

# Jacob: Mastered by Messiah

Portraits of Biblical Failures – Part III

Selected Scripture

## Introduction

In our last discussion, we saw Jacob – the schemer; the manipulator – at the very outset of his life, grasping the heel of his twin brother in the delivery room. From that point until, it seemed, the day he died, he would scheme his way to the top. He:

- stole the birthright, in Genesis 27;
- attempted to manipulate God, in Genesis 28;
- arranged a rendezvous with Esau, in Genesis 32.

## Reaping the First Fruits of Deception

As life and time go on, however, Jacob begins to reap the first fruits of deception.

### Jacob is personally deceived by his father-in-law

We looked, in detail, in Genesis 29, at the deception Jacob had from the hand of his father-in-law. His father-in-law was supposedly going to give him Rachel, the beautiful girl that he loved, for his wife. Instead, he slipped him “weak eyed” Leah. So, Jacob experienced deceit by his father-in-law’s hand.

### Jacob observes deception in his sons

A second deception, that we will study today, also occurs. Jacob observes deception in the lives of his own sons. Turn to the book of Genesis where we will look at this deception that Jacob will reap.

Let us read and skip through this incident in Genesis 34, starting with verses 1-7.

*Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.*

*When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force.*

*He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her.*

*So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, “Get me this young girl for a wife.”*

*Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.*

*Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.*

*Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob’s daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.*

*But Hamor spoke with them, saying, “The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage.”*

Skip to Genesis 34:13-16, and note verse 13.

*But Jacob’s sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.*

*They said to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us.*

*“Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised,*

*“then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people.”*

This sounds like a good plan. Skip to Genesis 34:24.

*All who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem,*

***and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.***

This is saying that the men could not get out of the city until they went through the knife. Continue to Genesis 34:25.

***Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.***

In other words, the men of the city could not get up and take a sword and fight. Continue to Genesis 34:26-29.

***They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.***

***Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister.***

***They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field;***

***and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses.***

What a deceitful plan this was.

Now this chapter follows the previous story of Jacob's lie to Esau (Genesis 32). You may remember that Jacob meets Esau and Esau patches things up, displaying great character. He comes and embraces Jacob and forgives him. Then, he says, "Jacob, why don't you bring your wives and all of your children and your party of people and come over to my place in Seir."

Jacob says, "Oh, that's a wonderful idea. Thank you for inviting me. We will be right there."

As soon as Esau leaves and is somewhere around the bend, however, Jacob heads in the exact opposite direction. His boys, though, had heard him say, "Esau, we'll come be with you."

Jacob's sons then, hear their father say, "Boys, pack the bags, we're going to head in this other direction."

Jacob's sons were observing, as any of us would, the deceit of their father.

Now do not misunderstand – every dishonest child cannot point their finger at a dishonest parent. I know

this because I was a dishonest child and my parents were very honest people.

However, often a child, or a teenager, or even a grown adult, who observes the life of their parents, can have the seeds of dishonesty sown in their character by observation. They hear their father call into work, saying, "I'm sick and I won't be there," and they know he is going fishing or golfing. They hear their mother talking to someone on the phone in nice, pleasant tones, saying, "Oh, I'm so glad you called," and as soon as she hangs up, saying, "I wish that lady would not call me." They observe a dad at a cafeteria, slipping a pat of butter underneath a loaf of bread so he does not have to pay the three cents, or whatever. They hear and observe these things and they pick up on it.

As a youth pastor in a previous church, I had a great deal of trouble with one teenage boy in particular, for his dishonesty. He was constantly lying. It was interesting that later, I discovered his father was under observation by his company for lying to them.

I remember reading of a woman in California, who was observed walking down the aisles in a grocery store. As she walked past certain items, she would tap them. Her little children, who were following along, would pocket the items. Think of the baggage; think of all that is sown in the character of those who see Mom or Dad tell a fib or do something as atrocious as this mother in California.

### **Jacob's two responses to this deception**

I think Jacob's sons picked up Jacob's ways well. They were rather conniving. But even more troubling to me, about this passage, is Jacob's response to the whole scheme. There are two of them.

