

MOORE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 2042 00045446 6

Box 46 A



JACOB

A MAN
OF
SERVICE

by

BESSIE G. OLSON

BIBLE CHARACTER SERIES

MOC

MOORE COLLEGE LIBRARY

MOC COLLEGE

MOORE COLLEGE LIBRARY

Jacob, A Man of Service

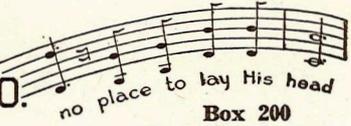
By
Bessie G. Olson

author of:

- Moses, A Man of Meekness
- Abraham, A Man of Faith
- Paul, A Man of Purpose
- John, A Man of Love
- Joseph, A Man of Destiny
- Isaac, A Man of Promise

Order From Your Book Dealer.

The **BOONE**
PUBLISHING CO.



no place to lay His head
Box 200
Des Moines, Iowa

INTRODUCTION

The story of Jacob covers many chapters in the book of Genesis. His life, like that of Abraham and Isaac, covered many years. There was such a great transformation in his life that sometimes it almost seems as if the Jacob of the early part and Israel of the last part are two entirely different persons. But Jacob and Israel are one and the same person . . . because of the work of God.

God said, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff . . ." Isa. 41:14, 15.

There is much contrast and no comparison, to our understanding, between a **worm** and a **new sharp threshing instrument having teeth**. Only God could make such a transformation—He did, in the case of Jacob. With God **NOTHING** is impossible.

Many facts have been omitted in this volume because of lack of space, yet we sincerely hope that his life has become one unit, in your thinking . . . that the life of Jacob has become more real. If so, the purpose of this book has been realized.

This book is written with only the biographical angle in mind.

Jacob was the grandson of Abraham and the son of Isaac. In this volume we found no space for the facts concerning the lives of Abraham and Isaac for, as we stated before, there was not room for all the minor events in Jacob's life. For the biographies of Abraham and Isaac see other volumes in this **BIBLE CHARACTER SERIES**.

Jacob, A Man of Service

- 1 -

THE name Jacob is **Yaaqob** in the Hebrew and it means, literally, "to seize the heel," or "supplant". At the time of the birth of Jacob and his twin brother Esau, Esau was born first but the instant Jacob was born he took hold of Esau's heel . . . hence, the name Jacob.

Esau was very red and covered with hairs at the time of his birth. We are told in Genesis that he was like "an hairy garment". But Jacob was fair and his skin was smooth. And so, their physical appearances differed as they grew to men also.

Esau loved the out-of-doors where nature was rugged and he became a cunning hunter. Jacob was more interested in the flocks and herds that belonged to his father, and he liked the peace and quiet of their home.

Esau was the favorite son of his father, Isaac, while Jacob stood highest in the esteem of his mother, Rebekah. The reason for this is clear. Before the twins were born, God told Rebekah that she was to give birth to two sons who would become two nations, and that the younger should be given first place instead of the elder, as was customary.

Like Mary, the mother of Jesus, Rebekah "kept

all these things and pondered them in her heart." It seems that she felt as if it were her responsibility to see that Jacob was put first. But Isaac, taking it for granted that the first-born son was to be first, favored Esau and was especially fond of the food Esau prepared for him from the venison he took while hunting.

The boys grew to young manhood and their differences continued. In fact, as they grew older these distinctions became a gulf between them—a deep gulf that led to misunderstanding and eventually to hatred and plans of murder.

While Esau was spending most of his time out hunting, Jacob was with his father in the tents. Jacob learned about the blessings that had been promised to his grandfather Abraham and also to his father Isaac. He came to understand and to appreciate spiritual values. Jacob saw too that Esau cared little for the blessing that would naturally fall to him as the first-born of his father, and Jacob began wishing that that blessing, known as the "birthright," might be his. It is altogether possible that God had put the desire in Jacob's heart . . . and God never puts a deep desire on a heart unless He intends to fulfill it.

When Esau spoke lightly of his "birthright" and seemed not to believe that God had promised to bless them in such a mighty way, Jacob suggested that he give his "birthright" to him, but Esau gave him no satisfactory answer so the matter was dropped.

One day Jacob was preparing a meal for himself. He was making beef soup with plenty of good red meat and vegetables. Esau returned from hunting

just as the soup was ready. The aroma was mighty attractive to a man who was faint with hunger.

"Oh, Jacob," said Esau, "I beg of you, feed me with some of that delicious soup. The red meat I crave. Oh, feed me for I am faint."

Jacob, taking advantage of the opportunity, was quick to reply, "Yes, if you will sell me your birthright for this soup."

"Very well, I am so faint with hunger I shall die if I don't get food at once. If I die what good would my birthright be anyway?"

"Are you sincere? Are you willing to turn over your birthright to me now?"

"I am, Jacob."

Then Jacob served the soup to Esau with bread. He also set before him a beverage. Esau ate and drank until he was satisfied—but he "despised his birthright."

- 2 -

Years later, Rebekah came to Jacob one day in great excitement. She was obviously much alarmed and upset about something, as if the outcome of the entire future of the world was then in her hands—and perhaps it was.

"Jacob! Jacob!" she said. "I just overheard your father talking to Esau. He told him he was old now and knew not how soon he would be gathered to his people. He told Esau to go get a deer and fix savory meat for him—you know, Jacob, the kind of meat that your father likes so well. He said for Esau to bring it that he might eat, that his soul might be glad and then he would bless him. Jacob, your fa-

ther **must** not bless Esau, it is not the will of God. You are the one chosen of God to carry on the blessing and the work given to Abraham and to your father, Isaac. We must prevent Esau's getting the blessing. Son, there is no time to lose."

"But Mother, how?"

"Go at once to the flocks, Jacob. Find two of the finest lambs, dress them carefully but hastily, bring them to me and I will prepare them in just the same way that Esau prepares the meat that your father has asked him to bring to him. You will take it to him and he will bless you instead of Esau. He cannot see well enough to distinguish one person from another now, you know."

