

Jacob Goes to Haran



Scripture Reference: [Genesis 28:10-33:20](#)

Suggested Theme: God comforts and encourages us in hard times. Sometimes God uses bad things that happen to us to teach and bless us.

Memory Verse: “And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” [Romans 8:28, ICB](#)

Story Overview:

Having deceived his brother and father, Jacob escaped to relatives in Haran. During the journey, Jacob dreamed of a stairway between heaven and earth on which angels were ascending and descending to the Lord at the top. God reassured Jacob of his blessing and promise. Undeserving as he was, this promise sustained Jacob over the next twenty years as he worked for his uncle Laban and built a family and wealth. Eventually, Jacob returned to his home and was surprised to find that his brother, Esau, welcomed him with open arms.

Background Study:

In the earlier lesson, [Jacob, Esau and the Birthright](#), we were first introduced to the character of Jacob. He had lived a life filled with jealousy and deception that culminated in him stealing his brother’s expected position as leader of the family. Even though Jacob moved away to escape retribution, trickery seemed to shadow his steps.

Our natural reaction to Jacob’s story might be that he did not deserve God’s blessing and protection. The story of Jacob, however, reminds us that God’s plans are not dependent on man’s behaviour. After all, NONE of us deserves to represent God in any of the ways that He asks us to. The people of God are not perfect heroes, and children should not be under the impression that they are. Instead, human imperfection is the backdrop of God’s perfection and amazing work.

This lesson picks up where the story of [Jacob, Esau, and the Birthright](#) left off. After deceiving his father and brother, Jacob left his family home and travelled north to his mother’s relatives in Haran. The official reason was that he was looking for a wife, but it was evident that he was fleeing his brother’s wrath. In the following years, many important events took place.

1. Jacob Encountered God at Bethel

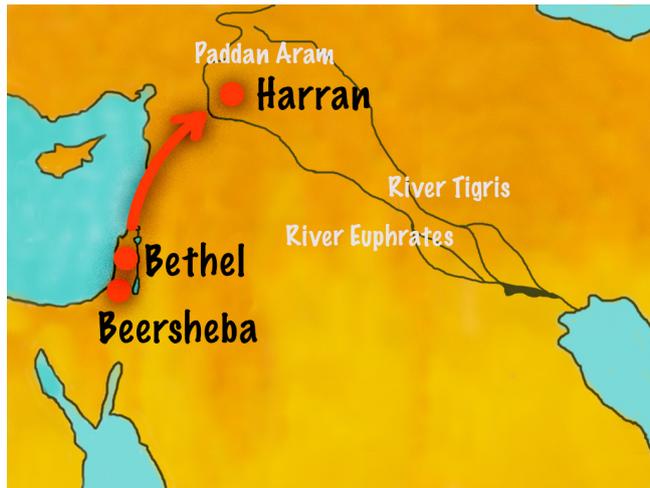
([Genesis 28:10-22](#)) As Jacob fled from his family in Beersheba, he stopped along the way one night to sleep. At this time, he dreamed of a stairway stretching from earth to heaven. God was at the top of the ladder, and angels were going up and down it. Here, God restated the blessing He had previously given to Abraham

and Isaac. Jacob recognised the magnitude of this promise, built a pillar there and called the place “Bethel.” Jacob also struck what appears to be a bargain with God. If God took care of him as he said, then he vowed to give God a tenth of what he had. It wasn’t until many, many years later that a “tithe” became part of the Mosaic Law ([Leviticus 27:30-32](#)).

2. Trickery between Jacob’s Family in Haran

([Genesis 29-31](#))

Jacob had always been the one who deceived, but once he connected with his family in Haran, he learned what it meant to be the recipient of deception. Jacob struck a bargain to work for his uncle Laban for seven years in exchange for marrying Laban’s beautiful younger daughter, Rachel. Seven years later, Laban switched the bride at the wedding, so Jacob married Laban’s older daughter, Leah, by mistake. Jacob was allowed to marry Rachel, too, under the condition that he worked another seven years.



Bargains, tricks and deception all played a part in the lives of Laban, Jacob and Jacob’s wives. Jacob’s family grows, but with much angst and sorrow. His wives were jealous of each other and even bargained over the nights they spent with their husband. They connive to have children with Jacob and even offer their servant girls to him. Twenty years after leaving his home, Jacob had two wives, two maidservants who mothered some of his children, eleven sons and one daughter. (His last son, Benjamin, was born after he returned to the place of his birth.)

God commanded Jacob to leave and return to his home, but Laban attempted to squeeze even more years of work out of him. Jacob used his knowledge of animal husbandry to trick Laban and accumulate large herds of animals.

Jacob secretly left his father-in-law’s lands to return to his home. As if all of the earlier trickery was not enough, Rachel even stole from her father on the way out.

