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# Genesis

## Part Two

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Genesis 25:19–50:26

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**Joan E. Cook**

with Little Rock Scripture Study staff



*A ministry of the Diocese of Little Rock  
in partnership with Liturgical Press*

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## DIOCESE OF LITTLE ROCK

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Dear Friends,

The Bible is a gift of God to the church, the people gathered around the world throughout the ages in the name of Christ. God uses this sacred writing to continue to speak to us in all times and places.

I encourage you to make it your own by dedicated prayer and study with others and on your own. Little Rock Scripture Study is a ministry of the Catholic Diocese of Little Rock. It provides the tools you need to faithfully understand what you are reading, to appreciate its meaning for you and for our world, and to guide you in a way that will deepen your own ability to respond to God's call.

It is my hope that the Word of God will empower you as Christians to live a life worthy of your call as a child of God.

Sincerely in Christ,

✠ Anthony B. Taylor  
Bishop of Little Rock





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# Welcome

The Bible is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. It is the Spirit-inspired word of God for us. It reveals to us the God who created, redeemed, and guides us still. It speaks to us personally and as a church. It forms the basis of our public liturgical life and our private prayer lives. It urges us to live worthily and justly, to love tenderly and wholeheartedly, and to be a part of building God's kingdom here on earth.

Though it was written a long time ago, in the context of a very different culture, the Bible is no relic of the past. Catholic biblical scholarship is among the best in the world, and in our time and place, we have unprecedented access to it. By making use of solid scholarship, we can discover much about the ancient culture and religious practices that shaped those who wrote the various books of the Bible. With these insights, and by praying with the words of Scripture, we allow the words and images to shape us as disciples. By sharing our journey of faithful listening to God's word with others, we have the opportunity to be stretched in our understanding and to form communities of love and learning. Ultimately, studying and praying with God's word deepens our relationship with Christ.

## **Genesis, Part Two**

### **Genesis 25:19–50:26**


The resource you hold in your hands is divided into five lessons. Each lesson involves personal prayer and study using this book *and* the experience of group prayer, discussion, and wrap-up lecture.

If you are using this resource in the context of a small group, we suggest that you meet five times, discussing one lesson per meeting. Allow about 90 minutes for the small group gathering. Small groups function best with eight to twelve people to ensure good group dynamics and to allow all to participate as they wish.

## WHAT MATERIALS WILL YOU USE?

The materials in this book include:

- The text of Genesis, chapters 25:19–50:26, using the New American Bible, Revised Edition as the translation.

- Commentary by Joan E. Cook (which has also been published separately as part of the New Collegeville Bible Commentary series).
- Occasional inserts  highlighting elements of the chapters of Genesis being studied. Some of these appear also in the *Little Rock Catholic Study Bible* while others are supplied by staff writers.
- Questions for study, reflection, and discussion at the end of each lesson.
- Opening and closing prayers for each lesson, as well as other prayer forms available in the closing pages of the book.

In addition, there are wrap-up lectures available for each lesson. Your group may choose to purchase a DVD containing these lectures or make use of the audio or video lectures online at no charge. The link to these free lectures is: [LittleRockScripture.org/Lectures/GenesisPartTwo](http://LittleRockScripture.org/Lectures/GenesisPartTwo). Of course, if your group has access to qualified speakers, you may choose to have live presentations.

Each person will need a current translation of the Bible. We recommend the *Little Rock Catholic Study Bible*, which makes use of the New American Bible, Revised Edition. Other translations, such as the New Jerusalem Bible or the New Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition, would also work well.

## HOW WILL YOU USE THESE MATERIALS?

### **Prepare in advance**

Using Lesson One as an example:

- Begin with a simple prayer like the one found on page 11.
- Read the assigned material in the printed book for Lesson One (pages 12–25) so that you are prepared for the weekly small group session. You may do this assignment by reading a portion over a period of several days (effective and manageable) or by preparing all at once (more challenging).
- Answer the questions, Exploring Lesson One, found at the end of the assigned reading, pages 26–27.
- Use the Closing Prayer on page 28 when you complete your study. This prayer may be used again when you meet with the group.



## **Meet with your small group**

- After introductions and greetings, allow time for prayer (about 5 minutes) as you begin the group session. You may use the prayer found on page 11 (also used by individuals in their preparation) or use a prayer of your choosing.
- Spend about 45–50 minutes discussing the responses to the questions that were prepared in advance. You may also develop your discussion further by responding to questions and interests that arise during the discussion and faith-sharing itself.
- Close the discussion and faith-sharing with prayer, about 5–10 minutes. You may use the Closing Prayer at the end of each lesson or one of your choosing at the end of the book. It is important to allow people to pray for personal and community needs and to give thanks for how God is moving in your lives.
- Listen to or view the wrap-up lecture associated with each lesson (15–20 minutes). You may watch the lecture online, use a DVD, or provide a live lecture by a qualified local speaker. This lecture provides a common focus for the group and reinforces insights from each lesson. You may view the lecture together at the end of the session or, if your group runs out of time, you may invite group members to watch the lecture on their own time after the discussion.

*Above all, be aware that the Holy Spirit is moving within and among you.*



# Genesis

## Part Two

### LESSON ONE

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#### Introduction and Genesis 25:19–30:24

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Begin your personal study and group discussion with a simple and sincere prayer such as:

#### *Prayer*

*God of my ancestors in faith, open my eyes and ears and heart as I reflect on these people whom you called centuries ago.*

Read the Introduction on pages 12–13 and the Bible text of Genesis 25:19–30:24 found in the outside columns of pages 14–25, highlighting what stands out to you.

Read the accompanying commentary to add to your understanding.

Respond to the questions on pages 26–27, Exploring Lesson One.

The Closing Prayer on page 28 is for your personal use and may be used at the end of group discussion.

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second half of Genesis in the Little Rock Scripture Study series, exploring in depth Genesis 25:19–50:26, using the associated sections of commentary from Joan E. Cook (originally appearing in the New Collegeville Bible Commentary, *Genesis*). The first half of this study covered Genesis 1:1–25:18, using the same commentary.