1. First, Jacob responds in weak silence.

Notice that Jacob's sons do all of the talking, not Jacob. We read in Genesis 34:5,

***Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in.***

Jacob's daughter has just been raped, and what does he do? He keeps silent. Why? Because his sons are not home from the field. Eventually, a meeting is established and Jacob does not say a word – his sons do the talking. We read in Genesis 34:13a,

***But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit . . .***

My question is, where in the world is the patriarch? Where is the man who is supposed to evidence great faith? He is silent; he is quiet.

Then, when Jacob does speak, it gets worse.

2. Secondly, Jacob responds with a rebuke that is based upon selfishness; self-centeredness.

After his sons get back, their swords are bloody and their pockets are full from looting. Does Jacob say to his sons, "You have sinned against God.?"

This is what I wish he had said. However, look at Genesis 34:30,

***Then Jacob said to [his sons], "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, . . . they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household."***

Notice the words, "I," "me," "my". In other words, "You're making life difficult for your father. I wish you'd do right, it would make *my* life a lot easier."

Does this sound familiar? This is completely self-centered. There is no lecture on revenge, no rebuke for murder, no rebuke for deceit, no lesson on honesty. The consequences of what his sons did bothered Jacob more than the crimes they had committed against these murdered men or that had been committed against his daughter.

**Jacob is personally deceived by his own sons**

Jacob will pay a steep price for his response to his son's deception, because guess who they will deceive next? Dear old Dad. The third deception that Jacob will reap is being personally deceived by his own sons.

You may remember this story. Jacob's beloved Rachel gave birth to two sons. The first son was Joseph and then, several years later, Rachel died in childbirth delivering Benjamin into the world.

Joseph would become Jacob's brightest hope; his favorite son. He would become, in many ways, I think, the memory of Jacob's beloved Rachel. Jacob saw in Joseph, everything that he had missed. He poured his love and affection on the life of this young lad – protecting him and pampering him. He made, for Joseph, a multi-colored tunic.

Jacob's other sons were fed up. Look at Genesis 37:31-32. This is after the other sons sold Joseph to some Midianite traders.

***So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood;***

***and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not."***

Note they do not say "our brother's tunic," but "your son's tunic". These sons do not offer any explanation; they let Jacob reach his own conclusion. Continue to Genesis 37:33.

***Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"***

***So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.***

Joseph, the favored son, is dead.

Now you may remember the rest of the story, but let us crawl into Jacob's skin – deceiver or not. I can imagine this burial scene. Perhaps Jacob, limping out – he has limped ever since the day the angel of the Lord touched his thigh – to a shady tree or beside a stream, digging a hole and taking Joseph's blood-stained tunic and laying it in the hole. He is washing the grave with his tears, saying, "My son Joseph is dead."

As far as Jacob knows, Joseph is dead.

**Insights on sorrow from this deception**

Let us step back from this story for a moment because there is genuine sorrow – even if Jacob's sons had told him that Joseph had been sold into slavery. We can garner from this deception, three very simple principles about sorrow.

1. Number one, sorrow is never sent without God's permission.

I believe, when sorrow comes into our lives, it is not up to us to see the good in it. And it does not really help to have someone tell us that Romans 8:28 is in the Bible – we should just go and read it. I do not think it is as much that we are to see the good in sorrow, when it comes, as we are to see and believe,

by faith, that God is involved, is behind the scenes, is in control, and will ultimately, show us the good.

Joseph's own words will ring true eventually, as he says to his brothers,

***“. . . you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good . . .” (Genesis 50:20)***

2. Number two, sorrow is not always sent as God's punishment.

Jacob, as tragic as this experience is, is exactly where God wants him to be. According to Genesis 37:1, he is in Canaan; he is in the promised land; he is obeying God. It is while he is in Canaan that this tragedy occurs; that his son is sold into slavery.

