Open Bible Stories

God Blesses Jacob

## 0 Introduction

### 0.1 Key Idea

The story of God blessing Jacob teaches us how God kept his promises to the next generations.

### 0.2 Creedal Verse

“By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.” Hebrew 11:20

### 0.3 Metanarrative Summary

The eternal God created all things in six days. He made a good and perfect world. He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation. But humans rebelled against God and ruined God’s creation. God set to restore his world through his promise. God made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to bless all nations through Abraham. God kept his promises across the generations. God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac. God gave Isaac a wife and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau. God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

## 1 Biblical Interpretation: Observing the Details of the Story

After reading the crafted biblical story, answer the following questions to familiarize yourself with the details of the story.

### 1.1 Observation Questions

#### 07-01

What did Jacob and Esau each love to do?

Which son did Rebekah love? Which son did Isaac love?

Who was the older son?

#### 07-02

How did Esau feel when he came back from hunting?

What did Esau ask his younger brother?

What did Jacob have Esau promise?

Why did he give everything that he should receive to Jacob, the younger son?

#### 07-03

To whom did Isaac want to give his formal blessing?

How did Jacob trick Isaac into giving him the blessing?

#### 07-04

What did Jacob say to his father, Isaac?

Who did Isaac think was speaking with him?

What did Isaac do to Jacob?

#### 07-05

What did Esau feel toward Jacob?

What did Esau plan to do to Jacob?

#### 07-06

What did Isaac and Rebekah do when Rebekah heard of Esau’s plan to kill Jacob?

#### 07-07

What happened to Jacob during the next twenty years?

#### 07-08

How long did Jacob live away from his family in Canaan?

What did Jacob do after these twenty years?

#### 07-09

Why was Jacob afraid when he returned to Canaan?

What did Jacob do in order to soothe Esau’s anger?

#### 07-10

Was Esau still angry with Jacob?

Where did Jacob settle to live?

After Isaac’s death, who received the covenant promises that God originally gave to Abraham?

### 1.2 Translation Questions

Use the following translation questions to understand specific details of the passage. Discuss how you might translate these specific elements of the story.

#### 07-01

**at home** This refers to the area around the family dwellings. Jacob preferred to stay close to the tents where they lived. How would you express **at home** to mean the place where his family lived?

  

**loved to stay at home…loved to hunt** Jacob liked to stay home and Esau like to hunt. How would you express **loved to stay at home…loved to hunt** to mean Jacob enjoyed/preferred staying around the family dwellings and Esau enjoyed/preferred to hunt animals?

  

**Rebekah loved Jacob, but Isaac loved Esau** Rebekah was more fond of Jacob, and Isaac was more fond of Esau. This does not necessarily mean that Rebekah and Isaac did not love the other son, but that each parent had a favorite. How would you express **Rebekah loved Jacob, but Isaac loved Esau** to mean Rebekah’s favorite child was Jacob and Isaac’s favorite child was Esau?

  

#### 07-02

**promise me** Jacob told Esau to make a promise to him: to swear that he would do something. How would you express **promise me** to mean a command telling someone to swear that they would do something?

  

**everything you should receive because you were born first** According to their custom, since Esau was the oldest son, he should have been the one to receive twice as much of their father’s wealth when their father died. Jacob thought of a way to take these rights of the oldest son from Esau. How would you express **everything you should receive because you were born first** to mean the rights to the larger portion of wealth from their father?

  

#### 07-03

**give his blessing** It was customary for fathers to formally express their desire for good things to happen to their children. Normally, the older son received the best promise. Isaac wanted this extra prosperity to happen to Esau. How would you express **give his blessing** to mean Isaac wanted to formally express his desire for good things to happen to Esau?

  

**tricked him** The word trick means to do something to deliberately deceive someone. Rebekah came up with a plan to deceive Isaac into giving Jacob the special blessing instead of Esau. How would you express **tricked him** to mean Rebekah and Jacob did something deliberately to deceive Isaac?

  

**pretend** The word **pretend** shows how Jacob would deceive his father (who had very poor eyesight in his old age). What words in your language mean **pretend** as in to make something seem like one thing but to be something different in reality?

  

#### 07-04

**When Isaac felt the goat hair and smelled the clothes** Isaac believed he was speaking to Isaac when he felt the goat hair and smelled the clothes. This action resulted in Isaac believing he was speaking with Esau. How would you express **When Isaac felt the goat hair and smelled the clothes** to mean that Isaac thought he was speaking with Esau at the time he felt the goat hair and smelled the clothes?

  

**he thought it was Esau** He thought that the person he was touching and smelling was Esau. How would you express **he thought it was Esau** to mean that Isaac believed he was speaking with Esau?

  

#### 07-05

**rights as oldest son** This refers to the the extra blessing and inheritance that belonged to Esau because he was the firstborn son. Jacob found a way to get the larger portion of their father’s wealth that should have gone to Esau as the older son. How would you express **rights as oldest son** to mean the extra blessing and inheritance the belonged to the firstborn son?

