

References for *Life and Ministry Meeting Workbook*

MARCH 2-8

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS 22-23

"God Put Abraham to the Test"

(Genesis 22:1, 2) Now after this the true God put Abraham to the test, and he said to him: "Abraham!" to which he replied: "Here I am!"² Then he said: "Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac, and travel to the land of Mo-ri'ah and offer him up there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will designate to you."

w12 1/1 23 ¶4-6

Why Did God Ask Abraham to Sacrifice His Son?

Consider Jehovah's words to Abraham: "Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac, and . . . offer him up as a burnt offering." (Genesis 22:2) Notice that Jehovah referred to Isaac as the son "whom you so love." Jehovah knew how precious Isaac was to Abraham. God also knew how He felt about his Son, Jesus. Jehovah loved Jesus so dearly that he twice spoke from heaven, directly referring to Jesus as "my Son, the beloved."—Mark 1:11; 9:7.

Note, too, that Jehovah's request to Abraham included the word "please." One Bible scholar suggests that God's use of this word indicates that "the LORD appreciates the costliness of what he is asking." As we can imagine, that request would have grieved Abraham deeply; in a similar way, we can barely imagine the intense pain that Jehovah must have felt as he watched his beloved Son suffer and die. It was undoubtedly the greatest pain Jehovah had ever experienced or ever will experience.

Really, then, although we may recoil at the thought of what Jehovah asked Abraham to do,

we are wise to remember that Jehovah did not allow that faithful patriarch to go through with the sacrifice. He spared Abraham the worst loss a parent can suffer; he protected Isaac from death. Yet, Jehovah did not shield "his own Son but delivered him up for us all." (Romans 8:32) Why did Jehovah submit himself to such a terrible ordeal? He did so in order that "we might gain life." (1 John 4:9) What a powerful reminder of God's love for us! Are we not moved to show our love for him in return?

(Genesis 22:9-12) Finally they reached the place that the true God had indicated to him, and Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac hand and foot and put him on the altar on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.¹¹ But Jehovah's angel called to him from the heavens and said: "Abraham, Abraham!" to which he answered: "Here I am!"¹² Then he said: "Do not harm the boy, and do not do anything at all to him, for now I do know that you are God-fearing because you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me."

(Genesis 22:15-18) And Jehovah's angel called to Abraham a second time from the heavens,¹⁶ saying: "'By myself I swear,' declares Jehovah, 'that because you have done this and you have not withheld your son, your only one, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand on the seashore, and your offspring will take possession of the gate of his enemies. ¹⁸ And by means of your offspring all nations of the earth will obtain a blessing for themselves because you have listened to my voice.'"

w12 10/15 23 ¶6

Obey God and Benefit From His Sworn Promises

6 For the benefit of sinful mankind, Jehovah God has also made use of oaths by using expressions like “‘As I am alive,’ is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.” (Ezek. 17:16) The Bible describes more than 40 different occasions when Jehovah God made sworn oaths. Perhaps the best-known example was in God’s dealings with Abraham. Over a period of many years, Jehovah had made several covenant promises to Abraham that when combined show that the promised Seed would descend from Abraham through his son Isaac. (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:5, 18; 21:12) Then Jehovah put Abraham to a severe test, commanding him to offer up his beloved son. Without delay, Abraham obeyed and was about to sacrifice Isaac when an angel of God stopped him. Then God made this oath: “By myself I do swear . . . that by reason of the fact that you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only one, I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore; and your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. And by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened to my voice.” —Gen. 22:1-3, 9-12, 15-18.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(**Genesis 22:5**) Abraham now said to his servants: “You stay here with the donkey, but the boy and I will go over there and worship and return to you.”

w16.02 11 ¶13

Jehovah Called Him “My Friend”

13 Before parting from the servants who accompanied them, Abraham said: “You stay here with the donkey, but *the boy and I* will go over there and worship and *return to you*.” (Gen. 22:5)

What did Abraham mean? Was he lying to his servants, telling them that Isaac would return when Abraham knew that Isaac was to be sacrificed? No. The Bible gives us some insight into what Abraham was thinking. (**Read Hebrews 11:19.**) Abraham “reasoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead.” Yes, Abraham believed in the resurrection. He knew that Jehovah had revived his reproductive powers and those of Sarah in their old age. (Heb. 11:11, 12, 18) Abraham realized that nothing was impossible for Jehovah. So he was confident that whatever happened on that challenging day, his beloved son would be restored to him so that all of Jehovah’s promises could be fulfilled. No wonder Abraham is called “the father of all those having faith”!

(**Genesis 22:12**) Then he said: “Do not harm the boy, and do not do anything at all to him, for now I do know that you are God-fearing because you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me.”

it-1 853 ¶5-6

Foreknowledge, Foreordination

Selective exercise of foreknowledge. The alternative to predestinarianism, the selective or discretionary exercise of God’s powers of foreknowledge, would have to harmonize with God’s own righteous standards and be consistent with what he reveals of himself in his Word. In contrast with the theory of predestinarianism, a number of texts point to an examination by God of a situation then current and a decision made on the basis of such examination.

