



Lesson 18

Jacob flees to Haran

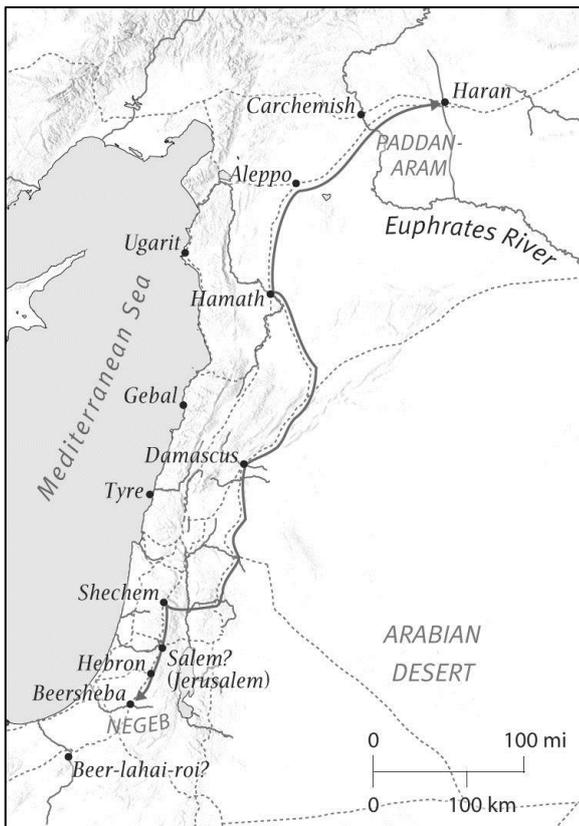
In the last lesson we saw that Esau hated Jacob because he had tricked him out of his inheritance. Esau said he would kill his brother and so Jacob was sent to live in Haran with his uncle, Laban his mother's brother for a while.

Isaac blesses Jacob a Second Time (28:3-4)

Before he went his father blessed him a second time. This time the words are quite different to those of the blessing we looked at in the last lesson. Then it was about material things that Jacob would inherit; now Isaac gives his younger son the blessing that God gave Abraham many years before. This is about the fulfilment of God's purpose in the life of Jacob. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that this was blessing by faith – Isaac now believed that his younger son was the one whom God had chosen to work with as part of His purpose in the Earth.

"God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings that God gave to Abraham!"
Genesis 28:3-4

The Journey to Haran (28:5-22)



Notice that Jacob was now promised the land of Canaan and this was very important to him. However, because of Esau's hatred and his threat to kill him, Jacob was being sent away. He had a long journey to make and as he travelled north, from Beersheba to Haran, he stopped for a night near a place called Luz (later called Bethel). This was near where his grandfather, Abraham, stopped when he first came into the land. We can imagine how Jacob felt. He had to leave his family and all that he loved and was running away for fear of his life. He was leaving the land he had just been promised!

As he slept, God came to him in a dream and spoke to him. He strengthened Jacob by telling him that he would certainly inherit the land and that wherever he went, God would be with him to help him in his life.

When Jacob awoke he changed the name of the place where he had slept calling it Bethel (it means 'the house of God') instead of Luz and made a vow to God.

"If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God."
Genesis 28:20-21

We can see the wonder and praise in his heart in these words. He marvels that God has promised to look after him and bring him back to the Promised Land and he says to himself, surely this God is my God!

We can learn a lesson from these words of Jacob. Whatever happens to us in life, if we are faithful believers, God has promised that He will bring us to His kingdom. When we think about this we too should praise the Lord as did Jacob.



Jacob meets Rachel (29:10-12)

Jacob travelled to Haran and stopped at a well. There he met a woman looking after flocks. He discovered that she was Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his uncle. Jacob went to live in Laban's household; he fell in love with Rachel and asked Laban if he could marry her.

Laban was a hard man and made Jacob work for him without wages for seven years before he could marry her. When the 7 years were completed, Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah, Rachel's older sister, instead. He then allowed Jacob to marry Rachel as his second wife but made him work another seven years for her. Jacob was cross that he had been deceived in this way and said to Laban:

"What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?"
Genesis 29:25

But Jacob had deceived Esau when he tricked him out of the inheritance! At that time Isaac explained to Esau:

"But he (Isaac) said, "Your brother came deceitfully, and he has taken away your blessing." Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." Genesis 27:35-36

The name Jacob means a 'supplanter', one who takes something from another person for himself. Jacob had behaved badly in tricking his brother in this way. Now God had brought him to a man, Laban, who was a greater deceiver than was Jacob! In this God was teaching Jacob what it felt like to be deceived. God does not approve of us behaving in deceitful ways even though we may think we are doing it for the right motives.

The Bible teaches us that God is the God of truth and we read that the Lord Jesus Christ was '*full of grace and truth*'. We are asked to behave like Jesus in our lives, to be honest and truthful, not trying to gain advantage by tricking or deceiving other people. God had promised Jacob that, because of his faith, he would not leave him but the Lord was now working in his life to show him how wrong his behaviour had been and to give him opportunities to behave in a different way. As disciples our lives are sometimes like this. Things happen to us that cause us problems but we can look at them and see that they can help to improve our characters and behaviour, to make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ if we accept them humbly, recognizing the hand of God in our lives.

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."
Romans 8:28

Jacob's Troublesome Family (30:1-2)

Because of what had happened, Jacob hated Leah and loved Rachel. So God made Leah very fertile and she bore four sons to Jacob but He made Rachel barren. This caused great strife between the two wives. By his behaviour with Esau, Jacob had caused dissent and trouble in Isaac's family, now he has the same problems in his own family! How he must have thought about what he did in the past and regretted it!

SUMMARY

In this lesson we have learned:

- Jacob behaved badly but God continued to work with him because of his faith in the promises.
- God gave him experiences in his life to help him see that what he had done was wrong so that he could change the way he behaved.
- In our lives we sometimes have difficult experiences, if we can use them to learn to live humbly like the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in God's promises of the kingdom to come, then these experiences can be good for us and help develop our characters.
- We have to live with the consequences of what we have done, just as Jacob had to live with his quarrelling wives.

