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BIBLE ADVENTURES SCRIPT:

A2193 ~ Jacob Moves to Canaan.

Welcome to Bible Adventures. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow. Jesus is Lord of all.

The rivalry between Jacob's two wives continued through the early years of their marriage. Leah and Rachel struggled against one other to gain Jacob's affection and be the one who produced the greater number of children. When the Lord saw that Leah wasn't loved by Jacob, He allowed her to bear a number of sons, while Rachel bore none.

Each wife had what the other wanted: Rachel had love but wanted children and Leah had children but wanted love. Leah expressed her longing for Jacob's love in the names she gave her first three sons: Reuben: he has seen my misery, Simeon: God hears me and Levi: attached, which is an indication of Leah's hope that Jacob would become more 'attached' to her after the birth of her third son. Levi in turn grew up and became the ancestor of the Israelite clan, the Levites, who God appointed as the priestly line of Israel.

After the birth of her fourth son, Leah seemed to have become more content and thankful, for she named him 'Judah', meaning 'I will praise the Lord.' Judah became the ancestor of the royal line of Judah, from which came King David and eventually the Messiah, God's Son, Jesus Christ Himself.

As childless Rachel became more and more jealous of her sister, she reverted to the same strategy Sarah had used with Abraham. She offered her maidservant to Jacob so that she would have children by her. According to ancient custom, the servant's children would legally be regarded as Rachel's. And in this way, Rachel could build a family for herself. Rachel's servant had two sons to Jacob: Dan meaning 'he has justified' and Naphtali, meaning 'my struggle'.

Not to be outdone, Leah then offered her maidservant to Jacob, who also had two sons: Gad meaning 'good fortune' and Asher meaning 'I am happy'. Leah herself had two more sons: Issachar meaning 'reward' and Zebulun meaning 'honour'. Leah also had a daughter called Dinah.

Then by God's grace, Rachel was allowed to have a son whom she named Joseph, meaning 'God will add to me', because Rachel immediately wanted the Lord to give her a 2nd son. By giving Rachel a son at all, God took away her disgrace before others, because in those days and culture, the inability to have children was considered to be a sign of God's disfavour.

If Leah and Rachel had both learnt to be content with what God had given them, there would have been much less strife in Jacob's family. Leah had children and Rachel had love. Leah could have saved herself much anguish in her lifetime by willingly marrying Jacob when knowing that he loved Rachel first and very dearly. Some decisions in life have consequences that last a very very long time.

Nevertheless, God used these 2 wives and their servants to produce the 12 tribes of Israel, which would ultimately become a channel of blessing to the whole world.

Our drama today joins Jacob just after the birth of Rachel's baby boy.

After Jacob had served Laban 7 years for Rachel, Jacob spoke to Laban about returning back to Canaan. Laban recognised that having Jacob working for him brought Laban great material blessing, so he was very reluctant to let Jacob go. He offered to pay Jacob wages. However, Jacob had a scheme as a reward for staying. He asked for all the mixed coloured sheep and mixed coloured goats. Usually most sheep are all white and most goats are all dark. Jacob was only asking for a small portion of Laban's flocks. So Laban, thinking this to be a good bargain, agreed.

But ever-deceptive Laban secretly removed all the mixed coloured animals from his flocks, and greatly reduced Jacob's share. But Jacob had a plan to increase the number of spotted animals by birth and so over a 6-year period, Jacob's flocks increased enormously while Laban's flocks decreased. This was God's doing and Jacob had technically kept his agreement.

When Laban's sons saw that Jacob's flocks were much larger than their father's, they were unhappy about the wealth distribution that was now occurring. Laban's sons had become a problem. They were jealous of Jacob and implied that Jacob was stealing from Laban. But Jacob hadn't stolen any of Laban's animals. The envy of Laban's sons distorted the truth and turned it into a lie. The brothers then turned Laban against Jacob. Before that, Laban had been quite happy with the arrangement that he had made with Jacob.