An angry Laban followed. He and Jacob finally make a kind of treaty. Laban then returned to Haran, and Jacob’s family continued on their journey. Jacob’s attention then turned to reuniting with his brother, Esau.

3. Jacob returned and Made Peace with His Brother:

([Genesis 32:1-33:11](#))

Knowing he had previously treated his brother terribly, Jacob now carefully planned all sorts of appeasements leading up to meeting Esau again. He sent gifts and a request to be reunited. Jacob sends his wives, concubines and children on ahead to Esau while he stays behind. It appears he is willing to use his family as a cushion for his own protection.

In this short time, Jacob was alone, and he encountered God again. At night, he wrestled with someone referred to by various designations, such as an angel, a man and even God himself. At this time, Jacob’s

name was changed to “Israel” because, as the angel said, “You have struggled with God and with men and have overcome.” This is the more familiar name when we think of the “Nation of Israel” and the “12 Sons or Tribes of Israel.”

When Jacob and Esau finally met up the next day, Esau welcomed Jacob with open arms.

4. Jacob’s Family Made Their Home in the Land of Canaan:

([Genesis 33:12-20](#)) Jacob was still careful not to settle too close to his brother. He made his home in the land of Canaan in a place called Shechem. Eventually, God would renew His promise to Jacob and tell him to remain in Canaan but settle in Bethel, the place where Jacob had had the staircase dream. ([Genesis 35:1-15](#)).

Way to Introduce the Story:

Have a number of different types of pillows and let the children vote on which is the most comfortable one to sleep on. Be sure to include a large stone among the choices. Discuss the comforts and discomforts of each choice. “Remember how Jacob tricked his father and brother in last week’s story? Jacob’s parents sent him on a trip to see his relatives in Haran. They wanted him to find a wife there. On the first night of the journey, Jacob slept out in the open. He used a stone for his pillow. After all of the bad things that Jacob did, he was about to learn some good lessons from the Lord.”

The Story:

Jacob had tricked his father and brother. His brother was so angry that he wanted to kill him. Jacob’s mother told him to leave and visit their family in Haran. He could find a wife there, and someday, when his brother was no longer angry, maybe he could come back.

Jacob stopped for the night on his way to Haran. He slept on the ground. For a pillow, he lay his head on a stone.

When you sleep, do you ever dream? Sometimes, we have good dreams, and sometimes, we have scary dreams. But Jacob had a *beautiful* dream. He dreamed that a stairway or ladder reached from the ground all the way into heaven! And on that long stairway, he saw angels going up and down! And who do you think was at the top of the ladder? God!

Jacob heard God say, “I am the God of your grandfather Abraham and your father Isaac. The ground you are lying on is yours. I will give it to you and your children and your children’s children. You will be the father of a great nation. There will be many children and they will populate this land.” God also promised to be with Jacob’s family and protect them.

The next morning, Jacob got up very early and placed the stone on which he’d been sleeping on its side. He poured olive oil on it and named the special place Bethel. He prayed, “Oh God if you protect me and give me food and shelter on this journey, I will always remember you as the true God. This place will be a special place of remembrance.”

Jacob now knew that God wanted him to be good. He would be the leader of a very big family, and someone from his family would bring blessings to the whole world. He knew he was not alone—God was with him.

When Jacob finally arrived in Haran, all his relatives were happy to see him. Jacob met his Uncle Laban’s beautiful daughter, Rachel, and her older sister, Leah. Rachel was beautiful.

Jacob worked hard helping Laban tend his sheep. After he had been there a month, Laban wanted to know how much to pay Jacob. Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel, so he had an idea. Jacob told Laban that he would work for him for seven whole years, and at the end of that time, Laban could give Rachel to Jacob as a wife. Laban agreed.

After seven years, the time came for Jacob and Rachel to get married. Do you remember how Jacob had been deceitful and played a trick on his father, Isaac? Now Jacob was the one who was tricked! Jacob thought he was marrying Rachel, but Laban switched the brides. Instead of Rachel, Laban gave his older daughter, Leah, to Jacob. Jacob could not see Leah, so he thought he was marrying Rachel. The next morning, when the sun rose, Jacob saw that his new wife was Leah!

Jacob was very angry with Laban, but Laban said it was unfair for the younger sister to marry before the older one. Then Laban had an idea. He would let Jacob marry Rachel, too. Men in those days sometimes had more than one wife. Laban said Jacob could marry Rachel now, but he would have to work another seven years in exchange. Jacob agreed.

Rachel and Jacob got married, and Jacob always loved Rachel the most. As the years went by, Jacob's family grew. Leah had a number of children, but many years passed before Rachel finally had children.