Thus, at Genesis 11:5-8 God is described as directing his attention earthward, surveying the situation at Babel, and, at that time, determining the action to be taken to break up the unrighteous project there. After wickedness developed at Sodom and Gomorrah, Jehovah advised Abraham of his decision to investigate (by means of his angels) to “see whether they

act altogether according to the outcry over it that has come to me, and, if not, *I can get to know it.*” (Ge 18:20-22; 19:1) God spoke of ‘becoming acquainted with Abraham,’ and after Abraham went to the point of attempting to sacrifice Isaac, Jehovah said, “For *now I do know* that you are God-fearing in that you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me.”—Ge 18:19; 22:11, 12; compare Ne 9:7, 8; Ga 4:9.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 22:1-18) Now after this the true God put Abraham to the test, and he said to him: “Abraham!” to which he replied: “Here I am!” ² Then he said: “Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac, and travel to the land of Mo-ri’ah and offer him up there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I will designate to you.” ³ So Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his servants along with him and his son Isaac. He split the wood for the burnt offering, and then he rose and traveled to the place that the true God indicated to him. ⁴ On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the place from a distance. ⁵ Abraham now said to his servants: “You stay here with the donkey, but the boy and I will go over there and worship and return to you.” ⁶ So Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and put it on his son Isaac. Then he took in his hands the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Then Isaac said to his father Abraham: “My father!” He replied: “Yes, my son!” So he continued: “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?” ⁸ To this Abraham said: “God himself will provide the sheep for the burnt offering, my son.” And both of them walked on together. ⁹ Finally they reached the place that the true God had indicated to him, and Abraham built an altar there and arranged the

wood on it. He bound his son Isaac hand and foot and put him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son. ¹¹ But Jehovah’s angel called to him from the heavens and said: “Abraham, Abraham!” to which he answered: “Here I am!” ¹² Then he said: “Do not harm the boy, and do not do anything at all to him, for now I do know that you are God-fearing because you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me.” ¹³ At that Abraham looked up, and there just beyond him was a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place Jeho’vah-jí’reh. This is why it is still said today: “In the mountain of Jehovah it will be provided.” ¹⁵ And Jehovah’s angel called to Abraham a second time from the heavens, ¹⁶ saying: “‘By myself I swear,’ declares Jehovah, ‘that because you have done this and you have not withheld your son, your only one, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply your offspring like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand on the seashore, and your offspring will take possession of the gate of his enemies. ¹⁸ And by means of your offspring all nations of the earth will obtain a blessing for themselves because you have listened to my voice.’”

MARCH 9-15

TREASURES FROM GOD’S WORD | GENESIS 24

“A Wife for Isaac”

(Genesis 24:2-4) Abraham said to his servant, the oldest one of his household, who was managing all he had: “Please put your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens

and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Ca'naan-ites, among whom I am dwelling. ⁴ You must go instead to my country and to my relatives and take a wife for my son, for Isaac."

wp16.3 14 ¶3

"I Am Willing to Go"

Abraham made Eliezer take an oath that he would not select a wife for Isaac from among the women of Canaan. Why? Because the Canaanites neither respected nor worshipped Jehovah God. Abraham knew that Jehovah intended in due time to punish those people for their wicked practices. Abraham did not want his beloved son, Isaac, to be bound to those people and their immoral ways. He also knew that his son had a vital role to play in fulfilling God's promises.—Genesis 15:16; 17:19; 24:2-4.

(Genesis 24:11-15) He had the camels kneel down at a well of water outside the city. It was about evening, the time when the women would go out to draw water. ¹² Then he said: "Jehovah the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success this day, and show your loyal love to my master Abraham. ¹³ Here I am standing at a spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ May it happen that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your water jar so that I may take a drink,' and who replies, 'Take a drink, and I will also water your camels,' let this be the one you choose for your servant Isaac; and by this let me know that you have shown your loyal love to my master." ¹⁵ Even before he finished speaking, Re-bek'ah, who was the daughter of Be-thu'el the son of Mil'cah the wife of Na'hor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

wp16.3 14 ¶4

"I Am Willing to Go"

Eliezer went on to tell his hosts that when he arrived at the well near Haran, he prayed to Jehovah God. He asked Jehovah, in effect, to choose the young woman for Isaac to marry. How? Eliezer asked God to ensure that the girl He wanted Isaac to wed would come to the well. When asked for a drink, she should volunteer not only to give Eliezer a drink but to water his camels as well. (Genesis 24:12-14) And who had come along and done precisely that? Rebekah! Imagine how she might have felt if she overheard the story Eliezer told her family members!

(Genesis 24:58) They called Re-bek'ah and said to her: "Will you go with this man?" She replied: "I am willing to go."

