

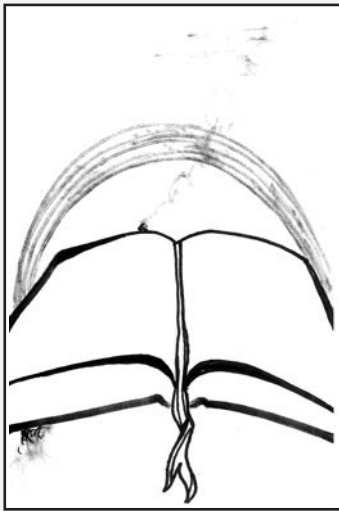
Tricked Two Times



SABBATH—MAY 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 25:21–34; Genesis 28:10–22; Genesis 29:1–30; Genesis 29:31–Genesis 30:22.

MEMORY VERSE: “Esau said, ‘His name is Jacob. That is the right [correct] name for him. He has tricked me twice [two times]. He took away my rights [the spiritual promises that belong to the son who is born first] as the firstborn son. And now he has taken away my blessing.’ Then Esau said, ‘Have you saved any blessing for me?’ ” (Genesis 27:36, ERV).



The people of God may often fail. But God will keep the promises of His agreement anyway.

WE NOW LOOK AT THE FAMILY HISTORY of Isaac and his sons, Esau and Jacob. The story doesn't have a good start. Jacob makes mistakes. We see Jacob's weaknesses when he fights with Esau about the promises that belong to the son who is born first (Genesis 25:27–34). Later, the brothers fight over who will get the special blessing from their father (Genesis 27).

Jacob tricks his father. He steals the blessing from his older brother. So, Jacob must run away to save his life (Genesis 28:10–22). After that, Jacob will be tricked by other people, the same as he tricked his father and brother. We see this experience in his marriage. Jacob loves Rachel (Genesis 29). But Laban tricks Jacob on his wedding night and gives Jacob his older daughter Leah. So, Jacob will need to work 14 years to earn both his wives. But God also blesses Jacob during that time with many children. God gives Jacob riches, too.

So, we see from this story an important Bible truth. The people of God may often fail. But God will keep the promises of His agreement anyway.

JACOB AND ESAU (Genesis 25:21–34)

Read about Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:21–34. Compare the personality of Jacob with the personality of Esau. How are the brothers different from each other? Why should Jacob get the blessing from Isaac?

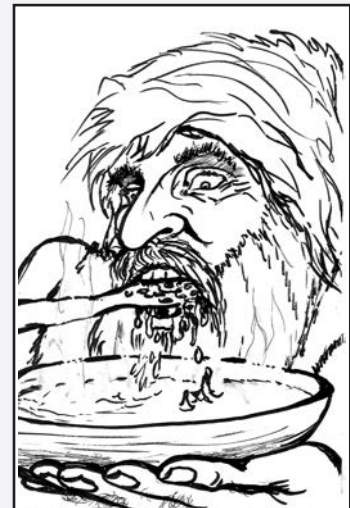
Before Jacob and Esau are born, we see there will be trouble between the two brothers. When they are inside the belly of their mother, the brothers fight. Their fighting shows us how the brothers will be very different from each other. Esau “became a skilled hunter, who loved to be out in the fields. But Jacob was a quiet man, who stayed at home” (Genesis 25:27, ERV). The word written as “quiet” is the same word used to show us the good behavior of Job, who is “honest” (Job 1:8, Nlrv) and Noah, who is “good” (Genesis 6:9, ERV) and “without blame” (Genesis 6:9, Nlrv).

The brothers grow more and more different from each other later in their lives. We see just how different they become from each other in the story in Genesis 27:1–Genesis 28:5. In the story, Esau comes home tired and hungry. Jacob cooks him lentils. For Esau, the food he eats right now (Genesis 25:32) is more important than any future blessing from God (compare with Hebrews 12:16, 17).

“God made promises to Abraham. Isaac and Rebekah held these promises dear to their hearts. Isaac and Rebekah taught their sons about these promises. The boys saw that the promises from God were very important. These special promises from God included more than riches. The promises also included a spiritual blessing. The son who gets this blessing will be the priest, or religious leader, for his family. This son will have many children. The Savior of the whole earth will come from this family line.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 177, adapted.

Esau does not care about this spiritual blessing. But Jacob wants this blessing so much. Later, his mother comes up with a plan (read Genesis 27) to trick his father into giving it to Jacob. Jacob even uses the name of “‘the LORD your God’ ” (Genesis 27:20, ERV) to trick Isaac. Yes, Jacob wants something that is good. But he should not lie to get it. Lying is never part of God’s plan.