"He cannot see, it is true, Mother. But Esau is a hairy man and my skin is so smooth. If my father questions the fact that I am Esau he will feel of me, he will know instantly that I am a deceiver and will bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing."

"Upon me be your curse, my son, only go at once to fetch the lambs. Obey me." So spoke Rebekah. Jacob obeyed.

When he returned with the lambs, Rebekah first put the meat to cook, then she brought to Jacob some of Esau's clothing which he had worn many times when he had gone hunting. These she asked Jacob to put on. She took the skins of the newly slain lambs and fastened them to the backs of Jacob's hands and also on his chest. And when the savory meat was prepared, she sent Jacob to Isaac.

"Father," said Jacob, when he entered Isaac's tent.

"Here am I. Who are you, my son?"

"Yes," replied Jacob, "I am Esau, your firstborn

son. I have done as you asked and here is the savory meat. Do eat now that your soul may be glad so you can bless me, father."

Isaac hesitated. "How is it that you found a deer so quickly?"

"The Lord brought it to me, father."

"Come here, son, I want to feel of you." And Jacob obeyed. Then Isaac continued, "Your voice sounds as if it were Jacob's; but the hands feel as if they were Esau's." And he pronounced on his son a blessing.

Again Isaac asked, "Are you really my son Esau?" Jacob said, "I am."

"Then bring the venison to me, my son, that I may eat, that my soul may be made glad so that I may give you the blessing."

Isaac ate. The meat was satisfying, yet in the mind of father Isaac there remained the question of the identity of this son.

"Son," he said when he was finished with eating, "Come near to me and kiss me."

When Jacob obeyed, Isaac smelled of the clothing this son wore. Isaac was satisfied, and said, "Yes, the smell of my son is the smell of the fields which the Lord has blessed: therefore, God give you of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth and plenty of corn and wine; let the people serve you, and nations bow down to you; be lord over your brother and let your mother's sons bow down to you: cursed be every one that curses you, and blessed be he that blesses you."

With this blessing upon him, Jacob left.

Soon after, Esau too came to his father. He was ignorant of what had been taking place while he was out hunting. The naked, hard truth came to Esau—Jacob had stolen his blessing. Jacob had now completely supplanted him. Jacob now had both the birthright and the blessing. Esau hated Jacob.

- 3 -

That evening, Rebekah came again to Jacob . . . this time in fear.

"Jacob! Jacob!" she said again. "The chief shepherd just came to me with alarming news. Esau had told him that as soon as your father is dead and the days of mourning are over he is going to kill you. He is very angry because of the blessing and he is comforting his own heart with these thoughts against you."

"Jacob, it is not safe for you to stay here. You must go to Haran and stay there with my brother Laban until I send for you and tell you that Esau feels more kindly toward you. Oh, if he kills you then he would be put to death as a murderer and I would be without both my sons. That I could never endure."

Jacob probably did not know that his mother went to talk with his father after this. It was true that Esau had already married two pagan girls and had brought them home to his father's tents. These girls had given the entire household nothing but grief because they had no faith in the living God, the God of Abraham and Isaac. Therefore, Rebekah, when she went to her husband this time, complained

about these daughters-in-law and told Isaac she could not endure having Jacob to marry one of the native girls.

Isaac therefore called Jacob to him the next morning. Jacob was expecting harsh words from his father but Isaac did not so much as mention the fact that he had taken the blessing from Esau. Instead, good old father Isaac greeted his son with another blessing, then said, "Jacob, you must not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. I want you to make ready for a journey to Haran where your mother's people live. Go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father; and take for yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. And God Almighty bless you, son, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, that you may be a multitude of people; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your seed; that you may inherit the land wherein you are a stranger, which God gave to my father Abraham."

Jacob was in his right place, in the place God had intended he should eventually fill—it was he who should carry the work of establishing a people in the Promised Land of Canaan.

He must not marry a girl of Canaan—thus had his father spoken. And his mother had commanded him to go to Haran to get away from his brother. Every circumstance pointed in the same direction, so Jacob left at once and went to his mother's relatives who were, in reality, also his father's relatives, as we have already learned in the story of Abraham.

- 4 -

Jacob was in exile.

After he had traveled all day and the sun was set he came to a somewhat sheltered place and decided he'd better stay there for the night. He was alone and in strange territory. There were no hotels or tourist cabins to welcome him. He found a smooth stone upon which to pillow his head, drew his coat a bit closer, and lay down to sleep.

And while he slept he dreamed. He saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. Then he saw the Lord Himself standing at the top of the ladder. He said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

We today know that Jacob's children, the Jews, have gone to every corner of the earth, God has blessed them, He is blessing them, and now He is bringing them back to that land known to us today as The Holy Land of Palestine.

Jacob awoke from his dream, and he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Isaac had given him the blessing, now God Himself had given THE PROMISE to him. It was an awe-inspiring

event. Jacob was afraid. He said, "This place is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

Early the next morning, Jacob took the stone that he had used for his pillow and set it up for a pillar or memorial, and he poured oil upon the top of it. The place was known as Luz at that time, but Jacob said, "This is Bethel." (meaning, The House of God).

Before God Jacob vowed, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I may come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house. And, Oh Lord, of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

With the great Promise of the Lord and the Peace of God upon him, Jacob went on his way. At last he came to what he thought should be near his uncle's home. He stopped at a well where shepherds were watering their flocks and inquired. Yes, they knew Laban.

"Is he well?" asked Jacob.

"Yes, he is well," they replied. "Look, there comes his daughter Rachel now with his sheep."

When Jacob saw Rachel and the sheep belonging to his own Uncle Laban his heart leaped with joy. He made himself known to Rachel; he kissed her. He could restrain his tears no longer—cool tears of joy, of expectation fulfilled.

Rachel ran at once to her father. Laban hurried to the well and when he saw Jacob, his own sister's

son, he embraced him, he kissed him, and took him to their home where every effort was put forth to make him comfortable. Jacob told his uncle what had taken place—yes, there was **much** for them to talk about.

A month sped by. In the meantime Jacob had gradually fitted into the routine of the family and had taken upon himself some of the work of caring for the cattle. It was the work he knew best and the work he liked. Jacob would rather serve than to be served by others, and he liked being busy.