(Genesis 24:67) After that Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother. Thus he took Re-bek'ah as his wife; and he fell in love with her, and Isaac found comfort after the loss of his mother.

wp16.3 14 ¶6-7

"I Am Willing to Go"

Weeks earlier, Eliezer had raised that very issue with Abraham, asking: "What if the woman is unwilling to come with me?" Abraham had responded: "This will release you from your oath." (Genesis 24:39, 41) In the house of Bethuel too, the young woman's preferences mattered. Eliezer was so enthusiastic about the success of his mission that on the following morning, he asked if he could return to Canaan with Rebekah immediately. The family, however, wanted her to remain with them for at least another ten days. Finally, they resolved the matter this way: "Let us call the young woman and inquire of her." —Genesis 24:57.

Here, then, was a great crossroads in Rebekah's life. What would she say? Would she play on the sympathy of her father and brother, pleading for a release from this journey into the unknown?

Or would she view it as a privilege to have a part in events that were clearly being guided by Jehovah? When she answered, she revealed how she felt about this sudden, perhaps daunting, change in her life. She simply said: “I am willing to go.”—Genesis 24:58.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 24:19, 20) When she finished giving him a drink, she said: “I will also draw water for your camels until they are done drinking.” ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the drinking trough and ran again and again to the well to draw water, and she kept drawing water for all his camels.

wp16.3 12-13

“I Am Willing to Go”

One evening, after she had filled her jar, an elderly man ran up to meet her. He said to her: “Please give me a little sip of water from your jar.” It was such a modest request and so politely made! Rebekah could see that the man had traveled far. So she quickly swung her water jar from her shoulder and let the man drink, not a mere sip, but a real drink of the fresh, cool water. She noticed that he had a train of ten camels kneeling nearby and that the trough had not yet been filled to water them. She could see that his kind eyes were watching her attentively, and she wanted to be as generous as she could. So she said: “I will also draw water for your camels until they are done drinking.”—Genesis 24:17-19.

Note that Rebekah offered not merely to give the ten camels a drink but to water them until they were satisfied. If very thirsty, one camel might drink over 25 gallons (95 L) of water! If all ten camels were that thirsty, Rebekah faced hours of hard work. As matters turned out, it seems unlikely that the camels were extremely thirsty. But did Rebekah know that when she made her offer? No. She was willing, even eager, to work as hard as need be to show hospitality

to this elderly stranger. He accepted her offer. Then he watched her intently as she ran back and forth, filling and refilling her jar and emptying it into the trough again and again.—Genesis 24:20, 21.

wp16.3 13, ftn.

“I Am Willing to Go”

It was already evening. The account contains no indication that Rebekah was detained at the well for hours. It does not imply that her family was asleep by the time she finished or that anyone came to see why her errand was taking so long.

(Genesis 24:65) Then she asked the servant: “Who is that man there walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said: “It is my master.” So she took her veil to cover herself.

wp16.3 15 ¶3

“I Am Willing to Go”

Finally, the day came that we described at the outset of this article. As the caravan traversed the Negeb and twilight began to fall over the land, Rebekah saw a man out walking in the fields. He looked thoughtful, contemplative. “She quickly got down from the camel,” we read—perhaps not even waiting for the beast to kneel down—and she asked her guide: “Who is that man there walking in the field to meet us?” When she learned that it was Isaac, she covered her head with her shawl. (Genesis 24:62-65) Why? Evidently the gesture was a sign of respect for her future husband. That kind of submission may strike some today as old-fashioned. Really, though, men as well as women may take a lesson from Rebekah’s humility, for who of us does not need more of that lovely quality?

Bible Reading

(Genesis 24:1-21) Abraham was now old, advanced in years, and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in everything. ² Abraham said to his servant, the oldest one of his household,

who was managing all he had: "Please put your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by Jehovah, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Ca'naan-ites, among whom I am dwelling. ⁴ You must go instead to my country and to my relatives and take a wife for my son, for Isaac." ⁵ However, the servant said to him: "What if the woman is not willing to come with me to this land? Must I then return your son to the land from which you came?" ⁶ At this Abraham said to him: "See that you do not take my son there. ⁷ Jehovah the God of the heavens, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my relatives and who spoke with me and swore to me: 'To your offspring I am going to give this land,' he will send his angel ahead of you, and you will certainly take a wife for my son from there. ⁸ But if the woman is unwilling to come with you, you will be free from this oath. But you must not take my son there." ⁹ With that the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master and swore to him concerning this matter. ¹⁰ So the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking along all sorts of good things from his master. Then he went on his way to Mes-o-po-ta'mi-a, to the city of Na'hor. ¹¹ He had the camels kneel down at a well of water outside the city. It was about evening, the time when the women would go out to draw water. ¹² Then he said: "Jehovah the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success this day, and show your loyal love to my master Abraham. ¹³ Here I am standing at a spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴ May it happen that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your water jar so that I may take a drink,' and who replies, 'Take a

