

Jacob (Israel)

(Genesis 25-50)

Then He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.” (Genesis 32:28)

Jacob is the father of the 12 sons (tribes) of the nation Israel – God changes his name to Israel. His father was Isaac, and his grandfather was Abraham. His story begins in Gen 25 and concludes in 50 with his burial in Canaan. Jacob receives the birthright, the blessing of the firstborn, and vowed that Yahweh would be his God if God kept His promises to him.

Jacob’s Life

- Third patriarch of the Jews (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob); born to Isaac when Isaac was 60 years old (25:26)
- Jacob means ‘supplanter’ with the idea of cheating or trickster and/or taking the place of someone else
- Described as a quiet man dwelling in tents (25:27) and is alive for 15 years before Abraham died
- Twin brother to Esau, the firstborn; lives at odds with his brother until he comes back to Canaan
- Loved by his mother Rebekah more than his father
- Buys the birthright Esau despised for a bowl of red stew (25:34)
- Participates in a plot to deceive his father into giving him the blessing of the firstborn son
 - The plot is concocted by his mother; Yielded to the will of his mother in spite of his conscience convicting him
 - Rebekah prepares a meal that Esau was supposed to prepare for Isaac on his deathbed
 - Jacob makes himself feel like his hairy brother to deceive Isaac
 - He lies to his father when asked, “Who are you?” stating he is Esau
 - Jacob receives the blessing of the firstborn from Isaac according to God’s sovereign will (Rom 9:13)
- Flees for his life from the wrath of Esau to Uncle Laban (Rebekah’s brother) in Haran
- At Bethel (House of God), God promises Jacob what he promised Isaac in the dream of a ‘ladder to heaven’
- Time at Haran has 3 parts: Working for a wife (4), growing a family (see below), and building a personal fortune
 - Jacob falls in love with Rachel, the youngest daughter of Laban; she is beautiful in appearance
 - Agrees to work 7 years for the bride-price of Rachel but is tricked/deceived by Laban on his wedding night
 - 7 days after being tricked into marrying Leah, he also marries Rachel in exchange for 7 more years of free labor
 - Works as a shepherd and livestock owner from the time with Laban until his death
 - Raises a family under Laban’s house for 6 more years until he is far wealthier than Laban
- At circa 90, flees the oppression of Laban and returns to the land of Abraham and Isaac (31)
- Greatly fears his reunion with Esau but God answers his prayer for safety and they are eventually reconciled
- Wrestles with ‘a man’ (God) all night until God puts Jacob’s thigh out of the socket and gives him the name Israel
- Fails to guide/control his adult sons when they disproportionately revenge the sexual assault of their sister Dinah
- At Bethel, Yahweh again promises a nation will come from him and gives him the name Israel again (35:10)
- Loses Rachel when she gives birth to Benjamin; when Jacob is 120 years old, his father Isaac dies at 180 years old
- Loved Joseph more than any of the older sons and showed that bias toward him with a special robe (37:3)
- Lived a depressed life all the years he thought Joseph was dead from an attack by a wild animal
- Famine forces Jacob to send his sons to get grain in Egypt on two different occasions
- After learning Joseph was the prime minister of Egypt, he moved to Egypt to reunite and survive the famine
- Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Joseph’s two sons: Ephraim and Manasseh, and lived in Goshen, Egypt for 17 years
- Prophesied concerning the future of all 12 sons including the ‘scepter and staff’ promise for Judah (49:10)
- Buried in the same cave as Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah at 147 years old in the promised land

Jacob’s Family

Leah (wife)		Bilhah (Rachel’s servant)	Zilpah (Leah’s servant)	Rachel (wife)
Reuben (1)	Issachar (9)	Dan (5)	Gad (7)	Joseph (11)
Simeon (2)	Zebulun (10)	Naphtali (6)	Asher (8)	Benjamin (12)
Levi (3)	Dinah (daughter)			
Judah (4)				

Referenced in Mat 1:2, 22:32; Acts 7:8-16; Rom 9:11-13; Heb 11:9, 20-21