Joseph, as well, is also where God wants him to be. God designed him to be the Israelite deliverer during the famine at Canaan. So, in order for Joseph to be in the will of God, Jacob had to lose Joseph; in order for Joseph to ultimately, save the Israelite nation and help it to flourish from seventy people to over two million, Jacob had to wave good-bye.

Jacob did not know this at the time, and I am sure that God could have done this in a much more compassionate way. However, sorrow is not always sent as God's punishment – Joseph had not really sinned against God.

3. Number three, sorrow is one of God's choicest tools in developing maturity.

Hebrews 5:8 says of Jesus Christ,

***Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.***

Hebrews 12:6 says,

***For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,***

I love the little word “discipline”. It is a Greek compound word that could be literally translated “son making”. In other words, “For those whom the Lord loves He is in the process of making them like a son.”

The Lord is involved in giving to us, His character, so that we walk, we talk, we live, we think like Him. He is involved in son making and how does He do it? He does it in a way that we would translate, “discipline”.

Sorrow can be a very powerful teacher in developing character and depth. Have you ever been around someone who seemed to have a depth of character beyond anything you have ever known? I

guarantee that if the covers of their life are pulled back, they have suffered; they have experienced sorrow.

You may have heard the words of Robert Browning Hamilton,

*I walked a mile with Pleasure,  
She chattered all the way;  
But left me none the wiser,  
For all she had to say.*

*I walked a mile with Sorrow  
And ne'er a word said she;  
But, oh, the things I learned from her  
When Sorrow walked with me!*

### **Joseph is deceived by the circumstances of life**

Well the sorrow in the life of Jacob is about to increase, not go away. The fourth deception that Jacob will reap is being deceived by the circumstances of life. Several years have passed and the sons of Jacob have married. Their number is now, seventy in all.

Joseph, in the mean time, has become an Egyptian ruler, second only to Pharaoh in the land. A famine comes and, as you may remember, the sons of Jacob are sent to find food. They are to go to Egypt because they have heard of the strategic plan by the ruler who has wisely set aside grain to sell to the known world. The sons arrive and run into Joseph, who recognizes them, even though they do not recognize him as this Egyptian ruler.

Joseph puts his brothers to a test to determine whether or not they have changed or are still the same conniving, deceitful brothers who sold him into Egypt. The ultimate test of integrity is that Joseph puts Simeon in jail and tells these brothers to go back and get the younger boy, Benjamin, that they said lived at home, and bring him back.

Now, if the plan works, the family comes back and the brothers have changed. If the plan does not work, they could care less about Simeon and the brothers have remained the same. They could have gone home and told Dad, “Oh, sorry, Simeon is dead too, something happened to him. By the way, we have grain for quite awhile.”

The brothers had changed, however. They went home and told their father. Look at Genesis 42:29-35, as they return home to Jacob.

*When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying,*

*“The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country.*

*“But we said to him, ‘We are honest men; we are not spies.*

*“‘We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.’*

*“The man, the lord of the land, said to us, ‘By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take grain for the famine of your households, and go.*

*“‘But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”*

*Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man’s bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed.*

Now Joseph does not know they would be dismayed. According to the past history of the way they had lived, they would have thrown a party, saying, “Oh, we have some more money.”

Now note the response of Jacob, in Genesis 42:36. He sums things up.

*Their father Jacob said to them, “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.”*

### The “Jacob Syndrome”

Let me stop at this point to make a few categorical comments about people who live lives by deception and manipulation; who have to have the shots called by circumstances. We will say these people have the “Jacob syndrome”.

1. First, they consistently misinterpret the events of life.

Jacob jumped to four wrong conclusions in this situation:

- Joseph is dead – no, he is not, but is, in fact, the second most powerful ruler in Egypt;
- Simeon is dead – no, he is not, but is in jail, although he probably thinks he is going to be killed;
- Benjamin will die – no, he will not;
- All these things are against me – no, they are not, but are finally, for the first time, beginning to go right.

When people like Jacob get all of their readings from circumstances rather than from God, they misinterpret the events.

