will not be Jacob. Your name will now be Israel. I give you this name because you have fought with God and with men, and you have won’ ” (Genesis 32:28, ERV).



The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shows us that we can depend on God to do everything He promises.

THE STORY OF JACOB continues. Jacob leaves Laban and is on his way home. Soon Jacob will see Esau again. Jacob hurt his brother, Esau, in the past. What will Esau do to Jacob now, when they see each other?

For sure, Jacob is afraid about what may happen. So, the Lord God of Abraham and Isaac comes again to Jacob to give him courage and hope. This meeting will become known later as the “time of trouble for the people of Jacob” (read Jeremiah 30:7, NIV; read also Jeremiah 30:5–7). That night, Jacob the liar becomes “Israel.” This new name shows us that Jacob gets a new chance in life. This new beginning will lead to the start of a new people group, who will be named after Israel.

The story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob shows us that we can depend on God to do everything He promises. God will keep His promises even when His people, at times, work against Him or fail to obey His commands.

FIGHTING WITH GOD (Genesis 32:22–31)

After Jacob leaves Laban, Jacob meets God. Jacob is afraid because he knows that his brother Esau is coming against him with 400 men (Genesis 32:6). So, Jacob prays to the Lord for help. Jacob says, “You have been very kind and faithful [kept your promises] to me. But I’m not worthy of [not good enough to get] any of this [mercy]” (Genesis 32:10; NIV). Jacob now knows what the mercy of God is all about.

How does the Lord answer Jacob?

Read the story in Genesis 32:22–31; also read Hosea 12:3, 4. What spiritual lessons does this story about Jacob and the Angel teach us?

Jacob is very upset. We can understand why, right? Esau is on the way to kill Jacob. Of course, Jacob wants to protect his family. Jacob camps by himself at night so he can pray. All of a sudden, “a Man” attacks Jacob (Genesis 32:24, NKJV). The word written as “Man” shows us God in the Hebrew language (read Isaiah 53:3). Daniel uses this same Hebrew word to show us our High Priest in heaven, Michael (Daniel 10:5). A high priest is a chief religious leader. Joshua uses this same word, “Man,” to show us the Lord, who is the “commander of the LORD’s army” (Joshua 5:14, ERV; read also Joshua 5:13–15). Joshua says this Commander is the Lord Himself.

As Jacob fights this “Man,” Jacob starts to see that he fights against God Himself. That is why Jacob says, “I won’t let you go unless [except when] you bless me” (Genesis 32:26, NIV). Jacob grabs hold of God and will not let go. Jacob begs God to forgive and accept him.

“Jacob lied and cheated to get the special blessing from his brother. God showed Jacob his sin. Jacob saw that he had not trusted the promises of God. Jacob tried by his own efforts to make the things happen that God promised to do for him in His own time and way.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 197, 198, adapted.

God changes Jacob’s name. What does Jacob’s new name show? His new name shows that God forgives Jacob. His new name is Israel. This name means that Jacob doesn’t need to feel guilty about his past anymore. The Lord says, “I give you this name because you have fought with God and with men, and you have won” (Genesis 32:28, ERV).



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THE BROTHERS MEET (Genesis 33)



Jacob bows down seven times in front of his brother (Genesis 33:3).

Jacob now leaves Peniel. Peniel is the place where Jacob fought with God. The name Peniel means “the face of God” (read Genesis 32:30). There, Jacob saw God face-to-face and lived. Now Jacob moves to meet his brother. The two brothers have been separated for 20 years. Esau comes to meet Jacob with 400 men (Genesis 33:1). Jacob is worried. So, he gets himself and his family ready for whatever may happen next.

Read about Jacob and Esau in Genesis 33. First, Jacob sees the face of God and then he sees the face of Esau. What connection do you see between the two experiences? What lessons can we learn from this story about how we should love our own “brothers,” whoever they may be?

