

# JACOB, AN EXAMPLE OF A RESTORED CHARACTER

## GOLDEN TEXT

“Just as it is written: “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Romans 9:13).

## USEFUL PRACTICE

Based on his foreknowledge and plans, God chooses people to fulfill his purposes.

## SCRIPTURE READING

**Genesis 25:28-34; 32:24, 28, 30**

28 - Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

29 - Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished.

30 - He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom).

31 - Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

32 - “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?”

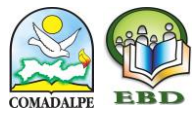
33 - But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob.

34 - Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.

## **Genesis 32.24,28,30**

24 - So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak.

25 - When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob’s hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man.



26 - Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

27 - The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered.

28 - Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome."

29 - Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there.

30 - So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To show that God chooses people to fulfill his purposes.

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- **To present** the origin of Jacob;
- **To show** the guidance of God in the life of Jacob;
- **To reflect** on some aspects of Jacob's character.

## INTRODUCTION

Isaac had two twin sons. Esau had a penchant for the field, for countryside life and also for hunting. Jacob, on the contrary, because of his temperament and personality, turned to domestic life. He soon revealed an opportunist and usurping character, which led him to deceive his father with his mother's support. The consequences were hard on his life. He reaped with great suffering what he sowed. But the mercy of God reached him, and the Lord chose him to be the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.

## I- WHO JACOB WAS

### 1. Isaac's younger son.

His name, in Hebrew, is **Yaakov** and means "God protects". He is part of the list of the three Hebrew patriarchs who marked the history of Israel:

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His story was full of dramatic episodes since his birth. God heard the prayers of Isaac, because Rebekah was barren (Gen 25:21). The text says that, in the womb, there was a struggle between the babies (Gen. 25:22). Jacob was born holding his brother's heel. Therefore, his name came to mean "he who holds the heel" or "supplanter."

## **2. His mother's favorite one.**

Isaac preferred Esau because he liked hunting. But Rebekah loved Jacob the most, because he was "a simple man, dwelling in tents" (Gen 25:27,28). When Isaac wanted to bless Esau, the firstborn (Gen 27: 1-5), Rebekah, in a clear demonstration of her crafty character, called Jacob and induced him to deceive his father (Gen 27:11, 12, 14, 15). Fooled, Isaac blessed Jacob (Gen. 27:27-29). When Esau returned from hunting, he discovered that his brother had taken his blessing away. In despair he received a lesser blessing from his father (Gen. 27:39, 40). Filled with hatred, he planned to kill his brother (Gen. 27:41). Jacob had to flee because he was being threatened by Esau. Isaac realized that God had a plan for Jacob's life and sent him away with a prophetic blessing of great significance (Gen. 28:1-4).

## **3. God's favorite one.**

Jacob's choice is a special case of divine foreknowledge in the face of God's purposes. God does not have privileged children, nor does he choose some for salvation and others for condemnation, because such an attitude would flatly contradict his holy, just and good character. It would be a terrible discrimination on the part of God that condemns anyone who shows favoritism (James 2: 9; Peter 1:17). But in his sovereignty, in special cases, He chooses people to be instruments of his directive will. Jacob was one of these chosen ones, while he was still in the womb (Rom 9:9-13).

# **II - THE GUIDANCE OF GOD IN THE LIFE OF JACOB**

## **1. The vision of the stairway that reached to heaven.**

In his flight, in the middle of the desert, Jacob had a God-given dream. He saw a stairway resting on the earth, whose top reached to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And God reiterated the blessing he had promised (Gen. 28:13-15). God did not approve of his arrangements and deceptions, but neither did he withdraw the blessing promised to his parents. That night he discovered the

presence of God, who presented himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac. He heard God reiterate His promises and found out that God's house is where He is: "the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28: 13-17).