Genesis is a story about the beginnings of the universe, the human family, and God’s people Israel. It focuses our attention on universal themes, especially relationships between God and people and relationships among people. At the same time these themes are expressed in the styles and settings of the ancient Near East, which require some attention as we take up this study. This review will serve as a reminder to those who completed Part One and as a brief introduction to those who are joining the study at this time.

### Themes

Genesis introduces several themes that permeate the entire Bible. The first is divine causality, the belief among ancient people that the deities cause everything to happen in life. For the ancient Israelites this means that the one God, revealed as the great “I AM,” takes special interest in them. Another theme is the importance of relationships and the appropriate boundaries within these relationships. These boundaries include right relationships between God and people, among peoples, and even extending to the possession of land. The third theme is that of promise and blessing. The Creator promises to remember and care for all of creation, and carries out that promise in spite of the many ways that creatures violate divinely set boundaries.

### Ancient Storytelling

Unlike the way we tell stories today, with great attention to the details surrounding the event or person and with an eye toward accuracy, the ancients had different priorities. For them, stories were primarily a way to communicate the *meaning* of an event or person. In

nonliterate cultures where people depended almost exclusively on oral communication, stories were told in ways that their listeners would remember and pass down to their descendants. In Genesis, there are even times that an event is recounted more than once, and sometimes in differing ways, in order to emphasize various meanings.

### Sources

The book of Genesis in our Bibles is the result of a long process, beginning with many years of oral storytelling in particular locations and situations. The writing process began around the time of King David (approximately 1000 BC) as he tried to unite the twelve tribes into one people, encouraging scribes to write down the stories of their people. As these stories were woven together to form the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible, also known as Torah), the flavor of various contributors remained. And as the collection of stories was edited and brought together over several centuries, a unified story emerged that managed to preserve some variances as well.

Scholars in later centuries identify at least four strands of tradition with particular viewpoints and particular names for God. Below is a quick summary to provide a broad understanding of these strands:

- The Yahwist (J) is named for the first letter of this strand’s preferred name for God, Yahweh (Jahweh in German). Out of respect for the sacredness of this divine name, many Bible translations substitute the title “LORD” in place of “Yahweh.” The Yahwist’s stories often rely on vivid language to allow readers and listeners to sense God’s presence with them.
- The Elohist (E) is named for the first letter of this tradition’s preferred name for God, Elohim (associated with a regional term that originally meant “gods”). The stories in this strand developed in the northern part of Israel and tend to focus on the transcendence of God.

- The Deuteronomist (D) strand emerged during and after the Babylonian exile (6th century BC) as God's people grappled with their painful situation. This tradition understood the exile as divine punishment for violation of God's covenant, and its narration of the stories of Israelite ancestors is characterized by formality and cause-and-effect thinking.
- The Priestly (P) strand also attempted to make sense of the experience of exile. This tradition emphasizes the importance of temple worship, the details of rituals, and genealogies of people.

The average reader may not notice these differences and need not be concerned with unraveling the strands of biblical tapestry. However, it is helpful to be aware that God's word is communicated with a variety of styles and emphases throughout Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch.

### Literary Genres

God's people wrote and spoke according to the conventions of their day. In Genesis, we find three main types of ancient writing:

- *Myths* are ancient stories that convey the beliefs and values of the people. The term "myth" does not mean these stories are to be dismissed as "make-believe." Rather, these are powerful religious stories that communicate essential truths of God's creative and sustaining actions in the world.
- *Sagas* are stories that tell about the past and relate it to the present. Sagas in Genesis include the stories of creation as well as the familial stories found throughout the book.
- *Genealogies* emphasize the relationships between generations. Most scholars believe these lists are among the latest parts of the book, added centuries later during the exile to produce a record of who belonged to the group exiled from the Promised Land.

**Birth of Esau and Jacob**

<sup>19</sup>These are the descendants of Isaac, son of Abraham; Abraham begot Isaac. <sup>20</sup>Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram and the sister of Laban the Aramean. <sup>21</sup>Isaac entreated the LORD on behalf of his wife, since she was sterile. The LORD heard his entreaty, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. <sup>22</sup>But the children jostled each other in the womb so much that she exclaimed, “If it is like this, why go on living!” She went to consult the LORD, <sup>23</sup>and the LORD answered her:

Two nations are in your womb,  
two peoples are separating while still  
within you;  
But one will be stronger than the other,  
and the older will serve the younger.

<sup>24</sup>When the time of her delivery came, there were twins in her womb. <sup>25</sup>The first to emerge was reddish, and his whole body was like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. <sup>26</sup>Next his brother came out, gripping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when they were born.

<sup>27</sup>When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country; whereas Jacob was a simple man, who stayed among the tents. <sup>28</sup>Isaac preferred Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah preferred Jacob. <sup>29</sup>Once,

*continue*

**THE ANCESTRAL STORY  
PART 2: ISAAC AND REBEKAH**

Genesis 25:19–28:9

**25:19-28 The births of Esau and Jacob**

The stories about Isaac are far fewer than those about Abraham. Many of them are incorporated into the narratives about his father Abraham and his sons Jacob and Esau. The Isaac account continues the theme of divine promise of descendants and land. In the narrative the betrothal and barren mother type scenes reappear, as does the wife-sister motif.



In addition, we meet here another motif that occurs throughout Genesis: that of the younger before the older. We will discuss these as we come to them in the Isaac stories.

After a brief genealogical note we learn that Rebekah, like Sarah before her, is sterile—an immediate threat to the promise, just as in the Abraham and Sarah saga. This time the childlessness is quickly overcome when Isaac prays to God and Rebekah becomes pregnant. Her pregnancy, however, is not without difficulty. She carries twins who jostle each other in the womb, making her pregnancy very uncomfortable. Rebekah brings her concern to the Lord, and the divine response confirms that she will bear twins who will father opposing nations; indeed the tension between them has already begun in Rebekah’s womb. The Lord informs Rebekah that the older will serve the younger, an unusual arrangement in ancient Near Eastern families.

