

Jacob Returns Home

MEMORY VERSE: And Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan Genesis 31:18

SCRIPTURES: Genesis 31; 32; 33

AIM: To see God's provision and grace in Jacob's story

Uncle Laban's Sons were grumbling and mumbling to their father because they were jealous of Jacob. "That man Jacob who came to our land owns everything and gets everything he wants," they said. "And if you hadn't given it to him, he wouldn't have anything."

That wasn't the truth and it wasn't fair, either. But Laban listened to his boys and started acting unfriendly toward Jacob. But God was taking care of Jacob just like He had promised to take care of Jacob's grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.

God said, "Go back to the land you came from and I will watch over you."

So Jacob talked to his wives Leah and Rachel.

"You have probably noticed how unkind your father has been toward me," said Jacob, "and I don't understand why. You know how hard I have worked for your father. We had a wage contract and he has lowered my wages again and again.

"Yet God has been taking care of me and blessing me with riches," continued Jacob.

"And it's very interesting how God has done this. Uncle Laban said I could have all the speckled sheep and he would keep the ones with streaks on them. God arranged that only speckled animals be born. Then when Uncle Laban noticed this, he said he would keep the ones with speckles and I would have the ones with streaks.

"And what do you think happened? All the animals that were born had streaks.

"Now God has told me to leave our home here and to go back to the country where I was born."

Jacob's wives listened to their husband.

"Do whatever God tells you to do," they said. "Our father hasn't been very nice to us, either, so we would be glad to leave."

So one day while Laban was busy shearing sheep, Jacob and his wives and sons and camels left without telling Laban.

Three days later Laban found out. He hurriedly left with some servants to try to catch up with Jacob. But God warned Laban not to hurt Jacob.

When Laban finally caught up with Jacob he said, "What do you mean by sneaking away! Why didn't you let me give you a party before you left? And why did you steal my idols?"

"I did not steal a thing," said Jacob. He didn't know his wife Rachel had brought them along.

Laban looked everywhere for the idols but couldn't find them.

Now Jacob was angry. "Why have you chased after me like I was a criminal?" he said. "I've worked for you twenty years. Fourteen of those years I labored to marry your daughters and six more years to raise your sheep. And you know what you did? You cut my wages ten times! If it hadn't been for God blessing me, I wouldn't have a thing!"

All Laban could say was, "Let's make peace!"

So Jacob took a stone and set it as a monument and his servants made a big pile of stones. "This will act as a boundary line," Laban said. "You can't cross over to my land and attack me and I won't cross over the line and attack you."

Jacob took an oath before God and they agreed to never cross over to each other's territory.

The next morning Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren good-bye and blessed them. Then he returned to his home.

Jacob continued on to his land. While traveling, more unusual things happened. He heard that Esau was coming after him with four hundred men. Jacob divided his company of wives, servants and flocks into two parts and sent them on by different routes. Jacob prayed for help from God; then he sent gifts of sheep, goats, cows and other animals to Esau.

That night when it was dark and he was alone, he suddenly felt a hand on him. Jacob was frightened and wrestled with the other man just like people wrestle today.

As dawn began to break, the stranger touched Jacob's hip and put it out of joint. Jacob could fight no longer. He correctly guessed that this stranger was more than an ordinary man. The stranger tried to go but Jacob held on to him. The man said "Let me go " "Not until you bless me " said Jacob "What is your name?" asked the man. "Jacob," was the answer

"Not anymore," said the man. "It is now Israel, meaning 'one who has power with God and with man."

Then Jacob named the place Peniel, meaning "the grace of God" because he now knew he had wrestled with an angel of God.

Later after Jacob had reunited with his family, he saw Esau coming with his four hundred men. Jacob bowed to Esau but Esau came running to meet Jacob. They threw their arms around each other and wept for joy.

"Who are all these people with you?" asked Esau. Jacob answered, "These are the children that God has graciously given to me."

"And what did you mean by sending all the flocks and herds I met on the way?" Esau asked. "I have enough flocks of my own."

"Please accept my gifts," Jacob said. "God has been good to me and I have plenty." Jacob urged Esau to accept, and Esau finally did.

"Let's finish your journey together," Esau suggested. However Jacob could only travel slowly. He had small children and young animals to look after. They could not walk as quickly as Esau's men. So the brothers said goodbye, but now they were friends once again.

Jacob trusted God to work all things out for the best, and in time that is what happened.