Eventually, Jacob became the father of twelve sons and one daughter. He did not always obey God. Some of the children were born to his wives, and some were born to his wives' servants.

Laban did not like it when Jacob said God wanted him to take his family and return to where he had come from. Jacob agreed to stay and work for a few more years. Jacob only had a few sheep, but he tricked Laban and ensured he had many sheep before leaving. God told Jacob it was time to go. Laban was angry, but Jacob and his family left anyway.

Before Jacob arrived at his old home, he had a visit from God (in the form of an angel). The angel wrestled with Jacob. The angel told Jacob that he was a fighter, so his name would no longer be "Jacob" but would be changed to a new name that suits a fighter. His new name would be called "Israel."

Jacob was very afraid to meet his brother Esau again. Esau had been very angry with him all those years ago. Jacob sent servants ahead of him with many gifts for Esau. Jacob even bowed down to Esau when he saw him.

But Jacob did not need to be worried. Esau ran up to his brother and hugged him. He was so happy to see Jacob.

Jacob and his family now made their home in nearby Shechem.

When Jacob had a dream about the staircase, God told him that He would watch over him. Sometimes, good things happened in Jacob's life, and sometimes, bad things happened. But God kept his promise and cared for Jacob in good and bad times.

God took care of Jacob, and God can take care of you.

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

[Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.](#)

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

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Review:

- Why did Jacob leave his family's home and go to Haran? (Esau wanted to kill him for stealing his family's blessing)
- What did Jacob use for a pillow one night when he was travelling to Haran? (A smooth stone)
- What did Jacob see in his dream? (A ladder between heaven and earth, with angels going up and down. God was at the top of the ladder.)
- What were the names of Laban's daughters? (Rachel and Leah)
- After working for seven years, Laban said Jacob could marry Rachel. What happened? (Laban tricked him into marrying Leah instead)
- What happened when Jacob found out that he had been tricked? (He married Rachel, too and then worked another seven years)
- What new name did God give to Jacob? (Israel)
- What happened when Jacob returned to meet his brother, Esau, again? (Esau welcomed him)
- What were some of the sinful things people in this story did? (stole, lied, deceived, etc.)
- Why do you think God still chose Jacob and his family to be His people, even though they did so many sinful things? (God loved them, God works with sinful people, God is forgiving, God sometimes works with sinful people so His goodness and power are more evident, etc.)

Reflection:

- What part of this story do you find most interesting?
- Have you ever had an incredible dream like Jacob's? Have you had a dream about God or Jesus before?
- Have you ever been tricked or lied to? How does that feel?
- Why does God want us to be honest with each other?
- Jacob and his family often behaved in ungodly ways, but God still kept His promise to Abraham and wanted to make his family a great nation. God forgives us when we do something sinful but repent. What does it mean to forgive?
- Is there someone you want to forgive like God?
- Is there something you want to ask God to forgive you for?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [Shake the Devil Off Song](#)
- [1-2-3 The Devil's After Me Song](#)
- [My God is So Big Song](#)
- [Father Abraham.](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- [How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.](#)
- [Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.](#)

Activities:

- Create an obstacle course and have the children travel as Jacob did. You could use masking tape on the floor or use furniture and other obstacles. Include items to represent the journey. Use your own imagination, but you might include the following:
 - Set up a ladder in the room. Have the children draw or make angels and place them on the steps.
 - Walk outside and let the children find a stone they think would be a comfortable pillow. Use a paper or a real rock for the children to lie their heads on while listening to the story.
 - Encourage children to share some of the dreams they have had.
- Interview: Put a towel, sheet, or piece of cloth on the head of one of the children so that they can assume the role of Jacob. You or one of the children can play the role of a reporter, and you and the children can ask Jacob questions.
- Game to Play: One child covers his or her head and face with a white cloth or bridal veil (like Leah), and the groom has to guess who it is.
- Discussion: Children share about bad things that have happened in their lives and what lessons they have learned from them. Adults should never provide glib answers to children's genuine hurts. Remember, sometimes the lesson is "God loves me and understands me." [Romans 8:28](#) is a good verse to guide the discussion.
- Maze to print. "Help Unite Jacob and Esau." [Difficult](#) [Medium](#) [Easy](#)

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

Crafts:

- Paint rocks.
- Make angels for a craft project.

- Have children make puppets and perform a show to retell the story.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. [Free printables for this story.](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page Jacob and Esau and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page Jacob's Dream and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page Rachel and Leah and puzzle worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page "Your Name Shall Be Israel" activities \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page of Romans 8:28 \(Teacher Help\)](#)
- [Game: Ideas for an indoor obstacle course \(Celebrating with kids\)](#)
- [Printable maze for Jacob's journey back to Esau](#)

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Date

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