Laban liked his energetic nephew and the longer he stayed the more Laban wanted him to stay. So after about four weeks, Laban said, "Jacob, you are my own nephew, I want you to continue with us but I do not want you to work for nothing. Tell me, what would you like your wages to be?"

Wages? Jacob's mind flew to the one and only desire his heart had at that time—Rachel.

"I will serve you seven years if you will give me your youngest daughter, Rachel, for my wife."

"Very well. It is much better that I give her to you, Jacob, than to a stranger. You shall have her. Stay with us."

Laban had two daughters. Leah was the older and she was not as attractive as the younger one, Rachel—at least not to Jacob. He loved Rachel with a deep, consuming love. This love and the joy it brought him made him forget that he was in exile, forget the troubles he had left.

Because of Rachel the seven years he promised to serve for her seemed like only a few days. Jacob served willingly and well.

- 5 -

The wedding day came. The seven years of service were past. Jacob took unto himself his wife. After the feasting was over, when the bride and groom were alone at last, Jacob lifted the heavy veil that covered the bride's face. Jacob's smile suddenly vanished. It was Leah, not Rachel, he had married.

"I have been tricked," Jacob muttered to himself as he hurried out to find Laban. Yes, Jacob, you were tricked as you yourself tricked Esau not so long ago. Maybe these **are** your wages—the wages you earned. But you are God's chosen one and He will work it all together for good.

"Laban, what does this mean?" demanded Jacob. "I served you seven years for Rachel and now you have beguiled me!"

Smugly, Laban said, "You see, it is not proper in this country to let the younger daughter marry before the older. Just be patient, my son; spend a week with Leah and then you may marry Rachel also—providing you will serve me another seven years."

So much did Jacob love Rachel that he was willing to forget his father-in-law's fraud and promised to serve another seven years. Therefore, it came to pass, that a week later Rachel became his wife.

Laban gave to his daughters each a handmaid, probably the maids who had served them before their marriages. To Leah he gave Zilpah; to Rachel, Bilhah.

Jacob loved Rachel a great deal more than Leah—in fact, we are told that "Leah was hated". Because of this, God had compassion on Leah and gave her the desire of every wife, a son. When her son, Reuben,

was born, Leah said, "Oh, surely now my husband will love me; I have given him a son." But Jacob never loved Leah.

After Leah had given birth to four sons and Rachel still had none, Rachel became jealous of her sister; she did not consider that Leah wanted her husband's love and was unable to win that. Rachel then gave Bilhah, her maid, to Jacob. Rachel thought, as Sarah had many years before, that she could have children through her maid. Bilhah did give Jacob two sons, Dan and Naphtali. Leah then feared that she would have no more children herself, and gave her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob. Zilpah gave birth to two sons, Gad and Asher. But God remembered Leah and let her have the joy of giving birth to still another son whom she named Issacher; and later, a sixth son, Zebulun. After this Leah also had a daughter, Dinah. So Leah gave to Jacob six sons and one daughter.

By this time, it seems that Leah was so much occupied with her seven children that it mattered little to her whether Jacob loved her or not. But Rachel still had no children.

Then it came to pass that God remembered also Rachel in her sorrow of childlessness. Her sorrow was turned to joy—she became the mother of a son, Joseph. She had waited long but Joseph was the one of Jacob's children who was destined to be most and unusually used of God. How often this is true—the ones who wait in prayer and with patience are well rewarded at last.

Jacob now had eleven sons and one daughter. God had indeed blessed him and now he longed to go again to his father's house. He wanted to have his

family to himself, in the land promised him by the God of Abraham and of Isaac.

So he spoke to Laban, asking his permission to take his wives and his children away. He reminded Laban that he had served him faithfully for more than the fourteen years he was supposed to serve for his wives.

Laban said, "If you can find it in your heart to do so, stay with me. I have learned that the Lord has blessed me for your sake. Now tell me what wages you want and I will give it."

"Yes, it is true," said Jacob. "The Lord has blessed you since my coming. You had but little when I came. I cared for your flocks and your herds faithfully and now you are a wealthy man. But it is time for me to be thinking of providing for my own family now."

"Yes, set your own wages, but stay with me."

"Very well, Laban. I will ask but one thing. Let me go through your flocks and herds and pick out all those animals that are an off color—the spotted and speckled cattle, the brown sheep, and the spotted and brown goats—and let those be mine."

Laban agreed. The flocks and herds were separated accordingly, and Jacob moved his stock away from Laban. And Jacob continued to oversee Laban's cattle also.

God was with Jacob. His flocks and herds increased. They increased so rapidly that Laban forgot what Jacob had done for him and changed his wages. Jacob was now to take the white sheep and goats, and the cattle that were of one color. Still God was with Jacob. The cattle then bore more one colored cattle, and the sheep and goats were mostly white. Ten

times Laban changed the wages of Jacob but still God saw to it that Jacob's stock increased.

God again spoke to Jacob saying, "Return unto

- 6 -

the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee."

Immediately he called Leah and Rachel to meet him in the field where he was keeping the flock, so he might talk with them alone. He told them that their father's interest was no longer theirs, and they too were aware of it. Jacob said, "I have served him faithfully yet he has changed my wages ten times. He has deceived me again and again, yet God has taken away the cattle of your father and given them to me. God came to me recently and spoke with me. He told me to arise and leave this land, and return to the land from which I came."

Rachel and Leah agreed that the time had come for them to leave. They said, "Whatever God has spoken to you, that do."

So they began preparations to leave and when Laban went away from home to shear his sheep, Jacob and his family left with all their possessions. They left without Laban knowing anything about it.

When Laban learned of it, he set out at once to overtake them. But they had been gone three days before Laban heard of their leaving, and it took him and those he took with him seven days to overtake them. He joined them at Gilead.

Enroute to Gilead, God spoke to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, saying, "Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad." Therefore,

it was with more gentleness than might be expected that he spoke to Jacob when they met again. He did ask why he had left in secret and told Jacob what God had spoken to him.