drink, and I will also water your camels,' let this be the one you choose for your servant Isaac; and by this let me know that you have shown your loyal love to my master." ¹⁵ Even before he finished speaking, Re-bek'ah, who was the daughter of Be-thu'el the son of Mil'-cah the wife of Na'hor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶ Now the young woman was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had had sexual relations with her. She went down to the spring, filled her water jar, and then came back up. ¹⁷ At once the servant ran to meet her and said: "Please give me a little sip of water from your jar." ¹⁸ In turn she said: "Drink, my lord." With that she quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she finished giving him a drink, she said: "I will also draw water for your camels until they are done drinking." ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the drinking trough and ran again and again to the well to draw water, and she kept drawing water for all his camels. ²¹ The whole time the man silently stared at her in amazement, wondering whether Jehovah had made his trip successful or not.

MARCH 16-22

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS 25-26

"Esau Sells His Birthright"

(Genesis 25:27, 28) As the boys got bigger, E'sau became a skilled hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a blameless man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ And Isaac loved E'sau because it meant game in his mouth, whereas Re-bek'-ah loved Jacob.

it-1 1242

Jacob

In contrast to his father's favorite son Esau, who was a wild, restless, wandering type of hunts-

man, Jacob is described as “a blameless [Heb., *tam*] man, dwelling in tents,” one who led a quiet pastoral life and was dependable to look after domestic affairs, one who was especially loved by his mother. (Ge 25:27, 28) This Hebrew word *tam* is used elsewhere to describe those approved of God. For example, “bloodthirsty men hate anyone blameless,” yet Jehovah gives assurance that “the future of [the blameless] man will be peaceful.” (Pr 29:10; Ps 37:37) The integrity keeper Job “proved to be blameless [Heb., *tam*] and upright.”—Job 1:1, 8; 2:3.

(Genesis 25:29, 30) On one occasion Jacob was boiling some stew when E’sau returned from the field exhausted. ³⁰ So E’sau said to Jacob: “Quick, please, give me some of the red stew that you have there, for I am exhausted!” That is why his name was E’dom.

(Genesis 25:31-34) To this Jacob said: “First sell me your right as firstborn!” ³² And E’sau continued: “Here I am about to die! What use is a birthright to me?” ³³ And Jacob added: “Swear to me first!” So he swore to him and sold his right as firstborn to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave E’sau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and he got up and went away. Thus E’sau despised the birthright.

w19.02 16 ¶11

Why Express Appreciation?

¹¹ Sadly, some Bible characters displayed a lack of appreciation. For example, although **Esau** was raised by parents who loved and respected Jehovah, he lacked appreciation for sacred things. **(Read Hebrews 12:16.)** How did his ungrateful attitude become evident? Esau rashly sold his birthright to his younger brother, Jacob, for a mere bowl of stew. (Gen. 25:30-34) Later, Esau bitterly regretted the choice he had made. But he had been ungrateful for what he had, so he had no basis for complaining when he did not receive the birthright blessing.

it-1 835

Firstborn, Firstling

From earliest times the firstborn son held an honored position in the family and was the one who succeeded to the headship of the household. He inherited a double portion of the father’s property. (De 21:17) Reuben was seated by Joseph at a meal according to his right as firstborn. (Ge 43:33) But the Bible does not always honor the firstborn by listing sons according to birth. The first place is often given to the most prominent or faithful of the sons rather than to the firstborn.—Ge 6:10; 1Ch 1:28; compare Ge 11:26, 32; 12:4; see BIRTHRIGHT; INHERITANCE.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 25:31-34) To this Jacob said: “First sell me your right as firstborn!” ³² And E’sau continued: “Here I am about to die! What use is a birthright to me?” ³³ And Jacob added: “Swear to me first!” So he swore to him and sold his right as firstborn to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave E’sau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and he got up and went away. Thus E’sau despised the birthright.

(Hebrews 12:16) and watch that among you there is no one who is sexually immoral nor anyone who does not appreciate sacred things, like E’sau, who gave up his rights as firstborn in exchange for one meal.

w17.12 15 ¶5-7

Questions From Readers

Now let us return to Hebrews 12:16, which reads: “Watch that among you there is no one who is sexually immoral nor anyone who does not appreciate sacred things, like Esau, who gave up his rights as firstborn in exchange for one meal.” What point was being made?

The apostle Paul was not here discussing the ancestry of the Messiah. He had just urged Christians to ‘make straight paths for their feet.’

Thus they would not ‘fail to obtain the undeserved kindness of God,’ which sadly could happen if they engaged in sexual immorality. (Heb. 12:12-16) If they did that, they would be like Esau. He failed to “appreciate sacred things,” and he literally gave in to what was profane.