The story follows the plot of the barren mother type scene: the childless Rebekah has a son (Jacob) and takes steps to insure his success. This account follows the request model, in which Isaac asks God for a son for his wife, and the Lord grants his request. The story alludes to the competition model as well, in the struggle between the two boys. Rebekah does not have a rival wife, but she carries the strife

between her two sons even before they are born. The divine response to her prayer in the face of her difficult pregnancy explains the conflict, confirms that it is of divine origin, and announces the reversal of roles between the two brothers. This divine word forms the backdrop for all Rebekah's actions to ensure the success of her younger son Jacob.

In addition, the story alludes to the promise model in the divine explanation to Rebekah while her sons are still in her womb. The three-fold promise announces that the tension between the two boys will continue throughout their lives: they will form two different nations; they will struggle for power; and their roles in the family will be reversed.

When the twins are born, Esau comes first, followed by his brother Jacob. Their names foreshadow the defining characteristics of each: Esau is hairy and reddish, and Jacob is the heel-gripper. With their contrasting personalities the two appeal to different parents: Esau the impetuous outdoorsman is his father's favorite while his mother prefers Jacob, the methodical and conniving tent-dweller.

### **25:29-34 Esau sells his birthright**

The first illustration of the boys' contrasting personalities comes when Jacob is preparing a stew. Esau refers to it as "red stuff"; the narrative calls it lentil stew (v. 34). We recall that when Esau was born he was reddish, probably a reference to a ruddy complexion (v. 25). Here the color of the stew attracts his attention; perhaps he thinks it contains blood, which would appeal to his hunter's tastes. In fact, the color comes from the lentils, which would appeal to a vegetarian.

Jacob seizes the opportunity to strike a bargain with his brother, and agrees to give him a bowl of stew in exchange for Esau's birthright. This is a hard bargain, considering the inequality of the tradeoff. It highlights both Jacob's scheming personality and Esau's utter lack of concern for a matter with long-term implications. It also foreshadows Jacob's deception of his father Isaac when he arranges to receive the blessing intended for his brother Esau in chapter 27.

when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. <sup>30</sup>He said to Jacob, "Let me gulp down some of that red stuff; I am famished." That is why he was called Edom. <sup>31</sup>But Jacob replied, "First sell me your right as firstborn." <sup>32</sup>"Look," said Esau, "I am on the point of dying. What good is the right as firstborn to me?" <sup>33</sup>But Jacob said, "Swear to me first!" So he sold Jacob his right as firstborn under oath. <sup>34</sup>Jacob then gave him some bread and the lentil stew; and Esau ate, drank, got up, and went his way. So Esau treated his right as firstborn with disdain.

## **CHAPTER 26**

### *Isaac and Abimelech*

<sup>1</sup>There was a famine in the land, distinct from the earlier one that had occurred in the days of Abraham, and Isaac went down to Abimelech, king of the Philistines in Gerar. <sup>2</sup>The LORD appeared to him and said: Do not go down to Egypt, but camp in this land wherever I tell you. <sup>3</sup>Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, in fulfillment of the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. <sup>4</sup>I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and I will give them all these lands, and in your descendants all the nations of the earth will find blessing— <sup>5</sup>this because Abraham obeyed me,

*continue*

### **26:1-35 Rebekah endangered**

The narrative returns to Isaac, who must care for his family in the midst of a famine. Just as his father did previously, Isaac prepares to migrate in search of food. Egypt is not an option for him because the Lord insists that he stay in the land of promise. At this point the Lord repeats to Isaac the promise of descendants, a nation, and land that was made so many times to Abraham. Instead of going to Egypt, Isaac travels to Gerar, as Abraham did during the second famine (ch. 20).

keeping my mandate, my commandments, my ordinances, and my instructions.

<sup>6</sup>So Isaac settled in Gerar. <sup>7</sup>When the men of the place asked questions about his wife, he answered, “She is my sister.” He was afraid that, if he called her his wife, the men of the place would kill him on account of Rebekah, since she was beautiful. <sup>8</sup>But when they had been there for a long time, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, looked out of a window and saw Isaac fondling his wife Rebekah. <sup>9</sup>He called for Isaac and said: “She must certainly be your wife! How could you have said, ‘She is my sister?’” Isaac replied, “I thought I might lose my life on her account.” <sup>10</sup>“How could you have done this to us!” exclaimed Abimelech. “It would have taken very little for one of the people to lie with your wife, and so you would have brought guilt upon us!” <sup>11</sup>Abimelech then commanded all the people: “Anyone who maltreats this man or his wife shall be put to death.”

<sup>12</sup>Isaac sowed a crop in that region and reaped a hundredfold the same year. Since the LORD blessed him, <sup>13</sup>he became richer and richer all the time, until he was very wealthy. <sup>14</sup>He acquired flocks and herds, and a great work force, and so the Philistines became envious of him. <sup>15</sup>The Philistines had stopped up and filled with dirt all the wells that his father’s servants had dug back in the days of his father Abraham. <sup>16</sup>So Abimelech said to Isaac, “Go away from us; you have become far too numerous for us.” <sup>17</sup>Isaac left there and camped in the Wadi Gerar where he stayed. <sup>18</sup>Isaac reopened the wells which his father’s servants had dug back in the days of his father Abraham and which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham’s death; he gave them names like those that his father had given them. <sup>19</sup>But when Isaac’s servants dug in the wadi and reached spring water in their well, <sup>20</sup>the shepherds of Gerar argued with Isaac’s shepherds, saying, “The water belongs to us!” So he named the well Esek, because they had quarreled there. <sup>21</sup>Then they dug another well, and they argued over that one too; so he named it Sitnah. <sup>22</sup>So he moved on from there and dug still another well,

*continue*

In verse 6 the wife-sister motif appears again, in the same location, Gerar, that was problematic for Abraham and Sarah in chapter 20. This time there is no prior arrangement between Isaac and Rebekah; the narrative simply tells us that Isaac identifies Rebekah as his sister when the men of Gerar approach him because of her. (Like Sarah, Rebekah is beautiful.) Isaac’s first concern is for his own safety, as was Abraham’s before him; he fears for his life at the hands of the inhabitants of Gerar.