Jacob answered him, "Because I was afraid that you would not let me take my wives with me, I left as I did." Jacob, being a bit angry with Laban, continued, "For twenty years have I served you and served you faithfully. Your flocks and your herds began to increase as soon as I began to care for them. Furthermore, when an animal was killed or stolen you expected me to replace it and I have done so. Many have been the times I have stayed with the cattle when I was suffering with thirst. More than one night have I suffered with the cold. Yes, and I've spent many sleepless nights too—all in order to care for your flocks. Twenty years have I served you . . . fourteen years for your daughters and six years for these cattle. You have changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely you would have sent me away now empty. But God saw my affliction and saw that I served you in all faithfulness. He has not forsaken me."

Laban knew the truth of his words. He suggested that they make a covenant there before they part. Jacob, therefore, took a stone and set it up for a pillar and told the others to bring stones until they had a huge pile. Then they prepared a love feast, they spread it upon the heap of stones and ate there together. The words, "The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another" were first spoken that day. They exchanged vows and

prayed together. Jacob offered sacrifice on the same stones. They rested all night at that place, and in the morning Laban parted from Jacob and all of his family.

Jacob moved on toward Canaan, the land of Promise. But thoughts of home brought fear of Esau. He did not know that twenty years had softened the hatred of his twin brother. God had told Jacob to return, yet Jacob was still human—fear lingered in his mind.

While Jacob and his family were camped along the way (they advanced very slowly and rested frequently for a few days) he sent messengers ahead to find Esau, to talk with him and to learn whether or not he was still seeking the life of Jacob. The messengers returned, saying, "We found your brother Esau. He is coming to meet you and he has four hundred men with him."

Greater fear came upon Jacob. "Four hundred men with him! This can mean no good to me." Hastily he divided his entire family and all his possessions into four groups and put a long distance between the groups. "If Esau and his men kill one group it may be that the remainder will escape," thought Jacob as he worked feverishly to save his beloved family. In the first groups he put the two maids with their children, then came Leah and her children, while farthest back and in the safest place was Rachel with her son Joseph.

That night, when the family and servants were asleep, Jacob prayed, "Oh God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which said to me, 'Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred,

and I will deal well with thee', I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which you have showed to your servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray you, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. You did also say 'I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'" And Jacob's heart was comforted. He rested that night.

The next morning, early, he prepared a gift for his brother Esau—two hundred and twenty goats, two hundred and twenty sheep, thirty milch camels with their colts, fifty cattle, and thirty donkeys—and sent it ahead to meet Esau. Jacob remained where he was for one more day, to delay his meeting with his twin brother. At evening he sent the family and servants on a short distance, probably a bit off the trail so that they would be more safe. But Jacob remained in the same place all night.

Jacob was alone. The angel of the Lord came to him that night—he wrestled with Jacob all night, even until the sun began to rise the following morning.

Jacob and the angel met each other in a hand to hand struggle . . . Jacob prevailed. Jacob's character was being strengthened by this struggle. He had come to a climax in his life, God knew he needed super-human strength for the tasks that were before him. When the angel saw that Jacob was able to prevail, he touched Jacob's thigh so his hip joint went out of place and he limped when he walked. The world would say that was a strange way to give a man strength,

to throw his hip out of joint! "When we are weak, then we are made strong in the Lord." God's ways are not the ways of the world.

Jacob limped but he wrestled on.

"Let me go, for the day begins to break," said the angel.

Jacob, still holding him fast, said, "I will not let you go, except you bless me." Jacob, the older, wiser Jacob, the new man who saw his great need of God, was not going to let this messenger of His leave without giving him something special for his soul.

"What is your name?" the angel asked.

"Jacob."

"Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but ISRAEL; for as a prince have you power with God, and with men. You have prevailed." So spoke the angel.

The name Israel means "a prince".

"What is your name?" asked Jacob but the angel gave him no definite answer. Jacob never knew exactly which angel he wrestled with that night—that it was the angel of the Lord was knowledge enough.

The angel blessed him there . . . and departed.

Jacob, whose name now was Israel, stood in holy quietness—alone. The sun rose in all its glory—it was a new day.

"The name of this place shall be Peniel (which means The Face of God) for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved."

- 7 -

Jacob, the new man, limped away from Peniel to begin the tasks of the day. The tasks were the same

but Jacob was stronger to meet them. Looking off in the distance, he saw men coming toward him. It was Esau and the four hundred men who were with him. Jacob made sure that his family was in four groups, as mentioned before. Jacob then went to meet his brother. Jacob bowed himself to the ground seven times as Esau was drawing near—Jacob was humbled and ready to pay respect.

But Esau took no time to bow. He ran to Jacob, gathered him in his arms and kissed him. Then the brothers wept together. They had not seen each other for over twenty years. They parted in hatred, they met again in love. With God nothing is impossible.

Esau was eager to know who the women and the children were. Jacob said, "These are the wives and the children which God has graciously given to your servant." And Esau was introduced to each of them.

Esau inquired about the great gift sent ahead for him, which he had been unable to understand. It seems that Esau had not thought of Jacob's heart being still full of fear toward him. Time had turned his own hate to forgiveness and love. Jacob told him that was a gift but Esau did not want to accept it since he had plenty himself. Jacob, however, insisted and Esau accepted it.

There is no definite record of it, but we can be sure that Jacob inquired about his father Isaac. Esau had remained with him and he was still alive. Yes, he lived to see Jacob and all of his family—he lived to see Jacob and Esau united in spirit.

Jacob was anxious to see his father again, but when Esau suggested that he leave some of his men to help them along their way Jacob said "No, you go on ahead,

my lord, and we will come as we can. The cattle are with young and if we overdrive them for even one day they will all die. And the children too would become too weary. So I will lead on softly as I see the children and the cattle can endure."

Thus, Esau left them and returned the same day to his home. What glad news he had to tell his father, and his mother also if she was alive. We have no way of knowing about her death, but no mention is made of her, therefore we must take it for granted that she had died during the twenty years Jacob was away.