Jacob bows down seven times in front of his brother, Esau (Genesis 33:3). Several times Jacob calls Esau “ ‘my lord’ ” (Genesis 33:8, 13–15, NKJV). Jacob also calls himself Esau’s “ ‘servant’ ” (Genesis 33:5; compare with Genesis 32:4, 18, 20, NKJV). The seven bows of Jacob show us the seven blessings that Isaac gave Jacob (Genesis 27:27–29). When Jacob bows to Esau, Jacob also reverses the blessing that Isaac gave him: “ ‘nations [people groups] bow down to you’ ” (Genesis 27:29, NKJV).

Why does Jacob say and do these things? He is trying to pay back to his brother the blessing that he stole from him (read Genesis 33:11). When Esau sees his brother, Esau runs to him. Does Esau kill Jacob? No. Esau “kissed him, and they wept” (Genesis 33:4, NKJV).

Later, Jacob says to Esau: “ ‘I am very happy to see your face again. It is like [the same as] seeing the face of God. I am very happy to see that you accept me’ ” (Genesis 33:10, ERV). Why does Jacob say these surprising words? Because he is so happy and pleased that Esau forgives him. The word written as “accept” comes from the Hebrew verb “**ratsah**” (Genesis 33:10). This word shows us any gift that God accepts or that pleases Him. So, “**ratsah**” shows us that God forgives the one who gives the gift (Leviticus 22:27; Amos 5:22).

First, God forgives Jacob at Peniel. Now Esau forgives Jacob, too. So, the first experience of forgiveness with God at Peniel helps Jacob get ready for the second experience of forgiveness with his brother. For sure, Jacob understands the mercy of God now more than ever before.

DINAH (Genesis 34)

Jacob makes peace with his brother. Now Jacob is ready to settle in the land of Canaan. “After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan” (Genesis 33:18, NIV). The word “safely” comes from the Hebrew word “shalom,” which means “peace.” For the first time, Jacob has peace in his journey home.

Jacob buys some land in Shechem (Genesis 33:19). There, Jacob builds an altar to show his faith in God. Jacob understands how much he must depend on God. So, Jacob offers God many gifts and worships Him.

Jacob-Israel has trouble when he tries to settle in the land. In the same way, Isaac had trouble at Gerar with Abimelech (Genesis 26:1–33). Jacob does his best to try to live in peace with the Canaanites.

Read the story in Genesis 34. What happens to Jacob’s family in this story? Can they continue to live in peace with the Canaanites?

In this story, we read about Shechem, who sees Dinah, the daughter of Jacob. Shechem forces Dinah to have sex with him. But then Shechem falls in love with Dinah and wants to marry her. He is willing to be circumcised so that he can marry her. As you will remember, being circumcised means that the top of the skin at the end of the male sex parts is cut off. This act was a sign of the agreement between God and His people.

But the brothers of Dinah are angry with Shechem. God told His people not to marry the Canaanites. So, Simeon and Levi decide to punish Shechem. First, Simeon and Levi lie to Shechem (Genesis 34:13). Next, Simeon and Levi kill all the men in the city, Shechem, and his father. Then Simeon and Levi steal everything in the city (Genesis 34:25–27).

When Dinah is forced to have sex, Jacob says nothing (Genesis 34:5). Jacob wants only to live in peace. But when Jacob hears what his two sons do, he scolds them because of the trouble they cause for him in the land (Genesis 34:30).

In the Genesis stories, we see the same things happening again and again: lies and cheating, mercy and forgiveness. What do these things tell us about humans?



In this story, we read about Shechem, who sees Dinah, the daughter of Jacob.

THE WORSHIP OF FALSE GODS (Genesis 34:30–Genesis 35:15)

Read the story in Genesis 34:30–Genesis 35:15. What lessons can we learn about worship from what happens here?



After the command from God, Jacob tells his people to throw away the idols or statues of Canaanite gods.

Jacob complains about the crimes of his two sons and scolds them (Genesis 34:30). Right away, God tells Jacob to leave Shechem and go back to Bethel to make a new agreement with God. God tells him to build an altar when he arrives.