2. Secondly, those who have the “Jacob syndrome” constantly review life’s disappointments.

They constantly live life in the negative. Jacob had not forgotten the pain.

Now, we must give Jacob credit – he could not and never would forget the pain. However, this situation happens in his life and guess what comes out? This long grocery list of all of these negative things. He is basically saying to his sons, “This is where God has disappointed me. Joseph is dead.”

Jacob brings this out and he, in effect, hurls it at his boys with such bitter cynicism that it drips. Ultimately, however, he is saying, “God has let me down,” or “I couldn’t control God enough to make that work right.”

When we bump a person like this, we get their list. Do not misunderstand this, however, as there is a place for sharing the disappointments of life with the church and dear friends because they occur. A person with this kind of character, though, is a broken record – they never change, the sun never shines, there is a constant rehash of sour grapes.

3. Thirdly, and the main problem of those who have the “Jacob syndrome,” I think, is they stubbornly refuse a divine perspective.

Jacob’s conclusions are based on the immediate circumstances. This kind of person will rebel against God when something wrong happens, rather than run to God. They will, in a sense, check God off, instead

of check with God first, because God is not really real to them.

I read some time ago, of several ministers who went to Siberia to a collective farm. The local commissar told them that they were very proud of their church. He knew it would rattle the ministers for him to say this. He asked, “Would you like to see our church? We’re very proud of it.”

They answered, “Certainly we would.”

So they went and, as they walked and drew closer to the church, they noticed that although there were communistic slogans painted or drawn on the walls, it seemed that the building was kept up. They stepped through the front doors and the vestibule looked rather ordinary. There was nothing strange about it – it looked like a church actually happened here. However, as soon as they stepped through the vestibule doors into the sanctuary, their mouths dropped open. Filling the sanctuary were no pews, but instead, row upon row upon row of chicken coops filled with clucking chickens.

The commissar said, “These hens make up what we, in Siberia, believe to be the finest hatchery. We have the finest hatchery in this church.”

He then laughed and said to the pastors, “Chickens are real. God isn’t.”

Now while we would never go to this extreme, even as believers, our nature, our tendency is to believe what is real to be what we can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. We cannot do any of these things with God. So, this tragedy is real – this financial loss is real; this illness is real – I can see it; I can touch it. So, to turn my back on God, in effect, I am saying, “God isn’t.”

## **Recognizing the Transformation From Schemer to Saint**

Now did Jacob learn that God was real enough to be trusted? Yes, he did. In the last few chapters of Genesis, we see another Jacob – one who begins to live up to his new name, which is, by the way, Israel. “Jacob” means “deceiver”. “Israel” means “prince of God”.

### **Evidences of Jacob’s change**

There are evidences, as we put the jigsaw puzzle pieces together, that let us know that Jacob

eventually, as a man of over one hundred years of age, begins to trust God.

1. The first evidence is that Jacob hesitated to settle in Egypt.

Now the Pharaoh, as you may remember, offered, to Joseph and his family, the fertile Goshen valley. It was a place that was filled with grazing grass and water. It was one of the most fertile regions of Egypt and the Pharaoh offered it out of love for Joseph, to his family, if they would come and stay there. The invitation, of course, comes home, “Jacob, get all of your family – the seventy people that comprise it – and head to Egypt to the Goshen valley.”

Now what would a manipulator do; what would a schemer do? They would say, “Wow, this is great! I can get something out of this – it is quite a deal! Get your bags and let’s go.”

Jacob, however, does something very, very unusual. Look at Genesis 46:1a.

*So Israel [the prince of God, rather than Jacob, the deceiver] set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba . . .*

Note this – Jacob first came to Beersheba. What is in Beersheba? This is where God appeared to his father Isaac. This is where Abraham planted a tree. This is the place where they centered their focus on God’s promises concerning the Abrahamic covenant.

Continue to Genesis 46:2-4a.

*God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, “Jacob, Jacob.” And he said, “Here I am.”*

*He said, “I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there.*

*“I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again . . .”*

This last phrase is the key. This is the crux of Jacob’s hesitation.