Jacob wants something good. But he uses lies and tricks to get it. How can we avoid this same trap? That is, why must we not do evil so that “good” may come?



For Esau, the food he eats right now (Genesis 25:31) is more important than any future blessing from God.

JACOB AND THE LADDER (Genesis 28:10–22)



In his dream, Jacob sees a wonderful ladder that is connected with God.

Esau learns that Jacob stole the blessing from him. So, Esau sees that Jacob tricked him and took the blessing Isaac wanted to give him (Genesis 27:36). Now Esau wants to kill his brother (Genesis 27:42). Rebekah is worried and wants to stop this crime (Genesis 27:45). So, with the support of Isaac, Rebekah tells Jacob to run away to her family (Genesis 27:43). On his way there, Jacob meets God in a dream at a place that he names Bethel. Bethel means “the house of God.” There, Jacob makes an oath.

Read about Jacob at Bethel in Genesis 28:10–22. Compare these verses with the story about the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1–9. How is Bethel different from Babel? What lesson does the experience of Jacob at Bethel teach us about our connection with God?

In his dream, Jacob sees a wonderful ladder that is connected with God. The ladder is “standing on the earth” (Genesis 28:12, NIV). The word written as “standing” is the verb “**natsav**” in the Hebrew language. This same verb also is written in the next verse to show us “the LORD standing by the ladder” (Genesis 28:13, ERV). This verb shows us that the ladder and the LORD are the same thing.

The ladder helps us remember the builders at the Tower of Babel. They wanted to reach heaven. The ladder that Jacob sees also reaches “the door of heaven.” But the tower and the ladder are different. The Tower of Babel shows that humans try to enter heaven where God is without obeying God. The ladder of Bethel shows us that we can come near God only if He comes to us. We cannot go to God by our own work.

Before Jacob dreams about the ladder, he puts his head on a stone and falls asleep. This “stone” becomes the word picture of “**beth-El**,” which means “the house of God” (Genesis 28:17; compare with Genesis 28:22), which shows us the temple, the house of God. This house is the center for the work on earth that God does to save humans.

Jacob is filled with a deep feeling of love and respect for God. So, he decides to give to God “ ‘one-tenth of all he gives me’ ” (Genesis 28:22, ERV). This one-tenth also is named tithe, as we already saw. Jacob gives tithe to show God that he is thankful for the blessings that God already gave him. So, here again, we see the idea of tithe long before the Israelites were a people on the earth.

JACOB GETS TRICKED (Genesis 29:1–30)

Read the story about Jacob and Laban in Genesis 29:1–30. How and why does God allow Laban to trick Jacob? What lessons does Jacob learn?

The first thing that Jacob sees when he arrives at the well is a stone. The stone helps us remember Bethel. The stone at Bethel is a word picture for how near God is to His people (Genesis 28:18, 19). The stone at the well will give Jacob a chance to talk to Rachel. Jacob learns from the shepherds that Rachel will come soon to give her sheep a drink. Jacob asks the shepherds to roll away the stone. The shepherds refuse. So, Jacob rolls the stone away. Then he introduces himself to Rachel (Genesis 29:11).

Jacob falls in love with Rachel at first sight. “Jacob loved Rachel” so much (Genesis 29:18, ERV). He promises to work for Laban for seven years if Laban will let him marry Rachel. Laban agrees. “So Jacob worked for seven years so he could marry Rachel. But they seemed like [the same as] only a few days to him because he loved her so much” (Genesis 29:20, Nlrv).

But at the end of these seven years, Jacob gets tricked. On the night of the wedding, Laban switches Rachel with Leah. The next day, Jacob wakes up next to the “wrong” bride. Then Jacob says to Laban, “ ‘You have tricked me’ ” (Genesis 29:25, ERV). “Tricked” is the same word that Isaac said about Jacob after Jacob fooled Isaac and Esau, his brother (Genesis 27:35, Nlrv).

So, we see from this story that the very thing that Jacob did to someone in the past is now done to him. We see this important Bible rule elsewhere in the writings of Moses: “An eye must be put out for an eye. A tooth must be knocked out for a tooth. A hand must be cut off for a hand and a foot for a foot” (Exodus 21:24, Nlrv; compare with Genesis 9:6). This Bible rule forces the person who does wrong to get the same punishment they gave to the one they hurt.