Esau lived in patriarchal times, and he may even occasionally have had the privilege of offering sacrifices. (Gen. 8:20, 21; 12:7, 8; Job 1:4, 5) But with his fleshly bent of mind, Esau gave away all such privileges for a bowl of stew. He may have wanted to avoid the suffering foretold to come on Abraham’s offspring. (Gen. 15:13) Esau also showed himself inclined toward the profane, lacking appreciation for sacred things, by marrying two pagan women, to his parents’ grief. (Gen. 26:34, 35) What a contrast he was to Jacob, who made sure to marry a worshipper of the true God!—Gen. 28:6, 7; 29:10-12, 18.

(Genesis 26:7) When the men of the place kept asking about his wife, he would say: “She is my sister.” He was afraid to say, “She is my wife,” for he said, “The men of the place might kill me because of Re-bek’ah,” for she was beautiful in appearance.

it-2 245 ¶6 **Lie**

While malicious lying is definitely condemned in the Bible, this does not mean that a person is under obligation to divulge truthful information to people who are not entitled to it. Jesus Christ counseled: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, neither throw your pearls before swine, that they may never trample them under their feet and turn around and rip you open.” (Mt 7:6) That is why Jesus on certain occasions refrained from giving full information or direct answers to certain questions when doing so could have brought unnecessary harm. (Mt 15:1-6; 21:23-27; Joh 7:3-10) Evidently the course of Abra-

ham, Isaac, Rahab, and Elisha in misdirecting or in withholding full facts from nonworshippers of Jehovah must be viewed in the same light.—Ge 12:10-19; chap 20; 26:1-10; Jos 2:1-6; Jas 2:25; 2Ki 6:11-23.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 26:1-18) Now there was a famine in the land, in addition to the first famine that occurred in the days of Abraham, so that Isaac went to A-bim’e-lech king of the Phi-lis’tines, in Ge’rar. ² Then Jehovah appeared to him and said: “Do not go down to Egypt. Dwell in the land that I designate to you. ³ Reside as a foreigner in this land, and I will continue with you and bless you because to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will carry out the oath that I swore to your father Abraham: ⁴ ‘I will multiply your offspring like the stars of the heavens; and I will give to your offspring all these lands; and by means of your offspring, all nations of the earth will obtain a blessing for themselves,’ ⁵ on account of the fact that Abraham listened to my voice and continued to keep my requirements, my commands, my statutes, and my laws.” ⁶ So Isaac continued to dwell in Ge’rar. ⁷ When the men of the place kept asking about his wife, he would say: “She is my sister.” He was afraid to say, “She is my wife,” for he said, “The men of the place might kill me because of Re-bek’ah,” for she was beautiful in appearance. ⁸ After some time had passed, A-bim’e-lech king of the Phi-lis’tines was looking out of the window, and he saw Isaac displaying affection for Re-bek’ah his wife. ⁹ At once A-bim’e-lech called Isaac and said: “She is actually your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?” At this Isaac said to him: “I said it for fear I should die because of her.” ¹⁰ But A-bim’e-lech continued: “What have you done to us? One of

the people could easily have lain down with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us!" ¹¹ Then A·bim'e·lech commanded all the people, saying: "Anybody touching this man and his wife will surely be put to death!" ¹² And Isaac began to sow seed in that land, and in that year he reaped 100 times what he sowed, for Jehovah was blessing him. ¹³ The man became wealthy, and he continued to prosper until he became very wealthy. ¹⁴ He acquired flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and a large body of servants, and the Phi·lis'tines began to envy him. ¹⁵ So the Phi·lis'tines took soil and stopped up all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham. ¹⁶ A·bim'e·lech then said to Isaac: "Move from our neighborhood, for you have grown far stronger than we are." ¹⁷ So Isaac moved from there and encamped in the valley of Ge'rar and began dwelling there. ¹⁸ And Isaac again dug the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham but that the Phi·lis'tines had stopped up after Abraham's death, and he called them by the names that his father had given them.

MARCH 23-29

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS 27-28

"Jacob Obtains His Rightful Blessing"

(Genesis 27:6-10) And Re·bek'ah said to Jacob her son: "I just heard your father speaking to your brother E'sau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me some game and make me a tasty dish. Then let me eat so that I may bless you before Jehovah before my death.' ⁸ And now, my son, listen carefully and do what I am instructing you. ⁹ Go, please, to the herd and get me two of the best young goats from there so that I may prepare from them a tasty dish for your father, just the way he likes it.

¹⁰ Then take it to your father to eat, in order that he may bless you before his death."

w04 4/15 11 ¶4-5

Rebekah—A Godly Woman of Action

The Bible does not say whether Isaac knows that Esau must serve Jacob. In any case, both Rebekah and Jacob know that the blessing belongs to him. Rebekah springs into action on hearing that Isaac intends to bless Esau when he takes his father a dish of game. The decisiveness and zeal that characterized her in her youth have not deserted her. She 'commands' Jacob to bring her two kids of goats. She will prepare a dish her husband is fond of. Then Jacob must impersonate Esau to obtain the blessing. Jacob objects. His father is bound to become aware of the ruse and curse him! Rebekah insists. "Upon me be the malediction meant for you, my son," she says. Then she makes the dish, disguises Jacob, and sends him to her husband.—Genesis 27:1-17.