Canaan means hunger, famine; Egypt means food. Canaan means distance from Joseph, his beloved son; Egypt means nearness. We would expect Jacob to say, “Let’s go to Egypt.”

However, Canaan is the promised land. It is where God wants the nation, which goes all the way back to Genesis 12 and 15.

Now a manipulator would not ask God, would he? Going to Egypt makes sense – there is food and

water and they have an invitation. However, something has changed. Jacob begins to live like Israel.

2. The second evidence of faith is that Jacob expressed contentment when reuniting with Joseph.

Look at Genesis 45:28.

***Then Israel said, "It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."***

Now notice Genesis 46:28-30. Can you imagine this reunion?

***Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out the way before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.***

***Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time.***

***Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive."***

Israel did *not* say, "God, You have robbed me of so many years with Joseph. Why did You do this in separating me from my son? Now I'm about to die and I'm only going to see him for a few days or weeks, or maybe months."

Contentment, I think, is one of faith's finest offsprings. Jacob expresses contentment.

3. The third evidence is that Jacob displayed character before the Pharaoh of Egypt.

I think of any event in this whole story that I would have loved to have seen, it would have been this one. Try to imagine it, as we look at it, in Genesis 47.

Joseph, as we can understand, is, without embarrassment, going to introduce his father to the Pharaoh. Jacob does not really fit in the court. He is a wanderer; a shepherd. He is unskilled; traditionally uneducated. Joseph, on the other hand, is a fine man of the court. He has been trained for his position. He walks with splendor and is dressed to the hilt. Here comes his limping, old father, dressed in the clothing of a shepherd. Joseph, unashamedly, it seems, leads his elderly father into the courtroom – the dazzling court of the Pharaoh, filled with splendor and dazzling with wealth. Jacob does not grovel, as

he did before with Esau. He does not fall on his face seven times, and say, "Oh, great Pharaoh." Instead, look at Genesis 47:7.

***Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.***

I can imagine the palace court comes to a standstill. I imagine the leaders, the wise men, the dazzling array of Pharaoh's kingdom comes to a hushed pause as this old shepherd reaches out his trembling hands and the great ruler of the then-known world bows his head. Jacob, not asking for the Pharaoh to give him anything; not saying, "Pharaoh, I've got a deal for you," but Israel, the prince of God, holds his hands out, while Pharaoh must have bowed, and blessed him. Jacob, the schemer, has begun to live like Israel, the prince of God.

### **Expressions of faith from Jacob's deathbed**

Perhaps the greatest evidence of Jacob's faith, however, is seen on his deathbed. There are three evidences recorded for us.

1. Number one, faith is seen in Jacob's last words to Joseph.

Turn to Genesis 48:21.

***Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers."***

Notice his promise, as well, to Joseph's son Ephraim, in Genesis 48:19b.

***". . . However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."***

He is saying, "I know the promise of God is true. One day our people will number among the nations, and now, it is seventy."

This is faith. Jacob is saying, "Even though I am in Egypt, Joseph, one day the land of promise will be ours."

2. Number two, faith is seen in the words of Jacob's prophecy to his twelve sons.

Genesis 49 gives a detailed account of Jacob's blessing to each of his boys – twelve in all. I imagine that he, with trembling voice, lays claim, as he did to the Abrahamic covenant promises, as he calls each of them to him. This is a study in itself, but we will only

take time to note one verse that gives his words to Judah.

Now Judah, according to Genesis 49:10, is the progenitor of the Messianic line. It is from the tribe of Judah that Jesus Christ will come. We do not know how much Jacob knows about the Messiah. We do know that he is clinging to a promise. Notice Jacob's words to Judah, in Genesis 49:10.

***The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.***

What does "Shiloh" mean? In Hebrew, this means, "rest giver".

This is a prophecy of the Messiah's coming. Jacob is presenting to his son, the promise that One will come who will give rest to the nation.