This time there is no attempt on the part of Abimelech the king to take Rebekah; instead, he happens to see Isaac and Rebekah enjoying each other as husband and wife. The Hebrew word that describes their action comes from the same root as the word “Isaac,” which means “laughter” and recalls the joy of Isaac’s parents at his birth. But the moment creates the opposite of joy for Abimelech when he realizes that Rebekah and Isaac are husband and wife. The conversation that follows between Abimelech and Isaac shows that Isaac’s fears are in vain. Abimelech has no intention of violating Isaac’s wife, and he forbids his people to mistreat either of them. This mandate confirms Isaac’s earlier fear: the people might indeed have violated Rebekah. It also highlights Isaac’s duplicity: if the people had violated Rebekah, it would have been Isaac’s fault.

The next episode describes a second incident when tensions arise between Isaac and Abimelech. This time the cause is Isaac’s hugely successful farming in Gerar. In an effort to drive him away the Philistines stop up the wells that Abraham dug, and Abimelech directly asks him to leave. Isaac moves to the area where Abraham stayed (21:34), re-digs his father’s wells, and discovers a spring in one of them. This valuable water source causes a new round of conflict, so Isaac moves again and digs other wells. These incidents highlight the scarcity of water in the region, and the desire of each family to protect its water sources, particularly during a famine.

Eventually (v. 23) Isaac returns to Beer-sheba, where he had lived with his father Abraham. Here the Lord appears to him and repeats



the promise of descendants. Isaac builds an altar to mark the place where the Lord appeared, just as his father had done. After praying to the Lord, he sets about digging a well. Again he must reckon with Abimelech, who recognizes the power that Isaac has accrued by his economic success. In verse 26 Abimelech and his men ask for a nonaggression pact between the two peoples. Isaac agrees, and they make a formal agreement. A brief genealogical note follows in verse 34, listing Esau's marriages to a Hittite woman and a Hivite woman, a cause of bitterness to his parents. It foreshadows Rebekah's determination that Jacob, not Esau, will receive Isaac's blessing now that Esau has married outside the family.

### 27:1–28:9 Isaac blesses Jacob

The saga continues as Isaac arranges to bestow his blessing on his son before he dies, like Abraham before him. This episode, in which Rebekah helps Jacob to usurp the blessing intended for Esau, takes place in seven steps, permeated by the motif of younger-older.

The first step (vv. 1-4) involves Isaac and Esau. We learn that Isaac's eyesight is failing, and he instructs his son Esau to hunt game with which to prepare him a meal, so Esau might receive his father's blessing. The formality of the request is evident in several details: first, Esau responds with "Here I am!" the formal acknowledgment of readiness and willingness. In addition, the meal his father requests has a ritual connotation; here it suggests a formal ceremony for bestowing the blessing.

The second step (vv. 5-17) involves the other two people, Rebekah and Jacob. Rebekah repeats what she heard Isaac say to Esau, adding the solemn words, "with the LORD's approval." She quickly formulates a plan and explains it to Jacob. She brushes aside his hesitation because she remembers the Lord's words, "the older will serve the younger," when the twins were still in her womb (25:23). They both make the necessary preparations, and Rebekah sends him in to his father.

The third step (vv. 18-29) takes place between Isaac and Jacob. Jacob lies to his father

but over this one they did not argue. He named it Rehoboth, and said, "Because the LORD has now given us ample room, we shall flourish in the land."

<sup>23</sup>From there Isaac went up to Beer-sheba. <sup>24</sup>The same night the LORD appeared to him and said: I am the God of Abraham, your father. Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for the sake of Abraham, my servant. <sup>25</sup>So Isaac built an altar there and invoked the LORD by name. After he had pitched his tent there, Isaac's servants began to dig a well nearby.

<sup>26</sup>Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath, his councilor, and Phicol, the general of his army. <sup>27</sup>Isaac asked them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have driven me away from you?" <sup>28</sup>They answered: "We clearly see that the LORD has been with you, so we thought: let there be a sworn agreement between our two sides—between you and us. Let us make a covenant with you: <sup>29</sup>you shall do no harm to us, just as we have not maltreated you, but have always acted kindly toward you and have let you depart in peace. So now, may you be blessed by the LORD!" <sup>30</sup>Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. <sup>31</sup>Early the next morning they exchanged oaths. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.

<sup>32</sup>That same day Isaac's servants came and informed him about the well they had been digging; they told him, "We have reached water!" <sup>33</sup>He called it Shibah; hence the name of the city is Beer-sheba to this day. <sup>34</sup>When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith, daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, daughter of Elon the Hivite. <sup>35</sup>But they became a source of bitterness to Isaac and Rebekah.

## CHAPTER 27

### *Jacob's Deception*

<sup>1</sup>When Isaac was so old that his eyesight had failed him, he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son!" "Here I am!" he replied. <sup>2</sup>Isaac then said, "Now I have grown old. I do not know

*continue*

when I might die. <sup>3</sup>So now take your hunting gear—your quiver and bow—and go out into the open country to hunt some game for me. <sup>4</sup>Then prepare for me a dish in the way I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die.”

<sup>5</sup>Rebekah had been listening while Isaac was speaking to his son Esau. So when Esau went out into the open country to hunt some game for his father, <sup>6</sup>Rebekah said to her son Jacob, “Listen! I heard your father tell your brother Esau, <sup>7</sup>‘Bring me some game and prepare a dish for me to eat, that I may bless you with the LORD’s approval before I die.’ <sup>8</sup>Now, my son, obey me in what I am about to order you. <sup>9</sup>Go to the flock and get me two choice young goats so that with these I might prepare a dish for your father in the way he likes. <sup>10</sup>Then bring it to your father to eat, that he may bless you before he dies.” <sup>11</sup>But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man and I am smooth-skinned! <sup>12</sup>Suppose my father feels me? He will think I am making fun of him, and I will bring on myself a curse instead of a blessing.” <sup>13</sup>His mother, however, replied: “Let any curse against you, my son, fall on me! Just obey me. Go and get me the young goats.”