Jacob was back in the land of Canaan—the land of Promise. No doubt he went at once to see his father, but his possessions were left at Succoth. In fact, he lived at Succoth for some time because he built a house for his family and barns for his stock. This is probably the first time that the "children of Promise" lived in a real house since Abraham left his relatives to follow the Lord to Canaan. Their homes had been tents.

After Jacob left Succoth, he went to Shalem where he bought some land from the natives and set up his tents. Why he did not go on to Bethel at once we do not know. Surely he had not forgotten that night at Bethel when he saw the ladder reaching to heaven, the night God renewed His Promise to him. God spoke again of that land being his. He promised to be with him. And Jacob had vowed before 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 raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all

that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth to you." God had been with him; He gave him bread and raiment—and much more! God had brought him again to his father—and had turned the hatred of his brother to love. God had done His part, and much more. Therefore, why Jacob was so slow in returning to Bethel we do not understand fully. We cannot question his devotion to God. It must have been mere human procrastination.

Finally—some students of the life of Jacob believe that seven years had elapsed after his return to Canaan—Jacob went to Bethel. But only after God came to him, saying, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother."

Jacob obeyed. He went at once to his family and said, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went." Strange gods? Yes, the fruit of lingering in too close fellowship with those who know not the Living God. The Bible tells us more of the price Jacob's children had to pay for their lingering but we have not space for it here.

Jacob obeyed God. He went again to Bethel, as soon as his household was clean and ready. God met him at Bethel and blessed him there. Once more He renewed his Promise—the same Promise that had been made to Abraham and to Isaac. Jacob set up a pillar there where God spoke with him—at Bethel.

How long they lived at Bethel we do not know. It was probably a short time, because soon we read of their journeying again . . . but do not read of God having told them to do so. However, they "journeyed from Bethel"; and when they reached Bethlehem they were forced to stop. There Benjamin was born and Rachel died in giving him birth. Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, was taken from him. He was given another son, but he lost Rachel. Sorrow and joy are often mingled together in the same heart.

Jacob buried Rachel there at Bethlehem and erected a tomb over her grave. Rachel's Tomb is located on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem and there, a little over one-half mile North of Bethlehem, her reputed tomb may be seen today. It is covered by a small Mohammedan mosque.

Jacob had twelve sons. The sons of Leah; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. The sons of Rachel; Joseph and Benjamin. The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid; Dan and Naphtali. And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid; Gad and Asher. These were the "Children of Israel" . . . the heads of the Twelve Tribes".

- 8 -

Jacob moved on. Taking his new-born son, Benjamin, along with the rest of his family and all his possessions, he moved on until he came to Hebron. There Abraham, Jacob's grandfather, had lived. There Isaac, Jacob's father, was living then.

It is generally believed that Jacob had visited his father before, since his return to Canaan, but this was the first time he moved his entire household and all

his possessions to his father's house. This time he had come to stay with him.

It is not hard to imagine the joy that filled old Isaac's heart when his grandchildren came to live with him. Isaac had lived a long life and had walked with God; therefore it is probable that when he placed his hand on their heads to bless them he pronounced the greatest blessing on Joseph instead of Reuben, the firstborn. Isaac knew, from experience, that the firstborn was not always first in the sight of God and in His Plan. This might have been the start of the jealousy which brought distress to Jacob's heart.

Jacob, whose new name was Israel, was with his father and he continued to live with him until old father Isaac "gave up the ghost, and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days". Isaac died at the fine old age of one hundred and eighty years. Esau and Jacob buried him in the same cave where his father and mother, Abraham and Sarah, had been buried.

The work of the Lord and the Promise of the Lord, the God of Abraham, and Isaac, was entirely bestowed upon Jacob now. Isaac was dead. Jacob was to carry on. The years leading up to this time had been years of preparation, years of character building for Jacob . . . and God had worked a great transformation. The selfishness of his youth had turned to service in his manhood. Where he had once been willing to run away when things went hard, he was now willing to walk humbly with his Lord whether his path led through sunshine or shadow. It was a gentle Jacob who returned to his father's house after so many years in exile. He knew now that in himself there was

no strength. Each time he walked he halted because of the hip God had touched. That in itself was a daily reminder of his own weakness . . . and of God's Strength. Jacob had learned to lean not on his own understanding but on the Strength of his Living Lord. The self-centered "worm" Jacob had been turned, by God, into the meek and lowly "new sharp threshing instrument having teeth" Israel.

God did not consider that it took too long to prepare Jacob for his destined place. God will use the same patience with us today, if we will let Him.

- 9 -

When our story continues, Joseph was seventeen year old. Joseph was the favorite son of Jacob because he was Rachel's first son, the one for whom he had prayed and waited so long. Joseph was also God's favorite of the sons of Jacob, and Jacob himself might have known this.

One day Jacob sat just outside his tent door after the rain had washed the air and earth. The world seemed fresh and clean. As he watched the beauty all about him, he saw in the eastern sky a rainbow arching the heavens. A rainbow! The Promise of God to his forefather Noah was again renewed . . . He would never again send a flood upon the earth. It seemed to Jacob that he had never seen such beauty in a rainbow before.

"The symbol of Promise," mused Jacob. "A symbol of God's love to man. It is as beautiful as my love for Joseph, the son with whom the Promise of God shall dwell, I do believe . . . ah . . . yes, yes. Why not? I will . . . I will have a coat made for Joseph.

It shall be made of many pieces and each piece shall be a different color. It will be like the rainbow . . . it will be a symbol of my love and of the Promise that will rest upon him, though he need not know that fact . . . not now."

And so it came to pass that Joseph was given a coat of many colors. It was beautiful and Joseph was very pleased. When he went away wearing it the first time, Jacob stood and watched him as long as he could see him. Joseph was going out to the field to join his brothers who were keeping the flocks and herds of his father. Joseph too was a shepherd lad.

Jacob did not know that his older sons had seen that he favored Joseph, nor that they had come to hate young Joseph because of it. Neither did he realize that the beautiful coat of many colors would cause those older sons to hate Joseph more . . . hate him so much that they could not speak kindly to him when they worked together.