After the command from God, Jacob tells his people to throw away the idols or statues of Canaanite gods. The sons of Jacob took these idols from the city when they killed Shechem and his people. These idols also included the statues that Rachel stole from the house of her father (Genesis 31:19, 32). God cannot make new His agreement with Jacob until his family gets rid of the false gods from their tents and their hearts.

This story shows us an important Bible truth about turning away from sin. We must do more than confess our sin and say we are sorry. We must get rid of any false gods in our hearts. False gods are everywhere. If we are not careful, we can worship just about anything, right?

So, Jacob obeys God. Then God causes the people around Jacob to feel afraid of him (Genesis 35:5). No one dares to attack Jacob. Now Jacob and his family are ready to worship God (Genesis 35:6). This story shows us that Jacob and his family have made peace with God and with each other. Jacob gives the name El Bethel to the place where he builds the altar. This name helps Jacob remember his dream about the ladder. So, we can see that the broken connection between heaven and earth is now made new again.

At this time, God helps Jacob remember that his name has been changed to Israel (Genesis 35:10). Then God gives Jacob-Israel a double blessing. First, God blesses Jacob with the promise of many future children. Kings will come from his family line, including the Savior, who is the King of all kings. Second, God blesses Jacob by promising him the land of Canaan (Genesis 35:11, 12).

When we love something more than we love God, we are guilty of worshiping false gods. The worship of false gods can sneak into our hearts very quickly. What can we do to protect ourselves from this danger?

RACHEL DIES (Genesis 35:16–29)

Read the story about Jacob and his family in Genesis 35:16–29. What other troubles does Jacob meet?

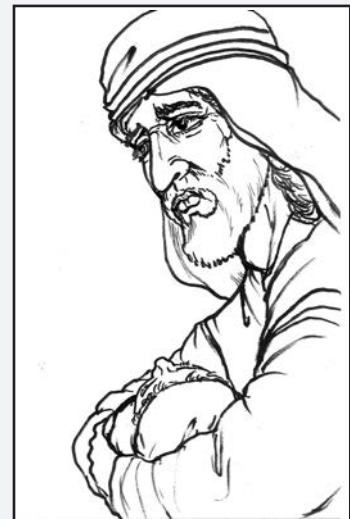
As soon as Jacob leaves Bethel, three things happen on the last part of his journey home. Benjamin, his last son, is born. Then Rachel dies. And Reuben, who is the first son of Jacob and Leah, sleeps with one of the other wives of Jacob. The Bible does not tell us why Reuben does something so evil. We just do not know.

The birth of Benjamin is connected to Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19). Bethlehem is within the borders of the Promised Land. So, the birth of Benjamin becomes a word picture that shows us the promise of God for the future of Israel. The woman who helps deliver the baby of Rachel tells Rachel “ ‘Do not fear’ ” (Genesis 35:17, NKJV). These words are the same words that God said to Abraham (Genesis 15:1).

Before she dies, Rachel names her son Ben-oni, which means “son of my sorrow.” This name shows us her pain. Jacob changes this name to Benjamin, which means “son of the right hand.” This name shows us that Jacob hopes for the Promised Land and for promises that God made to Israel.

During this time, Reuben sleeps with Bilhah, one of the wives of Jacob. Bilhah also is the maid of Rachel (Genesis 35:25; Genesis 30:3). The Bible tells us that “Israel heard about this, and he was very angry” (Genesis 35:22, ERV). In the end, Jacob trusts God to keep His promises, even when his family does things they should not do. Because of his awful sin, Reuben will not get the special blessing that comes to the son who is born first.

Wow, Jacob’s family makes many mistakes. In the end, God keeps His promises to Jacob and his family anyway. Now just think how different this story will be if the children of Jacob obey God! Things will be much easier, right? How much easier will it make our lives if we work with God and not against Him?



Jacob changes the name that Rachel gives her baby.