Why Rebekah acts this way is not stated. Many condemn her action, but the Bible does not, nor does Isaac on discovering that Jacob has received the blessing. Rather, Isaac amplifies it. (Genesis 27:29; 28:3, 4) Rebekah knows what Jehovah foretold about her sons. So she acts to see that Jacob secures the blessing that is rightfully his. This is clearly in harmony with Jehovah's will.—Romans 9:6-13.

(Genesis 27:18, 19) So he went in to his father and said: "My father!" to which he said: "Here I am! Who are you, my son?" ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father: "I am E'sau your firstborn. I have done just as you told me. Sit up, please, and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me."

w07 10/1 31 ¶2-3

Questions From Readers

The Bible does not give all the details as to why Rebekah and Jacob acted as they did, though it

does indicate that the situation arose suddenly. We should note that God's Word neither justifies nor condemns what Rebekah and Jacob did, establishing no precedent for lies and deception. The Bible does, however, shed light on the situation.

First, the account makes clear that Jacob was entitled to his father's blessing; Esau was not. Earlier, Jacob had legally purchased the birthright from his unappreciative twin brother, who sold it for a meal to satisfy his hunger. Esau "despised the birthright." (Genesis 25:29-34) So in approaching his father, Jacob was seeking a blessing that rightfully belonged to him.

(Genesis 27:27-29) So he came near and kissed him, and he could smell the scent of his garments. Then he blessed him and said: "See, the scent of my son is like the scent of the field that Jehovah has blessed. ²⁸ May the true God give you the dews of the heavens and the fertile soils of the earth and an abundance of grain and new wine. ²⁹ Let peoples serve you, and let nations bow low to you. Be master over your brothers, and let the sons of your mother bow low to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you."

it-1 341 ¶6

Blessing

In a patriarchal society a father often blessed his sons shortly before his death. This was a matter of great importance and was highly valued. Thus Isaac blessed Jacob, thinking he was the firstborn Esau. Isaac pronounced favor and prosperity for Jacob ahead of his brother Esau, undoubtedly petitioning Jehovah to carry out the blessing, as Isaac himself was blind and old. (Ge 27:1-4, 23-29; 28:1, 6; Heb 11:20; 12:16, 17) Later Isaac knowingly confirmed and enlarged on the blessing. (Ge 28:1-4) Before dying, Jacob blessed first Joseph's two sons, then his own sons. (Ge 48:9, 20; 49:1-28; Heb 11:21)

Similarly, Moses, before his death, blessed the whole nation of Israel. (De 33:1) In all these cases the results prove that they spoke prophetically. In some instances, when pronouncing such blessings, the hand of the one blessing was placed upon the head of the one being blessed.—Ge 48:13, 14.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 27:46-28:2) After that Re-bek'ah kept saying to Isaac: "I am disgusted with my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob ever takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these daughters of the land, what good is my life?"

28 So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and commanded him, saying: "You must not take a wife from the daughters of Ca'naan. ² Go away to Pad'dan-a'ram to the house of Bethu'el, your mother's father, and from there take for yourself a wife from the daughters of La'ban, your mother's brother.

w06 4/15 6 ¶3-4

Keys to Communicating With Your Mate

Did Isaac and Rebekah develop good communication skills? After their son Esau married two daughters of Heth, a serious family problem arose. Rebekah "kept saying" to Isaac: "I have come to abhor this life of mine because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob [their younger son] ever takes a wife from the daughters of Heth . . . , of what good is life to me?" (Genesis 26:34; 27:46) Clearly, she communicated her concern in no uncertain terms.

Isaac told Jacob, Esau's twin brother, not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. (Genesis 28:1, 2) Rebekah had made her point. This couple had successfully communicated about a most sensitive family subject, providing a good example for us today. What, though, if mates cannot come to an agreement? What can be done?