One day, when Jacob and his twelve sons were all together, Joseph said, "Listen, I want to tell you all about a wonderful dream that I dreamed last night. In this dream we twelve brothers were all binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf."

The urge to kill came to the ten older brothers. But their father was there. Therefore, they limited their words to, "Shall you reign over us? Indeed! Or shall you have dominion over us?" With scornful laughs they left "the dreamer" alone but they hated him more than ever.

In his youthful enthusiasm, Joseph was not easily

silenced. Besides, these dreams were really wonderful! After he had experienced one more, he again told it to his father and brothers. "Behold! I have dreamed another dream. This time the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me."

Jacob was definitely unhappy to hear his son telling his dreams. He could see plainly that the older sons were entirely out of patience with him. Jacob rebuked him with, "What is this dream you say you have dreamed? Do you mean to say that I shall bow down to you, and also your mother and all of your brothers?" This mild but stern rebuke from their father pleased the other sons but they continued to envy Joseph with cruel envy. Jacob, however, "observed the saying." In his own heart he believed the dreams yet he wondered how they would ever come to pass. Jacob, however knew God. "He has worked miracles for me, He will work miracles for Joseph", mused Jacob.

A few days after Joseph told his last dream he was at home with his father but the older sons were out in the fields watching the stock. Jacob called him saying, "Joseph, I have had no word from your brothers for three days. I wish you would go to them and find out how they are and also if it is well with the flocks. Then return to me at once so I may know of their welfare. I believe they are out in the vale of Hebron."

"Yes, father, I shall go at once." I have the beautiful coat of many colors to wear so I need not fear for the cold."

He bade his father farewell and left immediately.

Jacob watched his beloved son as far as he could see him.

The hours passed swiftly for he was busy. Then came the time when Joseph should be returning. He went outside where he could watch for him, but not one glimpse of Joseph did he see. He waited. The hours dragged on. Joseph still did not return.

Finally, the older sons returned home. "We found this in the field. Tell us, is this your son's coat?"

Jacob took from them the coat of many colors that Joseph had worn so proudly when he went away—it was torn to shreds and covered here and there with blood.

"Yes. It is Joseph's coat. Oh! He no doubt has been torn in pieces by some wild beast. It has devoured him. Joseph is dead." And Jacob tore off the fine clothing he was wearing and put on an old sack for a covering—an oriental sign of mourning. Jacob wept.

The older sons were with their old father, they saw him mourning and knew that his heart was broken. They pretended to comfort him but there is no comfort that comes from sinful, hypocritical hearts. It was within their power to comfort him. They might have told him that Joseph was still alive and that they had sold him as a slave to some traders who were going down to Egypt—but they did not. Had Jacob known that Joseph was alive at that moment, he would have quit mourning and gone to praying.

The hearts of the ten brothers grew harder because of the sin they covered. Jacob's heart grew ever more tender as he carried this great sorrow year

after year. Had Jacob observed them closely, it is possible that their guilty looks would have given him some clue to their untruth—but Jacob thought only of Joseph, and he trusted all his sons. The sorrow of his soul sweetened his nature day by day. This too was the will of the Lord.

- 10 -

More than twenty years passed. To Jacob they were years of mourning; to the older sons, years of living in sin.

Summer came again in Canaan. The spring rains had failed to come that year but surely the summer would bring plenty of rain. Day after day passed yet not one cloud did they see. No rain came. The hill-sides that usually gave such fine grass for the flocks and herds were brown. The wheat and corn that had been planted that spring withered and died long before it had started to ear.

Crop failure was followed by want. Want was followed by famine. Famine was in all parts of the world. In Canaan the only topic of discussion was "Where shall we get food?"

Some traders stopped at Jacob's tent one hot, dry day. "Abide with us, strangers," said Jacob. "To such food as we have, you are welcome. The famine is hitting us hard here. Have you found it so wherever you have traveled?"

"Yes, kind sir. The famine is in all the world. But down in Egypt they have plenty of food. Some new ruler was put on the throne down there about eight years ago. He foresaw that this famine was coming, and during the seven years of plenty that

are just past he has been gathering together great stores of food. It seems that there has never been such a ruler in any nation—even the Pharaoh himself says so."

"That is a wonderful tale, my friend," said Jacob. "Pray, tell me faithfully, will they sell corn to those of other lands?"

"Yes. That I know for certain because those to whom I talked about the matter had themselves been down to Egypt. They had the corn with them, therefore I am sure. They had purchased the corn with money."

The following day, Jacob spoke to his sons. "Sons, I have learned that there is plenty of corn in Egypt."

He expected that such an announcement would bring quick and definite action from his sons. Jacob could not know that the mere mention of Egypt brought unutterable condemnation to all ten souls. They looked at one another, sheepishly, looked at the ground, and remained silent before their father.

"Why stand you there just looking at one another? Can't you understand? There is **food** in Egypt . . . food for the buying. Don't stand here looking at each other. Get things ready immediately and go to Egypt with all haste so that we can live and not die of starvation. You ten older boys had better all go so that the ruler there will know how large is our household. But Benjamin must stay here with me. Joseph is not, and I cannot part with his brother lest mischief befall him."

The mention of Joseph opened old and deep wounds. The brothers went to Egypt . . . Jacob, Benjamin and the others remained in Canaan.

It was well for Jacob that there was work to do. He supervised the care of the flocks and herds while the ten older sons were gone. Benjamin, now a young man himself, was his father's chief helper.

The time passed quickly and one day Jacob saw something in the distance. He watched. It came closer, covered by a huge cloud of dust. Yes. It was the long expected caravan—his own sons!

Jacob welcomed them warmly. "But where is Simeon?" he asked, after looking for him, counting the group and finding that there were but nine.

Then they told their father the entire story of their adventure.

"Father, we arrived in Egypt alright and we were not long in finding the ruler of the land. A mighty ruler he is, indeed. But he spoke roughly to us, and said that we were but spies who had come to see how barren the land was. We assured him that we were all brothers, all sons of the same father. We told him that we had two brothers besides—one is not, and the youngest was at home with our father. So we spoke to him. We also told him that we came from the land of Canaan. Then he answered us that he would not believe our story unless we returned to Canaan and brought that living, youngest brother to him. In the meantime, he kept one of us—that one is Simeon. Here is the corn, father. Now let us take Benjamin and we will return to the land of Egypt at once, show him to the ruler that he might believe that we are not spies, and then we will all eleven return to you."

