

JACOB'S STORY: FROM DECEIVER TO PATRIARCH Genesis 25-46



The purpose of this study is to show God's love, patience, and promise keeping. It demonstrates how God can make a mercurial character such as Jacob into a patriarch, a man who played a leading role in the story of God's chosen people. God not only changed his name but gave him the opportunity to change his ways. It is a story that gives each one of us hope. Not one of us, whatever we have done wrong in our past, is beyond the grace and forgiveness of God.

WEEK SIX – JACOB AND HIS LEGACY

Read Genesis 35

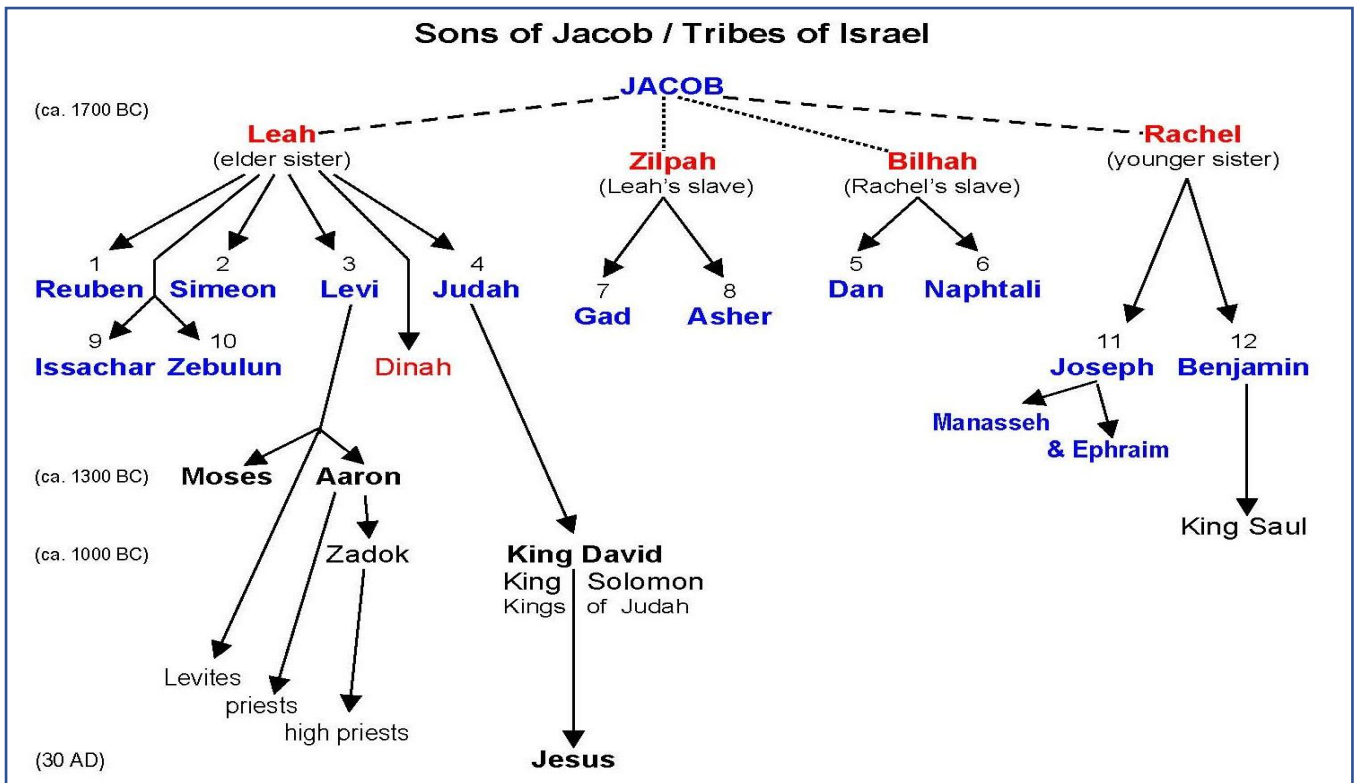
You will have received an information sheet with the first study on Abraham's two sons. I want now to look at the legacy Jacob left and how it all fits together with the story of Joseph and the eventual settlement, and then the deliverance, of the people of Israel, from Egypt.

In the last study we saw how Jacob and Esau established contact again after a period of twenty years but settled at a distance from each other. It would be hard for them to trust each other again.

Rachel, the one for whom Jacob told Laban he would work seven years but in fact it turned out to be fourteen years, died on the journey away from Bethel whilst giving birth to Benjamin. She was buried on the way to Bethlehem and Jacob set a pillar on her grave.

At the end of chapter 35 we read of the death of Isaac. I like the way the NKJV reads: *"So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, being old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."*

- Why do you think God blessed Jacob who had been so deceitful?
- What does it tell us about God?
- How do you think God sees you?



Look back at Genesis 17. God had made a promise to Abraham and despite the subsequent actions of some of the leading characters, we can see here in this chart, the beginnings of the nation, that God had promised. Quite literally these were the children of Israel, the man to whom God had given a new name. Also, how eventually, it comes to Jesus, the one who was *born of David's line*. Who would have thought at the beginning of Jacob's story, that he would become the patriarch of Israel?

Read Matthew 1:1-17

We have previously mentioned the importance of genealogies to the Jewish people, and you will find in this first chapter of Matthew how Jesus was linked all the way back to Abraham whom God had promised would become the father of many nations.

- Why do you think it is important to understand the links back to Abraham?

If you read through the remaining chapters of Genesis, you will see how the story of Jacob's favourite son Joseph, unfolds. Of course, everyone will remember the musical Joseph and his technicolour dreamcoat, but that is only a part of this greater serial, and I believe that is how we should see this. Back in the nineteenth century, newspapers started to serialise stories, and people were so keen to get the next instalment, until they reached the conclusion. We know that the conclusion of this particular serial is Jesus and his sacrifice on the cross for each one of us. We so often read parts of the scripture without seeing how the whole story pans out.

- How did Joseph become a pivotal character in Egypt?
- Do we realise how Moses then became a part of the story? He was followed by Joshua, a wonderful man of God whose words still challenge us today. (*Joshua 24:15*) He was the man who finally led the children of Israel into the promised land.
- What for you, is the most interesting part of Jacob's story?

For me one of the most important lessons of Jacob's life is how God is able to change people and use them for his purposes. I pray that this will be an encouragement to each of us. No matter our past, God loves and forgives us.

If you have made the choice to serve God, don't let anything stand in your way. Think back to this story and determine to become the person God intends you to be.



Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee
 Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
 As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be
 Great is Thy faithfulness
 Great is Thy faithfulness
 Morning by morning, new mercies I see
 All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me

Prayer

Our Father God, thank you that you never change and that we can trust you to be faithful to your promises. Thank you that, *Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, UNTO ME!*