## **2. The pillar in Bethel.**

Jacob did not seek God, but God sought him, and revealed himself as the God of his fathers. A proof of how deep the grace of God is. Undoubtedly, the story of Jacob is divided into two periods. Before God met him and after that special encounter. That episode was so shocking in his life that he called that desert place Bethel, which means "House of God." There, at that dawn, Jacob heard God speak to him; he felt the divine presence and experienced an extraordinary change in his life.

### **III - ASPECTS OF THE CHARACTER OF JACOB**

#### **1. Before his encounter with God.**

Until the encounter with God in Bethel, he was only a "natural", or fleshly man (1 Cor. 2:14). At that stage of his life, we can see some negative aspects of his character.

##### **A) Opportunist and selfish.**

When his brother came in famished and asked him to eat from his stew, he could have offered him his food, sharing his meal. But in a demonstration of opportunism and ambition, he immediately said, "First sell me your birthright" (Gen. 25:31).

##### **B) Self-interested and scheming.**

Jacob was cold, calculating, and hot-tempered. In addition to proposing the exchange of the birthright to his brother, he demanded that Esau swear an oath to guarantee that the exchange would be respected throughout his life: "But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob." (Gen. 25:33; Heb. 12:16). He just forgot one thing. What he was sowing in his youth he would reap later (Col. 6:7), in much greater proportions.

##### **C) A liar and a deceiver.**

With his weak and lenient character, he agreed, with his mother, to deceive his old father. When he came into Isaac's presence, he lied three times. He asked, "Who are you, my son?" He said that he was Esau (Gen. 27:19): The first lie. Asked why he had found it so quickly with the game, he lied the second time, saying, "Because the Lord your God brought *it* to

me" (Gen. 27:20). In embracing Jacob, Isaac repeated that he was Esau - "I am" (Gen. 27:24). He lied for the third time.

## **2. After his encounter with God.**

*Notice the transformation in the character of Jacob:*

### **A) A grateful character.**

Jacob began to see things from a spiritual perspective of a new relationship with God, and vowed to him by saying that if God would not let him lack anything, he would raise an altar and give a tenth of "everything" (Gen. 28: 20-22). In this, we see that Jacob was aware of the value of tithing as a sincere expression of gratitude to God, as did his grandfather, Abraham, before Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). He did not promise to give a tenth of what he had left (of the "net income"), but of "everything", as his grandfather had done (Heb. 7:2).

### **B) A dedicated and suffering character.**

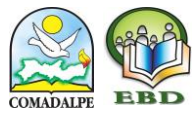
When he got to the house of Laban, his uncle, he proved to be a hardworking man. There, he began to reap what he had sown in deception and lie. On the "honeymoon" he was cheated by his father-in-law. Instead of marrying Rachel, he had to marry Leah. Only later did he marry his beloved one, and, for this, he worked another "seven years" (Gen. 29: 21-30). That was not the only price that Jacob had to pay because of his life of deception and lie. Laban changed his wages ten times over twenty years (Gen. 31:7). A man reaps what he sows (Gal. 6:7).

### **C) A man under the guidance of God.**

After being deceived by his father-in-law, Jacob gathered his family and fled from Haran. But he did not do so just for fear of his father-in-law. His flight from Haran was directed by God (Gen 31:31-33). In this way, Jacob fled with his family, and was soon pursued by his father-in-law. He could not harm him because God took action and told him not to say anything to Jacob "either good or bad" (Gen. 31:24).

## **3. In his encounter with Esau.**

As he approached Seir, where his brother lived, Jacob sent messengers to Esau, announcing his return. The messengers returned and said that Esau was coming to meet him with four hundred men. Jacob was in great fear (Gen. 32:7-12). But in the Jabbok Valley, he had an encounter that marked him for the rest of his life. His name was changed to Israel, and he saw God "face to face" (Gen. 32: 22-30). When he met Esau, he



reconciled with him and embraced him with forgiveness and love.

## CONCLUSION

In his experiences with God, we see that Jacob had his character changed. From an opportunist and a deceiver, he became humble, suffering, patient, long-suffering, selfless. It was by His patience and grace that God chose Jacob rather than Esau. When we give place to the Holy Spirit, He radically changes our character.