The sight of corn, huge sacks of corn, made even Jacob forget his troubles for a few moments. He

began to help his sons empty the sacks. What was this? Money! When all the sacks were empty they knew that all the money they had given the ruler in Egypt in payment for the corn was returned to them. Fear came upon them—even upon Jacob. He was afraid that the Egyptian ruler had kept Simeon for no good purpose.

"Oh! You have bereaved me of my children. Joseph is not, and now Simeon is not. Yet you would take away Benjamin also. It is too much for me."

Reuben said to his father, "Slay my two sons, if I fail to bring Benjamin to you again. But do let me have him at once that we may return to Egypt immediately, that we might take this money to the ruler and explain about our finding it, and that we might bring Simeon with us."

"My son shall not go down with you," said Jacob with firmness. "His brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befall him by the way in the which you go, then there would be nothing left for me but sorrow until I go to the grave."

There was nothing for the nine brothers to do but wait.

The famine grew worse. Even with care, the corn that they brought with them from Egypt was soon gone. The cattle were bawling for food. All night the bleating of the sheep and goats kept Jacob awake. The next morning the children looked hungry and they did not play. All this was too much for old father Jacob.

"Go again to Egypt, my sons, and buy us food."

Judah answered his father, "But the ruler there told us solemnly that we would never see his face

again except we had Benjamin with us. If you will not let us take him with us it will do no good to go. Without him we cannot speak to the ruler, and without speaking to the ruler we can buy no corn for he alone sells it."

"Oh, why did you ever tell the ruler you had a brother? Why did you deal so unkindly with me?"

"Father, the man asked us point-blank, 'Is your father yet alive? Have you another brother?' We answered him truthfully. How could we know he would command us to bring our brother to him?"

Jacob sat in silence. With such a heavy heart, how could he even imagine the great surprise that His Father had in store for him. Someone has well said, "The heart has no rainbows when the eyes have no tears." Jacob could see only the tears now—but the rainbow was awaiting him!

Judah begged his father to let them take Benjamin and go. He reminded him that if they tarried longer they would soon die of starvation.

Reluctantly, Jacob told them to go. He sent gifts to the ruler, and double money—that which had been returned in the sacks and enough to buy corn again. Then he said to the ten sons, "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. To have my children taken from me is my greatest loss."

They left Jacob again.

Time dragged. Nights were filled with the bleating of the sheep, the weeping of the children—and sleeplessness. Days were filled with an uncomfortable stillness—and dust.

At last they returned.

The sight of corn brought renewed life to the entire household. The women set about preparing a meal at once. But the brothers had more important matters to attend to. They went, the entire group, to see their father—not one wanted to miss seeing their father's reaction to the GLAD NEWS.

"Father! Father," they said with more spirit than they had shown for many years.

"Yes, my sons, I am glad to see you again."

"Father! Joseph, your son Joseph, is still alive. It is he who is the ruler down in Egypt."

Jacob's heart fainted. He could not believe their words.

"It is true, Father. We talked with him. He made himself known to us, he wept on our necks, he talked to us in our own language, he knew our names. Oh, yes, it is Joseph. And, Father, Joseph says there are five years of famine left. He told us to come here to get you, our families, and all that we have and then return at once to Egypt where he can feed us."

They repeated all the words Joseph had told them, they told him of dining with Joseph. This all seemed like a dream to father Jacob. Then they showed him the wagons that Joseph had sent with them so that their father, the women and the children might travel in comfort. They gave him the many gifts that Joseph had sent to him.

The sons were not impatient with their father. Their own hearts had been healed by Joseph's kind words, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt." Yes, "God did send me before you to

preserve life," Joseph had said. Those words had been balm to them.

With gentleness and love they repeated the story to Jacob. At last the joyous truth sank into his old heart, and he said, "It is enough: Joseph, my son, is alive. I will go and see him before I die."

- 11 -

God must have smiled when he saw Jacob's great joy. God had known all those years that the great surprise was in store for Jacob, yet for all Jacob's mourning He had not told him that Joseph was not only alive but very much in the care of the One who never slumbers nor sleeps. God plans great surprises for His children today; but too often we mar them with our impatience.

Jacob set about immediately to gather together all that he had. It seemed that he could not get started soon enough.

When they arrived at Beersheba, that place that had become sacred to Abraham, Isaac and also to Jacob, he stopped to worship the Lord. He offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. No offering seemed sufficient as a sacrifice for the One who had kept his son Joseph for him. Jacob knew Who was the Giver of such a gift. And God spoke to Jacob during the night, while they tarried at Beersheba.

God said, "Jacob, Jacob."

"Here am I, Lord."

"I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt

and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes."

Such assurance was all Jacob needed to help him along his way.

Father Jacob, the women and the children rode in the wagons sent for their use . . . they were traveling in kings' luxury!

When they were nearing their destination, Jacob sent his son Judah ahead to tell Joseph that they were near. So he did, and Joseph returned with Judah in great haste.

Joseph met them in the land of Goshen, a part of Egypt. Jacob and Joseph were reunited. They clung to one another and wept for joy for some time. At last Jacob said, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face. My joy is complete. I know now that you are yet alive."

This is probably one of the most dramatic reunions in the history of humanity. The hosts of heaven stood by to watch that day. We, even today, pause with reverent awe when we remember it.

Joseph made full arrangements for his father and all his children. He arranged for them to live in Goshen where they could be more or less to themselves and where there was plenty room for their flocks and herds. Joseph made everything very easy for his Canaanite family by telling them what the Pharaoh would be apt to ask them and also what they should answer him.

Joseph first took five of his brothers and presented them to the Pharaoh; for they had seen only Joseph when they had come to buy corn.