<sup>14</sup>So Jacob went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared a dish in the way his father liked. <sup>15</sup>Rebekah then took the best clothes of her older son Esau that she had in the house, and gave them to her younger son Jacob to wear; <sup>16</sup>and with the goatskins she covered up his hands and the hairless part of his neck. <sup>17</sup>Then she gave her son Jacob the dish and the bread she had prepared.

<sup>18</sup>Going to his father, Jacob said, “Father!” “Yes?” replied Isaac. “Which of my sons are you?” <sup>19</sup>Jacob answered his father: “I am Esau, your firstborn. I did as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me.” <sup>20</sup>But Isaac said to his son, “How did you get it so quickly, my son?” He answered, “The LORD, your God, directed me.” <sup>21</sup>Isaac then said to Jacob, “Come closer, my son, that I may feel you, to learn

whether you really are my son Esau or not.” <sup>22</sup>So Jacob moved up closer to his father. When Isaac felt him, he said, “Although the voice is Jacob’s, the hands are Esau’s.” <sup>23</sup>(He failed to identify him because his hands were hairy, like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him.) <sup>24</sup>Again Isaac said, “Are you really my son Esau?” And Jacob said, “I am.” <sup>25</sup>Then Isaac said, “Serve me, my son, and let me eat of the game so that I may bless you.” Jacob served it to him, and Isaac ate; he brought him wine, and he drank. <sup>26</sup>Finally his father Isaac said to him, “Come closer, my son, and kiss me.” <sup>27</sup>As Jacob went up to kiss him, Isaac smelled the fragrance of his clothes. With that, he blessed him, saying,

“Ah, the fragrance of my son  
is like the fragrance of a field  
that the LORD has blessed!

<sup>28</sup>May God give to you  
of the dew of the heavens  
And of the fertility of the earth  
abundance of grain and wine.

<sup>29</sup>May peoples serve you,  
and nations bow down to you;  
Be master of your brothers,  
and may your mother’s sons bow down to  
you.

Cursed be those who curse you,  
and blessed be those who bless you.”

<sup>30</sup>Jacob had scarcely left his father after Isaac had finished blessing him, when his brother Esau came back from his hunt. <sup>31</sup>Then he too prepared a dish, and bringing it to his father, he said, “Let my father sit up and eat some of his son’s game, that you may then give me your blessing.” <sup>32</sup>His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you?” He said, “I am your son, your firstborn son, Esau.” <sup>33</sup>Isaac trembled greatly. “Who was it, then,” he asked, “that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it all just before you came, and I blessed him. Now he is blessed!” <sup>34</sup>As he heard his father’s words, Esau burst into loud, bitter sobbing and said, “Father, bless me too!” <sup>35</sup>When Isaac said, “Your

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in order to receive the blessing intended for his brother. Because Isaac is losing his eyesight, he does not recognize Jacob, but questions the voice that sounds like Esau's. He blesses Jacob, assuring him of prosperity, political and military power, and divine protection.

The fourth step (vv. 30-41) brings together Isaac and Esau for the second time, when Esau returns after making the preparations his father directed. He and Isaac both realize what has happened, but it is too late to retract the blessing that has been given to Jacob. When Esau pleads for a blessing for himself, Isaac responds with the blessing of prosperity. He then announces that Esau will live a life of violence and subservience to his brother until he breaks free of him. Esau makes up his mind to kill his brother once their father is dead.

The fifth step (vv. 42-45) brings together Jacob and Rebekah for the second time. She urges him to leave at once and go to her brother Laban rather than risk being killed by Esau. She fears losing both of her sons at once: Jacob if Esau kills him, and Esau if he is condemned for killing his brother.

The sixth step (v. 46) takes place between Rebekah and Isaac. Rather than admit to her husband that she masterminded the deceitful events, she picks up the theme of 26:34-35: Esau's marriages outside the family have brought grief to his parents. Rebekah wants assurance that Jacob will marry within the family, to avoid further sorrow. Her request to send Jacob away has the added advantage of protecting the promise of children and land.

The seventh step (28:1-5) brings together Isaac and Jacob for the second time. Isaac formally sends Jacob to Rebekah's brother Laban to find a wife for himself. He repeats to Jacob the divine promise of land, children, and a nation in the name of his father Abraham, and Jacob sets out on the journey. This is the first time Jacob receives the promise; it comes from his father Isaac.

The episode brings out the deceptive aspect of Jacob's character even more strongly than the incident with the stew. Here Jacob deliberately lies to his father (at the encouragement

brother came here by a ruse and carried off your blessing," <sup>36</sup>Esau exclaimed, "He is well named Jacob, is he not! He has supplanted me twice! First he took away my right as firstborn, and now he has taken away my blessing." Then he said, "Have you not saved a blessing for me?" <sup>37</sup>Isaac replied to Esau: "I have already appointed him your master, and I have assigned to him all his kindred as his servants; besides, I have sustained him with grain and wine. What then can I do for you, my son?" <sup>38</sup>But Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me too, father!" and Esau wept aloud. <sup>39</sup>His father Isaac said in response:

"See, far from the fertile earth  
will be your dwelling;  
far from the dew of the heavens above!

<sup>40</sup>By your sword you will live,  
and your brother you will serve;  
But when you become restless,  
you will throw off his yoke from your  
neck."

<sup>41</sup>Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. Esau said to himself, "Let the time of mourning for my father come, so that I may kill my brother Jacob."