(Genesis 28:12, 13) Then he had a dream, and look! there was a stairway set on the earth, and its top reached up to the heavens; and there were God's angels ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And look! there was Jehovah stationed above it, and he said: "I am Jehovah the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you are lying, to you I am going to give it and to your offspring.

w04 1/15 28 ¶6

Highlights From the Book of Genesis—II

28:12, 13—What was the significance of Jacob's dream involving "a ladder"? This "ladder," which may have looked like a rising flight of stones, indicated that there is communication between earth and heaven. God's angels ascending and descending on it showed that angels minister in some important way between Jehovah and humans who have his approval.—John 1:51.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 27:1-23) Now when Isaac was old and his eyes were too weak to see, he called E'sau his older son to him and said: "My son!" He replied: "Here I am!" ² And he went on to say: "I have now grown old. I do not know the day of my death. ³ So at this time take, please, your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt some wild game for me. ⁴ Then make the kind of tasty dish that I am fond of and bring it to me. Then I will eat it so that I may bless you before I die." ⁵ However, Re-bek'ah was listening while Isaac spoke to E'sau his son. And E'sau went out into the field to hunt game and to bring it in. ⁶ And Re-bek'ah said to Jacob her son: "I just heard your father speaking to your brother E'sau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me some game and make me a tasty dish. Then let me eat so that I may bless

you before Jehovah before my death.' ⁸ And now, my son, listen carefully and do what I am instructing you. ⁹ Go, please, to the herd and get me two of the best young goats from there so that I may prepare from them a tasty dish for your father, just the way he likes it. ¹⁰ Then take it to your father to eat, in order that he may bless you before his death." ¹¹ Jacob said to his mother Re-bek'ah: "But E'sau my brother is a hairy man, and my skin is smooth. ¹² What if my father feels me? Then I will certainly appear to be mocking him, and I will bring upon myself a curse rather than a blessing." ¹³ At this his mother said to him: "Upon me be the curse meant for you, my son. Just do as I say and go, get them for me." ¹⁴ So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made a tasty dish, just the way his father liked it. ¹⁵ After that Re-bek'ah took her older son E'sau's finest garments, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. ¹⁶ She also put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the hairless part of his neck. ¹⁷ Then she handed the tasty dish and the bread that she had made to her son Jacob. ¹⁸ So he went in to his father and said: "My father!" to which he said: "Here I am! Who are you, my son?" ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father: "I am E'sau your firstborn. I have done just as you told me. Sit up, please, and eat some of my game, so that you may bless me." ²⁰ At that Isaac said to his son: "How were you so quick in finding it, my son?" He replied: "Because Jehovah your God brought it to me." ²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob: "Come near, please, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son E'sau or not." ²² So Jacob came near to his father Isaac, and he felt him, after which he said: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of E'sau." ²³ He did

not recognize him because his hands were hairy like the hands of his brother E'sau. So he blessed him.

MARCH 30–APRIL 5

TREASURES FROM GOD'S WORD | GENESIS 29-30

“Jacob Marries”

(Genesis 29:18-20) Jacob had fallen in love with Rachel, so he said: “I am willing to serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” ¹⁹ To this La'ban said: “It is better for me to give her to you than to give her to another man. Keep dwelling with me.” ²⁰ And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, but in his eyes they were like just a few days because of his love for her.

w03 10/15 29 ¶6

Jacob Appreciated Spiritual Values

Betrothal was effected by the payment of a bride-price to the bride's family. The Mosaic Law later set at 50 silver shekels the price for virgins who had been seduced. Scholar Gordon Wenham believes that this was “the maximum marriage gift” but that most were “much lower.” (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29) Jacob could not arrange for a payment. He offered Laban seven years' service. “Since casual laborers received between one-half and one shekel a month in old Babylonian times” (from 42 to 84 shekels in seven full years), continues Wenham, “Jacob was offering Laban a very handsome marriage gift in exchange for Rachel's hand.” Laban readily accepted.—Genesis 29:19.

(Genesis 29:21-26) Then Jacob said to La'ban: “Give over my wife because my days are up, and let me have relations with her.” ²² With that La'ban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. ²³ But during the evening, he resorted to taking his daughter

Le'ah and bringing her to him that he might have relations with her. ²⁴ La'ban also gave his female servant Zil'pah to his daughter Le'ah as a servant. ²⁵ In the morning Jacob saw that it was Le'ah! So he said to La'ban: “What have you done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why have you tricked me?” ²⁶ To this La'ban said: “It is not our custom here to give the younger woman before the firstborn.

w07 10/1 8-9

Distressed Sisters Who “Built the House of Israel”

Did Leah conspire to deceive Jacob? Or was she simply obliged to obey her father? And where was Rachel? Did she know what was going on? If so, how did she feel? Could she defy the will of her authoritarian father? The Bible provides no answer to these questions. Whatever Rachel and Leah thought about the matter, afterward the scheme outraged Jacob. And it was with Laban, not his daughters, that Jacob remonstrated: “Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? So why have you tricked me?” Laban's response? “It is not customary . . . to give the younger woman before the firstborn. Celebrate to the full the week of this woman. After that there shall be given to you also this other woman for the service that you can serve with me for seven years more.” (Genesis 29:25-27) Thus Jacob was maneuvered into a polygamous marriage that was to spawn bitter jealousy.