Jesus Christ laid claim to this very prophecy when He stood and told the masses,

***Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)***

Jesus was saying, "I am the Rest-giver. I am Shiloh."

Now maybe you are not asking this question and maybe I am answering a question that you are not asking, but I wonder where Jacob heard the name Shiloh? I know you will not lose any sleep over this, but I did. I had to do some reading and some digging, but I came across a suggestion by a great old commentator named F. B. Meyer.

Meyer suggests that it relates to the night that Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord, which is, by the way, a euphemism referring to the pre-incarnate Son, Christ Himself (Genesis 32). When he wrestled with Him, and this was when his thigh was touched, Jacob would not let Him go until He blessed him. You may remember the story. Jacob finally said, "What is your name?" The text does not tell us what His name was, but it does tell us that the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Son, turned and blessed him. Meyer thinks, in this blessing, He whispered in Jacob's ear, "My name is Shiloh."

Jacob never forgot this. So he says, "Judah, Shiloh, the Rest-giver, will come, and He will come from your tribe."

This is faith.

3. Number three, faith is seen in Jacob's final request.

Look at Genesis 49:29-31.

***Then he charged them [his sons] and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,***

***"in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site.***

***"There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah"***

Note that it was Leah that Jacob buried there, not Rachel.

Now Jacob does not ask for some splendid mausoleum in Egypt. He says, "I want to be buried in the humble cave, that damp cave of Machpelah, where Abraham is buried and Isaac."

In other words, "In death, I want to be laid beside other men of faith, and I, with them, claim the right to the land."

This cave was in the land of Canaan. It was the cave of God's choosing. Jacob, in effect, says, "I want to be surrounded by, what would be, a return through Joshua to the land. I want to lie there surrounded by an emerging, developing nation that lays claim to the promise that began centuries before."

## Application

Let us imagine that Jacob could be here, as we close our study of his life. We could ask, "Jacob, would you tell us some of the lessons that you've learned?"

I leaned back in my chair and tried to imagine this scene and to think, "What would Jacob say?"

Let me give three things that I think Jacob would say. I am sure there are many, but there are at least these.

1. First, I think Jacob would say that a life of manipulating and scheming can reap lifelong results.

I can hear Jacob saying, "I never really cared what I did or who I hurt or who got in my way. All I know is that I got my way. It meant tricking my blind old father and stealing from my brother, who didn't

realize what I was taking from him. It didn't matter – I got it. But I reaped pain, loss, and insecurity.”

I think Jacob would say, “You reap what you sow.”

2. Secondly, I can imagine Jacob taking another breath and saying, “However, I've learned, as well, that a life of faithlessness does not handicap the purposes of God.”

Jacob would have never married Leah. He did not even like Leah. However, it was from Leah that Levi was born, the father of the priestly tribe. If there had been no Leah, there would have been no Moses. It was from Leah that Judah would be born, the forefather of King David. If there had been no Leah, there would have been no David.

I can imagine Jacob saying that his world came crashing down when Joseph, seemingly, died and Simeon was in prison, yet God had planned it all. And God even used his failure to accomplish, in advance, His sovereign cause.

3. Thirdly, I think Jacob would finally say that a life of faithlessness merely reveals, in brilliance, the grace of God.

God is sovereign and God is also gracious. He chose to call Himself “the God of Jacob,” more than the God of any other patriarch. Twice as many times, in fact, as we read “the God of Abraham,” we will read “the God of Jacob,” and nearly three times as many times as we read “the God of Isaac,” we will read “the God of Jacob”.

God chose to call Himself by this schemer's name. I am glad because it means He can say, “I am the God of Stephen.”

He is your God too. Do not ever think, as His child, that anything you do will somehow handicap His purposes or make His grace run dry. You cannot.

Does this give us license? As Paul said, “God forbid.”

Do not ever think that the well of His grace runs dry. One beautiful thing about this, as I think Jacob would say, is, “All through life, God was my God. He led me, He developed me, He hurt me, He loved me, and ultimately, He led me into the experience of faith.”

May this be true in our lives too.