<sup>42</sup>When Rebekah got news of what her older son Esau had in mind, she summoned her younger son Jacob and said to him: "Listen! Your brother Esau intends to get his revenge by killing you. <sup>43</sup>So now, my son, obey me: flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, <sup>44</sup>and stay with him a while until your brother's fury subsides— <sup>45</sup>until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send for you and bring you back. Why should I lose both of you in a single day?"

### *Jacob Sent to Laban*

<sup>46</sup>Rebekah said to Isaac: "I am disgusted with life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob also should marry a Hittite woman, a native of the land, like these women, why should I live?"

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## CHAPTER 28

<sup>1</sup>Isaac therefore summoned Jacob and blessed him, charging him: “You shall not marry a Canaanite woman!”<sup>2</sup>Go now to Paddan-aram, to the home of your mother’s father Bethuel, and there choose a wife for yourself from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. <sup>3</sup>May God Almighty bless you and make you fertile, multiply you that you may become an assembly of peoples. <sup>4</sup>May God extend to you and your descendants the blessing of Abraham, so that you may gain possession of the land where you are residing, which he assigned to Abraham.”<sup>5</sup>Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way; he went to Paddan-aram, to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, and brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

<sup>6</sup>Esau noted that Isaac had blessed Jacob when he sent him to Paddan-aram to get himself a wife there, and that, as he gave him his blessing, he charged him, “You shall not marry a Canaanite woman,”<sup>7</sup> and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and gone to Paddan-aram. <sup>8</sup>Esau realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac,<sup>9</sup> so Esau went to Ishmael, and in addition to the wives he had, married Mahalath, the daughter of Abraham’s son Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

### *Jacob’s Dream at Bethel*

<sup>10</sup>Jacob departed from Beer-sheba and proceeded toward Haran. <sup>11</sup>When he came upon a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had already set. Taking one of the stones at the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. <sup>12</sup>Then he had a dream: a stairway rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God’s angels were going up and down on it. <sup>13</sup>And there was the LORD standing beside him and saying: I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants. <sup>14</sup>Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and through them you will

*continue*

of his mother) in order to get what he wants. It is true that the Lord intends for Jacob to win out over his brother. The means to this end are questionable, though, and Jacob’s deception will come back to haunt him. The incident also highlights the extent of Esau’s bitterness at his own situation. He arranges to marry one of Ishmael’s daughters, to exacerbate his parents’ displeasure with him. In addition, in this scene Isaac passes on the promise of descendants, land, and nation to his son Jacob. The event marks the successful completion of Isaac’s primary role: he has carried the promise forward to the next generation and entrusted it to the son chosen by God.

Here the narrative leaves Isaac and focuses on Jacob until it announces Isaac’s death in 35:27-29. We learn of Jacob’s journey to his uncle Laban, his marriages and the births of his children, the tensions between him and Laban, and his meeting with his brother Esau before he returns home. Twice on his journey, once on the way to Haran and once on the way back home, he encounters God.



In the ancient world every achievement and every failure were seen as a direct result of some form of divine intervention. In the Old Testament the **words of blessing** became a tool that called forth divine intervention in the life of an individual or in the larger world. Those who uttered the words were calling down God’s active involvement. The words themselves took on a life of their own, actually affecting the person being blessed; their power was not magic but was the result of God’s life in them. Because of this divine power, a blessing could not be reversed or taken away. The same was true for **words that cursed**. The deathbed scene with Jacob and his sons illustrates that blessings are often associated with passing on the headship of the family, usually reserved for the firstborn. Throughout Scripture, blessings are also associated with acts of creation

(Gen 1:22, 28), times of crisis (1 Sam 2:20-21; Ruth 4:11-12), protection on a journey (Gen 24:7; Tob 5:17), periods of national transition (Lev 26:3-13), and proclamations of the kingdom of God (Matt 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-26).

## THE ANCESTRAL STORY PART 3: JACOB AND HIS WIVES

Genesis 28:10–36:43

### 28:10-22 Jacob at Bethel

Just as in the report of the servant's journey to find a wife for Isaac, here we learn only the essentials of Jacob's trip, except for one event that takes place along the way. He stops for the night, apparently out in the open, at a place that has something special about it. There he has a dream in which the Lord gives Jacob the promise of descendants and land. Jacob received that promise from his father before setting out on his journey. Now he receives it directly from God. The deity's name is "LORD," the God of his father and grandfather. This identification makes it clear that, even though Jacob is probably sleeping at a shrine to a local deity, the God who speaks to him there is not the local god but the God who has cared for his family for several generations.

The Lord reiterates the promises of land, descendants, a nation, and divine blessing. When Jacob realizes that he has met the Lord he takes the stone pillow, sets it up vertically, and pours oil on it to designate it as holy because his head rested on it during his revelatory dream. It is thus a witness to the event (see Josh 24:27). Jacob does not build an altar, as his grandfather Abraham did to mark the places where he met the Lord. Instead, he consecrates the stone, then formally accepts the terms of his encounter with God. He names the place Bethel, or House of God, the place near where Abraham once built an altar (12:8).

This story has an element of the E strand in which dreams are an important means of divine communication with humans. Dreaming

spread to the west and the east, to the north and the south. In you and your descendants all the families of the earth will find blessing. <sup>15</sup>I am with you and will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you.

<sup>16</sup>When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he said, "Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!" <sup>17</sup>He was afraid and said: "How awesome this place is! This is nothing else but the house of God, the gateway to heaven!" <sup>18</sup>Early the next morning Jacob took the stone that he had put under his head, set it up as a sacred pillar, and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup>He named that place Bethel, whereas the former name of the town had been Luz.

<sup>20</sup>Jacob then made this vow: "If God will be with me and protect me on this journey I am making and give me food to eat and clothes to wear, <sup>21</sup>and I come back safely to my father's house, the LORD will be my God. <sup>22</sup>This stone that I have set up as a sacred pillar will be the house of God. Of everything you give me, I will return a tenth part to you without fail."

