

61.

Jacob Fled from Esau

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to speak the truth in love, as that is a key part of their spiritual growth. It also causes their lives to be a good example to others. In this topic, we will see that Jacob fled and went to Padan Aram, in order to escape the anger of his brother.

In Genesis 28:1-2 we read, “Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.’” Rebekah had told Jacob to flee to her brother in Haran to escape from the anger of Esau. However, she told Isaac that the Hittite wives of Esau made her life very difficult. She said that her life would have no value if Jacob also got a wife from among the people living in the land. As a result, Isaac called Jacob and gave him instructions about getting a wife.

Isaac began by giving Jacob a blessing and then charged him not to take a wife from the daughters of the people of Canaan. The word translated “charged” means *to give a command*. Many times, in the Old Testament, it spoke of God giving a command to a person. In Genesis 6:22, we read, “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” Here, we see that Noah was obedient to all that God commanded. In 1 Samuel 17:20, we see that David carried out the command of his father, when that verse says, “So David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, and took *the things* and went as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the camp as the army was going out to the fight and shouting for the battle.” That is the way the word is used here, as we see that Isaac commands his son not to get a wife in Canaan.

Instead, Isaac told Jacob where he was to go to get a wife. Isaac told Jacob to go to Padan Aram to get a wife. In addition, he also told him to get a wife there from the daughters of Laban. Genesis 24:29 says, “Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well.” This verse tells us that Laban was the brother of Rebekah. As a result, Isaac made it clear that he was to go to the family of his mother and take a wife from the daughters of her brother. Marriage to close relatives was allowed prior to the giving of the Law to Moses, and that law was not given until about six hundred years later. “Padan Aram” was the name of the area and means *a plain or very large field*, while Haran was the name of the actual city where Laban lived. Rebekah mentioned the name of the city, in Genesis 27:43, while Isaac, here, mentioned the name of the area.

We go on to read about the blessing Isaac gave Jacob as he sent him away. Genesis 28:3-5 says, “‘May God Almighty bless you, and make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; and give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and your descendants with you, that you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.’ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.” In this blessing, we see that Isaac had come

to the understanding of the fact that the blessing God had given to Abraham and Isaac was to be passed on through Jacob, not through Esau. God first revealed Himself as the Almighty God, in Genesis 17:1, where we read, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.” This verse is the second time where that name for God is used, so that is why we see that Isaac now understood that the promise to Abraham was to be passed on to Jacob.

The promise that God gave to Abraham is first mentioned in Genesis 12:1-3, where we read, “Now the LORD had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’” Then, in Genesis 15:17-18, God made it a blood covenant, as we read, “And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day, the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates.’” Isaac included the main thoughts of this covenant in his blessing of Jacob.

Isaac also looked forward to the day when Jacob and his descendants would possess the land in which they were presently strangers. God had promised that land to Abraham and the Lord had reminded Isaac of that promise when the Lord said, in Genesis 26:4, “And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Now, as Isaac sent Jacob to Laban, he reminded Jacob that the blessing included that promise from God that his descendants were the ones who would inherit the land in which he was presently a stranger. This promise had been given to Abraham, reaffirmed to Isaac, and now, Isaac wanted Jacob to know that this blessing would pass to him and his descendants.

This blessing also showed the faith of Isaac. The only land that Abraham had purchased was a burial place for Sarah and was the place where he was later buried. Isaac had not received any additional land, but God had reaffirmed that promise to him. Now, as Isaac included that promise as he blessed Jacob, he was showing his faith in the promises of God. Hebrews 11:20 says, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.” Here, we see that Isaac became one of those listed among those Old Testament saints who lived by faith because of this blessing that he gave here to Jacob. Isaac had also let Esau know that Jacob was the one who would have that blessing when he said, in Genesis 27:33, “Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, ‘Who? Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed.’”

Once Isaac had reaffirmed this promise to Jacob, we see that he sent Jacob away and told him to go to Padan Aram. Isaac gave two specific instructions about what Jacob was to do when he came to Padan Aram. First, he was to make certain that he went to the house of Bethuel, who was the father of his (Jacob’s) mother. Second, he was to take as his wife one of the daughters of Laban, the brother of Rebekah. We will see that the Lord, there, gave Jacob a love for Rachel, who was one of those daughters. Genesis 29:18-20 says, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’ And Laban said, ‘*It is* better

that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me.’ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.” When we come to these verses, we will also see how Laban deceived Jacob so that Jacob ended up working fourteen years for Rachel.

Meanwhile, we see that Esau learned about the instructions that Isaac had given to Jacob. Genesis 28:6-9 says, “Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,’ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.” Esau realized, by what Isaac said to Jacob, that his father was not happy with the Hittite wives that he had married.

The statement that Isaac made, when he said, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan” made it very clear to Esau that his father did not approve of the wives he had married. He also saw that Jacob was obedient to his father and mother and left Canaan to go to Padan Aram to carry out the instructions of his father. Esau still wanted to please his father, even though he had not received the blessing. Perhaps he thought that his father would give him a better blessing if he had a wife that was not from any of the nations that lived in the land of Canaan.

Many years earlier, Abraham had learned that the Lord had given his brother, Nahor, eight sons, including Bethuel, by his wife Milcah. Then, Genesis 22:23 says, “And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.” Bethuel was the father of Rebekah, who became the wife of Isaac, and that was why Isaac sent Jacob to the house of Bethuel to get a wife. As a result, Esau went to Ishmael and made arrangements to marry the daughter of Ishmael named Mahalath. Ishmael was also a son of Abraham, even though he was not the son that carried on the blessing, and so Esau thought he could gain the approval of his father by marrying a relative of the family of Abraham.

Esau gives us an example of the desire of most children to have the approval of their fathers, even when those children have been angry at the decisions the father made. Esau even took another wife in his efforts to try and feel that approval. Ephesians 6:4 says, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Even though Esau was very angry at his father and his brother, he still wanted the approval of his father. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why it is so important, even for rebellious sons and daughters, to know that they have the acceptance and approval of their father. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things to others.