Jacob now understands how Esau and his father felt. Do you see how God teaches Jacob a lesson about his own lies? God lets Laban trick Jacob and lie to him often. The question that Jacob asks, “ ‘Why did you trick me?’ ” (Genesis 29:25, ERV), shows that he knows that lying is wrong.

Why must we learn to trust God when people trick us and lie to us?



The stone at Bethel is a word picture for how near God is to His people (Genesis 28:18, 19).

THE BLESSING OF A FAMILY (Genesis 29:31–Genesis 30:22)



God “made it possible” for Leah to have children (Genesis 29:31, ERV). Then God “made it possible” for Rachel to have a baby, too.

For 20 years, Jacob worked hard for Laban (Genesis 31:38). At the same time, God blesses Jacob, too. Jacob has 11 of the 12 sons who will become the fathers of Israel.

In Genesis 29:31–Genesis 30:22, we read about the children that are born to Jacob. These verses start and end with these important words: God “made it possible.” First, God “made it possible” for Leah to have children (Genesis 29:31, ERV). Then God “made it possible” for Rachel to have a baby, too. What does this wording show us? It shows us that these babies are miracles. They are gifts from God.

Read the story in Genesis 29:31–Genesis 30:22. How are we today to understand what happens in this story?

God gives Leah a baby boy. She names him Reuben. Why does Leah give him this name? The name “Reuben” comes from the Hebrew verb “**ra’ah**,” which means “to see.” So, God “saw” that Jacob did not love Leah (Genesis 29:31). Reuben was a gift from God. God gave Leah a son to comfort her.

Leah names her second son Simeon. Simeon comes from the verb “**shama’**,” which means “heard.” God “heard” the deep pain and shame that Leah felt. So, God pitied her, just as He felt sorry for Hagar (Genesis 29:33).

The name “Simeon” is connected to the name of Ishmael, the son of Hagar. Ishmael means “God will hear” (read Genesis 16:11). When Leah has her last son, she names him Judah, which means “praise.” This name shows us that God has healed Leah so much. Leah does not talk about her pain anymore. She just praises God for His miracles and mercy.

Then God “remembers” Rachel and makes it possible for her to have a child (read Genesis 30:22, NLV). But first, Rachel must wait seven years after her marriage and 14 years after she gets engaged to Jacob (Genesis 29:18, 27). Rachel said, “ ‘God has taken away my shame.’ Rachel named the son Joseph, saying, ‘May the Lord give me another son’ ” (Genesis 30:23, 24, ERV).

We do not always follow God’s plan for our lives. We make mistakes, too. How does the story about Rachel and Leah show us God’s plan will happen in heaven and on earth anyway?

JACOB LEAVES (Genesis 30:25–32)

Jacob serves Laban for many years. Jacob is a loyal worker. He works hard for his uncle. Jacob does not try to get even with his uncle for tricking him on his wedding night. Laban is not very fair. But Jacob does not complain. He does everything that Laban asks him to do.

When Rachel has her first son, things change. Jacob has worked for his uncle for 14 years (Genesis 30:26). Now Jacob thinks about going home to the Promised Land. But Jacob is worried. Will he have enough money and goods to take care of the needs of his own family (Genesis 30:30)?

Read the story in Genesis 30:25–32. What happens in this story? What reasons does Jacob ask from Laban? How does Laban answer?

It has been many years since Jacob left home. Jacob never expected to be gone for so long. But things happened that kept Jacob away from home for many years. Now it is time to go back and take his family with him.

Why does Jacob wait a long time to go home? Why does Jacob not leave Laban sooner? The answer is that Jacob is a different person now. We see that Jacob learns how to be patient when he works many years for his uncle Laban. Yes, Jacob changed. He understands now that he must wait for God. He must have faith. He waits for God to tell him it is time to go. Jacob leaves only when God finally tells Jacob to leave.

God shows Himself to Jacob as “the God of Bethel” (Genesis 31:13, NIV). Then God commands Jacob to leave Laban and go back to “the land of your family” (Genesis 31:13, NKJV). God said the same words to command Abram to go away “from your family” (Genesis 12:1, NKJV).

Another thing that helped Jacob see that it was time to go home was the behavior of Laban and his sons (read Genesis 31:1, 2). “Jacob wanted to leave Laban long before this time. But Jacob was afraid of meeting Esau. Now Jacob feels he is in danger from Laban’s sons. Laban’s family is jealous of the riches of Jacob. Jacob fears they may try to hurt him and steal his riches.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 193, adapted.