## CHAPTER 29

### Arrival in Haran

<sup>1</sup>After Jacob resumed his journey, he came to the land of the Kedemites. <sup>2</sup>Looking about, he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep huddled near it, for flocks were watered

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is an act beyond human control, which takes place in a realm we cannot access by our own efforts. We often gain valuable insights while dreaming; ancient people understood these as revelations from God.

### 29:1–30:24 Jacob's marriages

The narrative resumes with Jacob's arrival in the general area of his uncle's home. The plot follows the elements of the betrothal type scene. By looking at those elements we can see

from that well. A large stone covered the mouth of the well. <sup>3</sup>When all the shepherds were assembled there they would roll the stone away from the mouth of the well and water the sheep. Then they would put the stone back again in its place over the mouth of the well.

<sup>4</sup>Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" "We are from Haran," they replied. <sup>5</sup>Then he asked them, "Do you know Laban, son of Nahor?" "We do," they answered. <sup>6</sup>He inquired further, "Is he well?" "He is," they answered; "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." <sup>7</sup>Then he said: "There is still much daylight left; it is hardly the time to bring the animals home. Water the sheep, and then continue pasturing them." <sup>8</sup>They replied, "We cannot until all the shepherds are here to roll the stone away from the mouth of the well; then can we water the flocks."

<sup>9</sup>While he was still talking with them, Rachel arrived with her father's sheep, for she was the one who tended them. <sup>10</sup>As soon as Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of Laban, he went up, rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well, and watered Laban's sheep. <sup>11</sup>Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. <sup>12</sup>Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative, Rebekah's son. So she ran to tell her father. <sup>13</sup>When Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him. After embracing and kissing him, he brought him to his house. Jacob then repeated to Laban all these things, <sup>14</sup>and Laban said to him, "You are indeed my bone and my flesh."

### ***Marriage to Leah and Rachel***

After Jacob had stayed with him a full month, <sup>15</sup>Laban said to him: "Should you serve me for nothing just because you are a relative of mine? Tell me what your wages should be." <sup>16</sup>Now Laban had two daughters; the older was called Leah, the younger Rachel. <sup>17</sup>Leah had dull eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. <sup>18</sup>Because Jacob loved Rachel, he answered, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." <sup>19</sup>Laban replied, "It is better to give her to you than to an-

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the story unfold, and can also compare and contrast Jacob's experience with that of Abraham's servant when he went to Haran in search of a wife for Isaac. Jacob arrives at a well that is covered with a large stone, surrounded by several flocks of sheep. Shepherds are with them; when Jacob asks if they know Laban he learns that Laban's daughter Rachel is arriving at that moment with her father's flock.

These details set the stage for a very different experience from that of Abraham's servant who came with a large retinue of gifts for Laban and his family. Jacob comes on the one hand as one sent by God and on the other as a fugitive. He brings nothing with him. Instead, Jacob offers his services, the first of which is to remove the stone from the well. He manages the stone singlehandedly, even though it is huge, because he is thrilled at the sight of Rachel. It is not clear whether he is responding to the sight of a relative or to an attractive young woman; perhaps to both. Then Jacob, instead of asking for water and receiving it from the woman, offers to water Laban's sheep. He further expresses his delight by tearfully kissing Rachel, a gesture of delight and gratitude at meeting his relative (v. 11).

True to the type scene, Rachel hurries to tell her father of Jacob's arrival. He greets the visitor and invites him into his home. Then the narrative tells us only that Jacob told the story of his adventures; it does not repeat Jacob's words as Abraham's servant did.

The arrangements for the betrothal proceed much more slowly here than with Abraham's servant. A month passes before the subject comes up, and then Jacob mentions it in response to Laban's offer to pay Jacob for his services. Jacob offers to work for Laban for seven years in exchange for Rachel's hand (29:18). (Jacob must work for the privilege of marrying Laban's daughter because he does not bring gifts with him, as did Abraham's servant.) The narrative points out that Rachel is the younger of Laban's two daughters, bringing into play the younger-older motif. Jacob meets his match when Laban gives him his older daughter Leah in marriage instead of

Rachel, then falls back on ancient tradition as his excuse for the deceitful arrangement. He assures Jacob that, after the customary seven days of celebration of the first marriage, Jacob may work seven more years for Rachel, and Jacob agrees.

Then the story picks up the barren mother type scene, and the competition model begins to unfold. Two women are married to the same husband; one has children and the other does not. The narrative highlights the divine action on behalf of Leah for her disfavored status. Leah bears four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. The names she gives the boys reflect her situation as the unloved wife. The note that she then stops bearing sons foreshadows further difficulties to come.

The request model of the barren mother type scene overlaps with the competition model when Rachel pleads desperately with Jacob to give her children in 30:1. But Jacob does not accept responsibility for her childlessness, and reminds her that children are gifts from God. In her despair she offers her maid Bilhah to Jacob, just as Sarah offered Hagar to Abraham. Rachel arranges that Bilhah will bear surrogate children for her; she clarifies her own maternal status by arranging to hold Bilhah's children on her own knees. The act of holding a child on one's knees legitimates him as the son of that parent (see 48:12 and 50:23). Bilhah bears two sons, whom Rachel names Dan and Naphtali, referring to the competition between her and Leah.

Not to be outdone, Leah then gives her maid Zilpah to Jacob (v. 9). Zilpah bears two sons, giving them names that suggest Leah's own good fortune: Gad and Asher. Jacob now has eight sons, but none by his favored wife Rachel. Leah's son Reuben offers his mother some mandrakes, known for their aphrodisiac qualities. When Rachel asks for some of them she learns of Leah's bitterness at her own unloved status, so Rachel makes a deal: Rachel will have the mandrakes, but Leah will spend the night with Jacob. Leah bears two more sons, whom she names Issachar and Zebulun, reflecting her awkward relationship with Jacob. The narrative

other man. Stay with me." <sup>20</sup>So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, yet they seemed to him like a few days because of his love for her.