  

**because** Jacob had stolen The connecting word **because** connects the reason, Jacob stole Esau’s rights and blessing, with the result, Esau hated Jacob. How would you express **because** Jacob had stolen to mean the reason Esau hated Jacob was **because** Jacob had stolen his rights to the inheritance?

  

**So he planned to kill** Jacob The word So connects the result, Esau planned to kill Jacob, with the reason, Esau hated Jacob. How would you express so he planned to kill Jacob to mean Esau determined to kill Jacob because he hated him?

  

#### 07-06

**But Rebekah heard Esau’s plan** The connecting word But is used in a contrast relationship. It contrasts Esau’s plan to kill Jacob with Rebekah hearing of it and devising a different plan. Rebekah acted opposite to Esau. Esau planned to kill Jacob; Rebekah acted to protect Jacob. How would you express **But Rebekah heard Esau’s plan** to mean Rebekah responded differently/opposite to Esau’s plan?

  

**Esau’s plan** This refers to the plan that Esau had decided to do. **Esau’s plan** was to kill Jacob after his father died. How would you express **Esau’s plan** to mean the intent or decision Esau made to kill Jacob after their father died?

  

**far away to live with her relatives** Since Abraham’s brother was Rebekah’s grandfather, her relatives were also Isaac’s relatives. How would you express **far away to live with her relatives** to mean the family members who lived in in the same land where she used to live?

  

#### 07-07

**During that time** Jacob married, had children, and became wealthy while he was living with Rebekah’s relatives. How would you express during that time to mean that Jacob married, had children, and became wealthy while he was living with Rebekah’s relatives?

  

**very wealthy** This included money, large herds of animals and other possessions. How would you express **very wealthy** to mean that Jacob had become rich in possessions?

  

#### 07-08

**After 20 years** After twenty years living in the land where his relatives were Jacob returned home. Jacob had lived for twenty years in the land where his mother was from. How would you express **After 20 years** to mean Jacob returned home at the end of twenty years living with Rebekah’s relatives?

  

**all his flocks and herds of animals** This refers to ownership—all the groups of animals that belonged to him. How would you express **all his flocks and herds of animals** to mean all the flocks and herds that belonged to Jacob as his possession?

  

#### 07-09

**gift** Jacob sent many animals to Esau as a **gift**. He was hoping the **gift** would cause his brother to no longer hate him. What words in your language mean **gift** as in a present one offers to someone else?

  

**Your servant, Jacob** Jacob was not actually Esau’s servant. But Jacob told his servants to say this because he wanted to show Esau that he was coming to him humbly and respectfully, so that Esau would no longer be angry with him. How would you express **Your servant, Jacob** to mean that Jacob was coming to his brother, Esau, humbly and respectfully as a servant would to a master?

  

#### 07-10

**But Esau no longer wanted to harm Jacob** The connecting word But here contrasts Jacob’s fear of Esau wanting to kill him with Esau no longer wanting to harm Jacob. How would you express **But Esau no longer wanted to harm Jacob** to mean that Esau had different/opposite feelings toward Jacob?

  

**lived peacefully** This refers to the fact that Esau and Jacob were not angry at each other and did not fight with each other. How would you express **lived peacefully** to mean Esau and Jacob were no longer angry with each other and no longer fought with each other?

  

**covenant promises** These were the promises that God made in his covenant with Abraham. How would you express **covenant promises** to mean the things God guaranteed his would do (promises) for Abraham as a result of the formal agreement (covenant) he made with him?

  

**passed on from Isaac to Jacob** The promises went from Abraham to his son Isaac, and now to Isaac’s son Jacob. Esau did not receive the promises. How would you express **passed on from Isaac to Jacob** to mean that the promises God made to Abraham continued to the descendants of Jacob not the descendants of Esau?

  

## 2 Theological Dialogue: Discussing the Meaning of the Story

Take time to explore the meaning of this story together as a community. Use the following discussions as a way to grasp what truth the story teaches.

### 2.1 Discourse Questions

##### What caused conflict between Esau and Jacob? (07-01)

##### How did God bless Jacob? (07-06)

##### How did the relationship between Jacob and Esau get restored? (07-01)

##### How did keep his covenant promises to the next generation? (07-10)

### 2.2 Theological Questions

Answer the following theology questions as a community. Discuss what truths this story teaches.

1. What causes conflict in human relationships? How does the story of Jacob and Esau help us understand why human relationships can have conflict?
2. How are the promises of God’s blessing undeserved (an act of grace)? How do we see God blessing Jacob despite Jacob’s wrongdoing?
3. How can human relationships be restored to peace? How does the story of Jacob and Esau show us what restored relationship looks like?

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## 3 Personal Reflection: Following the Teaching of the Story

Take a moment to allow this story to evaluate your own life and to consider how God would have you respond. After this reflection, use the quality checking questions to check your translation draft among the translation team.

### 3.1 Journal Reflection

Prayerfully think about the following personal reflection questions. Write/Record your answers and/or discuss them as a group.

1. When have you been tricked or deceived by someone else? How did this feel?
2. When have you tricked or deceived others? What consequences did you experience?
3. How can trusting God help you enjoy God’s blessing and a life of peace with others?
4. What are the obstacles that are keeping you from trusting God? How can you tell that you are trusting God?

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