So, Jacob takes his family and all his belongings and leaves. He starts on a journey that is the beginning of a new chapter in the plan of the chosen people of God.



**Jacob is a different man.
He understands now
that he must wait for God.**



The Good News is all about how God saves us by His mercy.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: God chose Jacob. Jacob did not do anything to earn the favor of God. When Jacob tried to force God's blessing, Jacob failed. He had no success. He ended up cheating Esau, his brother, and lying to his father, Isaac. The same is true for us. We never can force God to bless us. We can't earn mercy, and we can't be saved by our works (read Romans 4:1–5). The Good News is all about how God saves us by His mercy. When Jacob learned how to live by faith, his life changed. Jacob learned to trust and depend fully on God. The experience of Jacob teaches us an important lesson: do not try to get success by tricking other people.

“Jacob tries to lie to get the special blessing. But his behavior only caused him to lose more. Jacob feels that he lost everything. Jacob thinks he lost his connection with God and his home. Jacob is a runaway with no hope. But what does God do? God looks on Jacob, who feels so hopeless. God sees that Jacob is very disappointed. But God also sees all that Jacob can be and how he will give glory to God. As soon as God sees this hopeless runaway, God shows Jacob the mysterious ladder. This ladder shows us Jesus Christ. Jacob is a word picture for humans who have lost all connection with God. Sin has separated man from God. But the God of heaven looks on man and gives Jesus the permission to save man. Maybe if we were there at Bethel, we would say, ‘I wish to touch heaven, but how can I touch it? I see no way.’ For sure, that is what Jacob thinks. So, God shows Jacob the dream of the ladder. The ladder connects earth with heaven, with Jesus. A man can climb this ladder because the bottom of the ladder rests on the earth. The top of the ladder goes into heaven.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 1, page 1095, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Look at the lives of these people in the Bible: Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Esau, Laban, Rachel, and Leah. Look at all the lies they told! What can we learn from their mistakes? What do their mistakes teach us about the mercy and forgiveness of God?
- ② What hints can you find in the story of Jacob that he grows and changes in his faith?
- ③ As Seventh-day Adventists, we have a special blessing from God. Are we like Esau, who did not care about the blessing? Or are we like Jacob, who learns to trust God? How can we make sure we never stop loving God for all the Bible truth He gives us?

MY MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE

When I got on the plane, I opened my Bible to read. I was flying from Namibia to South Africa. As soon as I opened my Bible, the young man next to me started talking to me.

“Do you believe in the Bible?” he asked. He was from Eastern Europe.

“Yes. With all my heart,” I answered.

The young man told me that his grandparents used to read the Bible to him. But he didn’t believe the Bible stories, least of all the one in Genesis where God made the skies and the earth. I told him how God had changed my life. After 15 years on my own, God saved me and led me to a safe place on this earth. The young man was interested in my story.

“May I hold your Bible, please?” he asked.

I was so happy to see my Bible in his hands. His heart was touched by the experience. After the young man handed the Bible back, I read Isaiah 43 to him. The young man was touched deeply by the promise of God’s protection.

Before the plane landed, I asked the young man, “May I give you a gift?” I had a copy of *Steps to Christ* in my travel bag. The young man did not want to take the book away from me. But I told him that I had another copy. “If you have any questions, please text me,” I said. Then I wrote my phone number inside the cover of the book.

To my surprise, the young man texted me the day I arrived home in Ireland. He told me he met a woman in Namibia who prayed daily. “When I saw her pray, I started to think about my grandparents reading the Bible. Then I met you,” he said.

“I believe things happen for a reason,” I said. “Let God talk to your heart.”

We texted once in awhile. I sent him Bible verses, too. Then he sent me a picture of a church next to his house.

I texted back that I wanted to mail him a history of the Christian church. He gave me his address. Then I sent him *The Great Controversy*. I also sent him a video about God’s plan to save us. He wrote, “This video is so wonderful!”

I prayed, “Lord I need to know what I should do next to help him give his heart to You.” A strong thought filled my mind: “The young man held your Bible. Give him your Bible.”

I mailed my Bible to him. The letter I wrote said, “This is the most precious thing I own. God gave His only Son, the most precious thing He had to save us.”

This story shows Spiritual Growth Task No. 5 of the “I Will Go” plan for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Task No. 5 says: “We will help people and families live more Spirit-filled lives.” Read more: IWillGo2020.org.

INSIDE
Story
by THEDA PIENAAR



“May I give you a gift?”