<sup>21</sup>Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, that I may consummate my marriage with her, for my term is now completed." <sup>22</sup>So Laban invited all the local inhabitants and gave a banquet. <sup>23</sup>At nightfall he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he consummated the marriage with her. <sup>24</sup>Laban assigned his maidservant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maidservant. <sup>25</sup>In the morning, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban: "How could you do this to me! Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why did you deceive me?" <sup>26</sup>Laban replied, "It is not the custom in our country to give the younger daughter before the firstborn. <sup>27</sup>Finish the bridal week for this one, and then the other will also be given to you in return for another seven years of service with me."

<sup>28</sup>Jacob did so. He finished the bridal week for the one, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. <sup>29</sup>Laban assigned his maidservant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. <sup>30</sup>Jacob then consummated his marriage with Rachel also, and he loved her more than Leah. Thus he served Laban another seven years.

### ***Jacob's Children***

<sup>31</sup>When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he made her fruitful, while Rachel was barren. <sup>32</sup>Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben; for she said, "It means, 'The LORD saw my misery; surely now my husband will love me.'" <sup>33</sup>She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "It means, 'The LORD heard that I was unloved,' and therefore he has given me this one also"; so she named him Simeon. <sup>34</sup>Again she conceived and bore a son, and she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, since I have now borne him three sons"; that is why she named him Levi. <sup>35</sup>Once more she conceived and bore a son, and she said, "This time I will give thanks to the LORD"; therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing children.

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## CHAPTER 30

<sup>1</sup>When Rachel saw that she had not borne children to Jacob, she became envious of her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children or I shall die!” <sup>2</sup>Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, “Can I take the place of God, who has denied you the fruit of the womb?” <sup>3</sup>She replied, “Here is my maidservant Bilhah. Have intercourse with her, and let her give birth on my knees, so that I too may have children through her.” <sup>4</sup>So she gave him her maidservant Bilhah as wife, and Jacob had intercourse with her. <sup>5</sup>When Bilhah conceived and bore a son for Jacob, <sup>6</sup>Rachel said, “God has vindicated me; indeed he has heeded my plea and given me a son.” Therefore she named him Dan. <sup>7</sup>Rachel’s maidservant Bilhah conceived again and bore a second son for Jacob, <sup>8</sup>and Rachel said, “I have wrestled strenuously with my sister, and I have prevailed.” So she named him Naphtali.

<sup>9</sup>When Leah saw that she had ceased to bear children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as wife. <sup>10</sup>So Leah’s maidservant Zilpah bore a son for Jacob. <sup>11</sup>Leah then said, “What good luck!” So she named him Gad. <sup>12</sup>Then Leah’s maidservant Zilpah bore a second son to Jacob; <sup>13</sup>and Leah said, “What good fortune, because women will call me fortunate!” So she named him Asher.

<sup>14</sup>One day, during the wheat harvest, Reuben went out and came upon some mandrakes in the field which he brought home to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” <sup>15</sup>Leah replied, “Was it not enough for you to take away my husband, that you must now take my son’s mandrakes too?” Rachel answered, “In that case Jacob may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son’s mandrakes.” <sup>16</sup>That evening, when Jacob came in from the field, Leah went out to meet him. She said, “You must have intercourse with me, because I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So that night he lay with her, <sup>17</sup>and God listened to Leah; she conceived and bore a fifth son to Jacob. <sup>18</sup>Leah

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then reports that she also bears a daughter whom she names Dinah. No interpretation of her name or other details are given about Dinah.

Only after Jacob already has ten sons and a daughter does Rachel bear a son (v. 22). The narrative specifies that God remembers her; that is, God focuses attention on her. She bears Joseph, whose name suggests both removing her past shame and adding hope and joy to her future. By now eleven sons are born to Jacob and his four women: six to Leah, two to each of the two maids Bilhah and Zilpah, and one to Rachel. In addition he has one daughter by Leah. Throughout the narrative, all the women compete with one another for Jacob’s love and for children. While the humans strive to control the situation, the narrative repeats frequently that it is God who gives children, assuring that the promise of descendants moves forward into the next generation.



then said, “God has given me my wages for giving my maidservant to my husband”; so she named him Issachar. <sup>19</sup>Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob; <sup>20</sup>and Leah said, “God has brought me a precious gift. This time my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons”; so she named him Zebulun. <sup>21</sup>Afterwards she gave birth to a daughter, and she named her Dinah.

<sup>22</sup>Then God remembered Rachel. God listened to her and made her fruitful. <sup>23</sup>She conceived and bore a son, and she said, “God has removed my disgrace.” <sup>24</sup>She named him Joseph, saying, “May the LORD add another son for me!”

**EXPLORING LESSON ONE**

1. What is divinely revealed to Rebekah about her difficult pregnancy (25:23)?

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2. What problems do you see with parental favoritism of one child over another (25:28)?

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3. If you have felt taken advantage of by a family member or close friend (25:27-34), how have you moved beyond this situation into forgiveness?

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4. What does Isaac's blessing promise to Jacob (27:27-29)?

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5. Why might the story of Isaac, Rebekah, and Abimelech (26:1-31) seem familiar to readers of earlier sections of Genesis? (See 20:1-18; 21:22-34.)

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6. Jacob has a special dream during his journey to his Uncle Laban's (28:10-22). Describe a dream that has carried special meaning in your own life. Consider your deepest desires as a form of dreams also.

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7. In Genesis 28:16, Jacob realizes God's presence only in hindsight. When has such a realization happened to you?

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8. Why does Jacob's plan to marry Rachel (29:14-30) prove to be more difficult to achieve than Abraham's earlier plan to win a wife for Isaac (24:1-67)?

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9. How does Laban prove to be as deceitful as Jacob (29:14b-30)? (See 27:1-29.)

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10. Read the account describing the birth of Jacob's children (29:31-30:24). How does this account highlight the role of God in their family's growth?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

### *Prayer*

*“Truly, the LORD is in this place and I did not know it!” (Gen 28:16)*

You are the God of surprises, coming to us in the most ordinary of places and through events that have the power to draw us to you. Gift us with the wisdom of awareness and wonder in your presence. This day we offer thanksgiving, especially for . . .