

JACOB.....I

(Genesis 25:14---32:32)

Jacob took advantage of his brother Esau to get Esau's right to the birthright, which was normally given to the oldest son. After an elaborate scheme by which he and his mother deceived his blind aged father, Isaac, Jacob fled in fear to Haran, home of Laban, Rebekah's brother. Rebekah sold the plan to Isaac, saying that Jacob needed to find a wife from among her relatives.

Genesis 28 records the account of the trip to Haran. On the way Jacob had a dream in which he saw a stairway to heaven with angels moving on it. Then the Lord appeared at the top, renewing promises made earlier to Abraham and Isaac--promise of the land, of many descendants, and of blessings to all nations through his descendants. Jacob pledged his loyalty to the Lord in response to the Lord's promises.

Genesis 29 records the meeting with Laban's family and Jacob's love for Rachel, Laban's younger daughter. There is the well-known story of Jacob's agreement to work 7 years in order to marry Rachel, only to be deceived into marrying the older daughter, Leah. (The deceiver had been deceived!) A week later he married Rachel in return for 7 more years of working for Laban.

Jacob had a total of twelve sons and one daughter by Rachel and Leah, and by their servant girls, Bilhah and Zilpah. Rachel's 2 sons were Joseph and Benjamin (Rachel died in childbirth with Benjamin).

During his years of service to Laban, Jacob, with God's help, became wealthy with an abundance of flocks, herds, camels, donkeys, and servants.

Genesis 31 tells of the jealousy and anger among Laban and his sons toward Jacob and his prosperity. Jacob decided to leave and return to his home country. Fearing an angry confrontation with Laban, Jacob decided to leave quickly while Laban was away for a few days. Laban got word on the third day and chased after Jacob. There was then an angry confrontation after all. Things gradually settled down and they all parted on fairly good terms.

What Jacob REALLY dreaded was meeting Esau again. It had been 20 years, but Jacob feared that Esau would still be angry and might do harm to him and his family. On the way to meet Esau, Jacob had a very strange experience. One night he wrestled with angel until daybreak. There is no explanation of how it all started or why it occurred. But out of it came a pronouncement by the angel that Jacob's name would be changed to Israel...thus the term "Israelites".