God wants to deliver us all from the power and effect of the enemy. In Titus, Chapter 3, the Apostle Paul said: "We ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another." Envy is no small sin. It put Jesus on the cross. In Matthew, Chapter 27, it says: "For he (that's Pilate) knew that they (the chief priests and the elders) had handed Him over because of envy." This shows that envy has no mercy and no limits. In James, Chapter 3, it says: "Where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." Envy co-exists with all types of wickedness.

What can we do to replace envy in our lives? First we need to confess our envious thoughts and words to God, asking for His forgiveness for them and all other wrong things that we have done. Nothing less than completely giving ourselves to God and asking for Him to save us through Jesus for now and for all eternity is sufficient. Ask that God's Holy Spirit will truly indwell and guide you in all matters of faith and practice. Thank the Lord for His precious salvation from all sin and His love and peace now within us. Then pray for God's blessings to be on those that we have harmed in any way in the past.

When Laban turned against Jacob, God stepped in. The Lord spoke to Jacob and told him to return to his family in Canaan. Again, God promised to be with them. Jacob consulted his wives and they all agreed to go to Canaan. For once, Leah and Rachel agreed on something, as they both believed their father Laban was now an enemy. But they didn't seem to understand that once they married Jacob, their inheritance rights from their father Laban had ceased.

Jacob had been with Laban now for 20 years. The family set out while Laban was away shearing his sheep and they didn't tell Laban that they were leaving. Jacob took everything that belonged to him and fled across the Euphrates River. In Genesis, Chapter 31, it says Jacob headed for the mountains of Gilead some 300 miles away. His family was mounted on camels, which was an indication of the wealth that he now held and the speed that they wanted to travel at.

Laban was furious when he found out that Jacob had gone. He stopped shearing his sheep and he chased after Jacob with his trained men. But God warned Laban in a dream not to harm Jacob. This shows that Laban had evil intentions towards Jacob. It took Laban 7 days to catch up with Jacob. The sizes of Jacob's and Laban's flocks and herds meant that Jacob and Laban didn't live close together. But why did Jacob flee to Canaan when Laban wasn't around?

It was because Laban kept changing the terms of the wages that he would pay Jacob so he could give himself the advantage. Jacob feared that if he left while Laban was watching, Laban would send him away empty-handed. This was confirmed to Jacob when Laban and his men caught up with Jacob's family, flocks and servants. Laban claimed that everything Jacob had was really his; but this was an untruthful and mean-spirited thing to say, especially after all the work Jacob had done for him. Jacob's fear and deceptive departure shows he still lacked confidence in God and His promise. Instead, he relied more on his own wisdom and ability. Jacob didn't have an indwelling of the Holy Spirit the same way as New Testament believers in Christ have had ever since Pentecost.

Do you know that there's a big difference between the Old Testament Covenant established with Abraham and the New Testament covenant introduced by the Lord Jesus? In the Old Testament, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was selective and temporary. In those days, the people anticipated the coming of Christ through animal sacrifices, a priesthood and the temples build for the sole purposes of worshipping their Creator God. In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit was given after Jesus returned to heaven to work in the hearts of people to enlighten, convict and to lead them to believe the message of Jesus, the world's Redeemer from sin.

Faith in the true God was the necessary condition for salvation in the Old Testament, as well as in the New. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was almost exclusively focused on the nation of Israel and selective in the types of ministry that He had. God's Spirit, however, came with new and fuller ministries after Pentecost in the New Testament, just as God's displays of grace in the Old Testament were dim compared to the grace that flooded the world when Christ came.

In John's Gospel, Chapter 1, it says: "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." And in Titus, Chapter 2: "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to *all* men."

What privileged people believers in the Lord Jesus have been since the time of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured at on Christ's followers! But at times, can we too be like Jacob, who lacked confidence in God and His promises? When things are going well, yes, it's easy to have faith in God and trust His leading in our lives. But when everything seems to be going wrong, does our faith in Him waver? Will we tough things through, praying to Him moment by moment? Or will we go back to relying on ourselves and how the world deals with things? All our tests in life rely on our determination to be loyal to Christ, no matter what! And in Jesus' Name, we have the power and forbearance to be able to do so!

In Proverbs, Chapter 3, Verses 5-7, it says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way. Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are; simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong."

The drama is from The Bible In Living Sound.

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