Then Joseph took his father, Jacob, and presented

him before the Pharaoh—King of Egypt. Then as now, it was a great honor to be presented before the ruler of a land. Jacob was at ease in the great palace, he bore himself as the gentleman and prince that he was.

He lifted his arms and prayed a blessing upon the Pharaoh.

Pharaoh asked, "Good sir, how old are you?"

"The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years. But I am not yet as old as were my fathers before me."

Jacob and Pharaoh conversed longer; then, before he left the throne room, Jacob blessed the king again.

Joseph saw to it that his father, his brothers and all that were theirs were comfortable and well fed in the land of Goshen. Jacob came to know Joseph's beautiful wife, Asenath, and his two sons that had been born to them, Manasseh and Ephraim. The Biblical records do not tell us when Joseph first took his wife and sons to meet his father, but we can be assured that it was very soon after Jacob's arrival. Perhaps Jacob and all his family dined with Joseph and Asenath at their home on the day that Jacob and five of his sons were presented to Pharaoh.

For seventeen years Jacob lived in the land of Goshen. There, free from sorrow and cares, he had time for meditation. Often his soul was lifted in praise to God for letting him see his son Joseph alive. He remembered the dreams that Joseph had dreamed—they had been fulfilled. Not only had his eleven brothers bowed down to him many times, but he and his wives who were yet alive (Rachel and Leah were

both dead) had bowed before him that day he met them in Goshen. He remembered the coat of many colors—the coat that had symbolized his own belief that Joseph was his son of promise, the coat that had been brought to him torn and covered with blood. "Oh, had I only trusted the God of Abraham more fully," he mused, "I should have known that He would not fail me, that He would not take from me forever the son of promise. Had I only served Him better and sorrowed less."

His sorrow had turned to service again. Now he was serving God with trust and praise.

To us, it would seem that Jacob had done nothing but serve. He had served Laban fourteen years for the wives he had; then six years longer for the cattle, sheep, and goats that he took with him home to Canaan. After that, though he was a man of much wealth, he worked constantly and did well the tasks that came to him. Most important, he had served God faithfully. He was not satisfied with his own quality of service, to be sure, but that has been true of all worth-while men all down through the ages.

For seventeen years Jacob lived to enjoy his son Joseph and to see his fame spread throughout the world, for all the world came to him for food. Jacob was proud of Joseph.

But one day Jacob was ill—very ill. His eyes had failed until at times he was blind. He felt within himself that his time for leaving this world was very close. He was now one hundred and forty seven years old.

"Joseph is coming to see you, Father," someone told him. He was ill and in bed when these words

reached his ears. Then he "strengthened himself and sat upon the bed". He wanted to talk with Joseph once more.

When Joseph came to him, Jacob could not see but he knew Joseph's voice and his touch.

"Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me. He said to me, 'Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession.' Those were the words God spoke, Joseph. I remember them well.

"Now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born to you here in Egypt before I came here, are mine. I am here and now adopting them. They are mine even as Reuben and Simeon. Any children that shall be born to you later, they shall be yours and shall be called yours. But Ephraim and Manasseh are mine."

Jacob went on speaking to Joseph, recalling the things that had befallen him. Then, suddenly, the mist cleared from his eyes and he saw that there were two little boys standing beside Joseph. He could not see well enough to know them, so he asked, "Who are these?"

"Father, they are my sons, whom God has given me in this land."

Yes, Manasseh and Ephraim had been there listening to the words of their grandfather. That scene and his words were probably fixed indelibly upon the minds of those two boys.

"Bring them, I pray you, to me, and I will bless them," said Jacob. He did so. Jacob embraced the

lads and kissed them tenderly. Then, with his arms still around the boys, he looked in the direction of his own son and said, "Joseph, not so many years ago I thought that I would never see your face again, and behold, God has let me see not only you but your children also. I never cease to marvel at the goodness of God."

Jacob was in a reminiscent mood. While he talked with Joseph, the boys slipped back to their father's side before Jacob had blessed them. But Joseph took Ephraim in his right hand toward Jacob's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Jacob's right hand, and brought them near Jacob. But Jacob stretched out his God-directed right hand and placed it upon Ephraim's head; then reaching across with his left hand, placed it on Manasseh's head.

With his hands thus resting on the heads of his adopted sons, he blessed their father, Joseph, first. Then Joseph noticed that his father had his right hand on the head of his younger son instead of the older one. Quickly, he tried to move his father's hands, saying, "Father, you are making a mistake. Here, this is the firstborn, place your right hand on him."

Jacob refused. "I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

Then he blessed them, setting Ephraim before Manasseh.

Jacob, knowing that the end was near, sent for all his other sons that they might join him there. They came. Starting with his firstborn son, Reuben, he told

each of them what would befall them in the future, both good and bad. He blessed them all . . . "every one according to his blessing he blessed them."

Then his last command to them was, "I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite which Abraham bought for a burying place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. Bury me there."

With those last instructions to his sons, he lifted his feet up on the bed again—then fell back lifeless. Jacob, whose new name was Israel, was "gathered unto his people." He had served for over a hundred years—now his service was ended.

Joseph, who had been deprived of his father for so many years, fell upon his father's lifeless form and wept bitterly. To him it seemed that he could not part with the father who had been restored to him so recently. But God comforted him.

Joseph summoned the best physicians of Egypt and they embalmed the body of Jacob according to the Egyptian custom. The process of embalming took forty days and those days were spent in mourning for Jacob. Not only his family but all the people of Egypt mourned for Jacob.

When the forty days had expired, Joseph himself went before Pharaoh to tell him of his father's wish to be buried with his fathers in Canaan, and to ask Pharaoh's permission to leave Egypt long enough to take his father's body there.

Pharaoh replied, "Go up, and bury your father, according as he made you swear."

But Joseph and his brothers did not go alone. All the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt went with them. The daughters-in-law went also. Only the children remained in the land of Goshen. They went in chariots, in wagons, and on horses. It was a very great company that went from Egypt to Canaan.

They arrived at the cave, the tomb of Abraham and Isaac. There they placed the body of Jacob to rest from his long life of service.

Jacob, whose new name was Israel, the man of service, had gone to be forever with his God.

The End