“The history of Jacob gives us hope. God will not turn away from the ones who sinned but then turn back to Him with sorry hearts.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Night of Wrestling,” pages 195–203, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Jacob fights with God all night. This experience of pain and suffering shows us the awful test that the people of God will have just before the Second Coming. . . . God’s people will fight against the powers of evil. All of God’s children will have the same experience as Jacob in this final fight. God will give them a test of faith. This test will show everyone that His people are patient. The test also will show everyone how much His people trust Him to deliver them. Satan will make them feel that they have no chance of being saved. Satan will tell them their sins are too awful. So, God will never pardon them. God’s people will see how much they failed God in the past. They will see all their mistakes. As they think about their past, their hopes will die. Then they remember that God is full of mercy. The people of God also will remember that they turned away from their sins. They will ask God to keep His promises that He made to them because of Jesus. These promises are for helpless sinners who have confessed their sins. Then the faith of the people of God will not fail when God does not answer their prayers right away. They will hold on to the strength of God just as Jacob held on to the Angel. And the people of God will say, ‘I won’t let you go unless [until] you bless me’ (Genesis 32:26, NIV). . . .

“The history of Jacob gives us hope. God will not turn away from the ones who sinned but then turn back to Him with sorry hearts. By faith, Jacob got what he failed to get by fighting in his own strength. Jacob trusted in God and not in himself. God taught His servant that only His power and mercy will give him the blessing he wants so much. The same is true for us in these end times. Dangers will be all around us, and we will feel very sad. So, we must depend completely on the faith and promises of Jesus. We can do nothing to save ourselves.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 201–203, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 How does the experience of Jacob show us this Bible truth: “It is when I am weak that I am really strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10, ERV)?
- 2 What false gods do we worship today? How can we make sure we worship only God?

DOUBLE ANSWER TO PRAYER

The first-year Bible student ran to the worship room at Zaoksky Adventist University. The university is south of Moscow, Russia. The student knelt down. “Lord, why are You blessing me so much when I am an awful sinner?” he prayed.

The name of the student was Vadim Antyushin. He was 20 years old. Vadim did not feel he was worthy of God’s blessings. Vadim did not feel worthy to study at the university. He did not feel he was worthy of being an Adventist pastor. He just started his first year at the university. That day, Vadim got a gift from someone in the United States for \$100. This gift was a lot of money. “Lord, I did not do anything to get this money,” Vadim prayed. “Thank You for taking care of me. I have everything I need. Show me what to do with the money.” Vadim exchanged the U.S. dollars for Russian rubles or money. After Vadim paid tithe, he had 6,000 rubles left.

Vadim joined a small group of students who met during the week to pray. At the meeting, one of the students asked for prayers for him to be able to pay his school bill. Vadim did not know the student. Vadim did not know how much money the student needed. That night, Vadim came to the worship room to pray. “Lord,” Vadim said. “I want to give the money to the student in need. Please bless this plan if You want me to help him.”

The next day, Vadim saw the student. “How much money do you need for your studies?” Vadim asked.

“6,000 rubles,” the classmate said.

Surprised, Vadim understood that God answered his prayers. The two classmates hugged when they understood what God did.

Two years later, the student is now one of Vadim’s best friends. “My friend has helped me during many hard times in the past two years. I thank God for our friendship. Thank God that He takes care of our needs long before we know that we have a need. Before we ask, God knows what to give and how to give it to us. The most important thing we can do is trust Him.”

“I ask God that you may know the love of Christ which is more than we can ever know. I ask that you may be filled with everything that God has. God can do much more than we ask him to do, or we even [can] think of. He does it by his power which is working in us” (Ephesians 3:19, 20, WE).

This story shows us two parts of the “I Will Go” plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Spiritual Growth Task No. 5 and No. 7. Task No. 5 is: “We will help people and families live more Spirit-filled lives.” Task No. 7 is: “We will help youth and young adults put God and the Bible first in their lives.” Read more: IWillGo2020.org.

INSIDE
Story
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



“Show me what to do with the money.”