it-2 341 ¶3

Marriage

Celebration. While the wedding itself had no formal ceremony, there was, nevertheless, a very joyous celebration of weddings in Israel. On the day of the wedding, at her own home the bride usually made elaborate preparations. First she would bathe herself and rub herself with perfumed oil. (Compare Ru 3:3; Eze 23:40.) At times assisted by woman attendants, she put

on breastbands and a white robe, often richly embroidered, according to her financial status. (Jer 2:32; Re 19:7, 8; Ps 45:13, 14) She decked herself with ornaments and jewels, if she was able to do so (Isa 49:18; 61:10; Re 21:2), and then covered herself with a light garment, a form of veil, that extended from head to foot. (Isa 3:19, 23) This explains why Laban could so easily practice a deception on Jacob so that Jacob did not know that Laban was giving him Leah instead of Rachel. (Ge 29:23, 25) Rebekah put on a head covering when she approached to meet Isaac. (Ge 24:65) This symbolized the subjection of the bride to the bridegroom—to his authority.—1Co 11:5, 10.

(Genesis 29:27, 28) Celebrate the week of this woman. After that you will also be given this other woman in exchange for serving me seven more years.”²⁸ Jacob did so and celebrated the week of this woman, after which he gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.

Digging for Spiritual Gems

(Genesis 30:3) So she said: “Here is my slave girl Bil’hah. Have relations with her in order that she may bear children for me and that through her, I too may have children.”

it-1 50

Adoption

Rachel and Leah both considered the children born to Jacob by their handmaids as their own sons, ‘born upon their knees.’ (Ge 30:3-8, 12, 13, 24) These children inherited along with those born directly of Jacob’s legal wives. They were natural sons of the father, and since the slave girls were property of the wives, Rachel and Leah had property rights in these children.

(Genesis 30:14, 15) Now Reu’ben was walking in the days of the wheat harvest, and he found mandrakes in the field. So he brought them to his mother Le’ah. Then Rachel said to Le’ah: “Give me, please, some of your son’s

mandrakes.”¹⁵ At this she said to her: “Is it a small matter that you took my husband? Would you now take my son’s mandrakes also?” So Rachel said: “Very well. He will lie down with you tonight in exchange for your son’s mandrakes.”

w04 1/15 28 ¶17

Highlights From the Book of Genesis—II

30:14, 15—Why did Rachel relinquish an opportunity to conceive in exchange for some mandrakes? In ancient times, the fruit of the mandrake plant was used in medicine as a narcotic and for preventing or relieving spasms. The fruit was also credited with the capacity to excite sexual desire and to increase human fertility or aid in conception. (Song of Solomon 7: 13) While the Bible does not reveal Rachel’s motive for the exchange, she may have thought that the mandrakes would help her conceive and end her reproach of being barren. However, it was some years before Jehovah “opened her womb.”—Genesis 30:22-24.

Bible Reading

(Genesis 30:1-21) When Rachel saw that she had borne no children to Jacob, she became jealous of her sister and began to say to Jacob: “Give me children or else I will die.”² At this Jacob’s anger flared up against Rachel, and he said: “Am I in the place of God, who has prevented you from having children?”³ So she said: “Here is my slave girl Bil’hah. Have relations with her in order that she may bear children for me and that through her, I too may have children.”⁴ With that she gave him her servant Bil’hah as a wife, and Jacob had relations with her.⁵ Bil’hah became pregnant and in time bore Jacob a son.⁶ Then Rachel said: “God has acted as my judge and has also listened to my voice, so that he gave me a son.” That is why she named him Dan.⁷ Bil’hah, Rachel’s servant, became

pregnant once more and in time bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ Then Rachel said: "With strenuous wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister. I have also come off the winner!" So she named him Naph'ta-li. ⁹ When Le'ah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her servant Zil'pah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ And Le'ah's servant Zil'pah bore a son to Jacob. ¹¹ Then Le'ah said: "With good fortune!" So she named him Gad. ¹² After that Zil'pah, Le'ah's servant, bore a second son to Jacob. ¹³ Then Le'ah said: "With my happiness! For the daughters will certainly pronounce me happy." So she named him Ash'er. ¹⁴ Now Reu'ben was walking in the days of the wheat harvest, and he found mandrakes in the field. So he brought them to his mother Le'ah. Then Rachel said to Le'ah: "Give me, please, some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵ At this she said to her: "Is it a small matter that you took my husband? Would you now take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said: "Very well. He will lie down with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶ When Jacob was coming from the field in the evening, Le'ah went out to meet him and said: "It is with me you are going to have relations, because I have hired you outright with my son's mandrakes." So he lay down with her that night. ¹⁷ And God heard and answered Le'ah, and she became pregnant and in time bore to Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Then Le'ah said: "God has given me my wages because I have given my servant to my husband." So she named him Is'sa-char. ¹⁹ And Le'ah became pregnant once more and in time bore a sixth son to Jacob. ²⁰ Then Le'ah said: "God has endowed me, yes, me, with a good endowment. At last, my husband will tolerate me, for I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zeb'u-lun. ²¹ Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Di'nah.