

# Story Time with Jesus



**Bible Stories**

*-As told by Jesus-*



**Book 2**

# Men on the Move

## Chapters 13-24



*As told by Jesus*

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## A Man on the Move

It's not easy to move, to leave friends and relatives, houses or places that you've become accustomed to, things you like and enjoy.

Have you ever had to say good bye to loved ones, pets, or friends, and to give away many of your possessions? It can feel pretty difficult, especially when you wonder if you'll be happy in the new place you are going to move to, since you've never been there before.

Or perhaps you've lost everything you own in a flood or fire or other disaster, or a bad or sad event, and you feel sad and in despair. Well, if you are choosing now to do things God's way, you can be encouraged by what He told Abraham one time. God said, "I am your exceeding great reward."

If you follow God's plan for your life, then you'll sense the richness of God's presence and the joy He can give you. You'll experience His help and friendship, and the amazing things He can do for you when you pray.

You'll enjoy the wonderful reward of the Heavenly life to come while living with God in a beautiful paradise land. It will surpass all you could have gained on Earth if you were to just gather possessions and earn rewards on Earth.

Abraham loved God more than having things, or staying in a certain country, or having a family with children of his own. He had confidence that if he just kept doing what God told him to, good things would eventually work out for him.

So when God told Abraham to travel from where he was living and go see a new land, he did it. He and all those that were with him, including his nephew Lot, moved.

They lived in tents, looked for water, found grass and food for their animals, and were a travelling team for many years.

They didn't have trailers with a fridge and stove, or fold out beds, or camping lights.



Through the hot days and cold nights they stayed in tents. They were campers, travelling here and there, as God led them.

God took good take care of Abraham. He became a very rich man with many animals and people to help him. God kept him safe all his life till he was old.

When there was a famine in the land, and not enough food around, they were allowed to stay in Egypt, and had all that they needed there, until they could leave to go to their next place. ■





## Living Peacefully

One time when there wasn't enough grass for all the sheep, cattle and animals, Abraham showed his faith and kindness.

Abraham had a nephew called Lot, who was travelling with him as part of the big team. It wasn't just Lot, but all his many animals and herdsmen: everyone was having a hard time finding enough greenery around. There wasn't enough grass for the sheep and cattle, where they were camping at that time.

Has it ever happened that you and your brother or sister or friend both wanted the same thing? You're both very focused on wanting just that one thing that you both happen to want at the same time, and there is only one, and you are having a hard time letting the other have the first turn with it?

There could be several other things to do and to play with, but you sort of forget, while thinking only about the one item or game or whatever it is that you very much want.

Then you don't act kindly or react patiently with one another, because all you want is that one thing!

Well, when Abraham's and Lot's herdsmen and shepherds started to only focus on the grass they needed for the animals, they started to quarrel.

They wanted to take good care of the sheep, goats and cattle, and make sure that they had all that they needed. But they forgot that there were other places to travel to, new places they could go to.

Abraham reminded Lot to look around and see all the other areas that had greenery and whatever would be needed for their animals. He gave Lot the first choice.

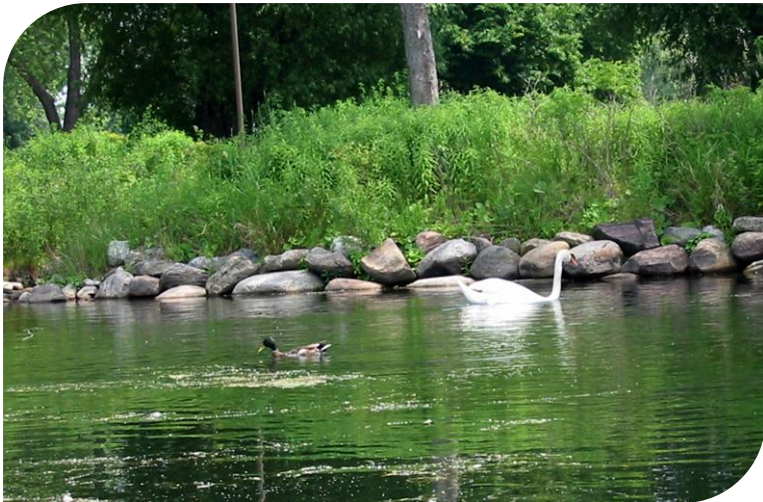
"Where would you like to be? Choose any place around the country. If you go to the left, I'll go with our team to the right. If you go to the right, we'll go to the left."



So the teams split, and Lot chose to go to a place very well watered, and beautiful—almost as nice as the Garden of Eden it seemed.

See, if he had just stayed there, quarrelling over what little bit of grass he and his team needed, he wouldn't have had a very nice time.

Maybe you can try that too. If you and someone else are both wishing for the same thing, try looking around, exploring new ideas and possibilities. You might even have more fun than just getting the one thing you wish you could have. ■





## Three Special Visitors

The camping team felt the heat as the sun shone down on them. Sitting in the doorway of his tent Abraham had shade and a bit of fresh air. But on this day there was to be a special surprise.

God sees you all the time. He never sleeps. He knows not only what you choose to do each day, but what you are feeling, and what you think about too.

The Bible says, "The Lord preserves (*keeps from harm, protects, saves, maintains, helps to carry on*) the faithful, and plentifully rewards the proud doer." - He rewards greatly those doing an honourable, good job. (Psalms 31:23)

Sometimes you just have to keep going and doing what you are meant to do, even when no big fun surprises or rewards come your way.

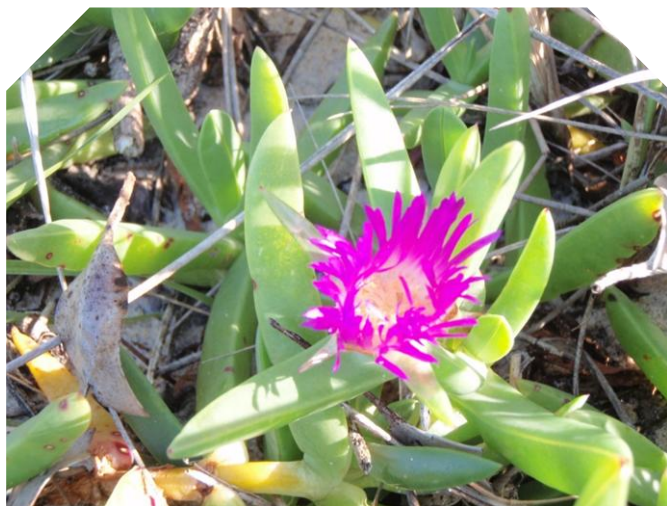
Day by day you just keep making the choices to do what is best, and then you are very glad when the results of those good decisions catch up with you.

Travel took a of lot time in those days. The only way to get around was either walking with your own two feet , or using animal transportation—horses, camels, donkeys, and so forth. (Or you could go by boat if you were travelling over water.)

So if you had travelled far, and were camping out away from the cities, and someone showed up to visit, it was something special! You knew they'd had a long journey. You knew they were tired, hungry and thirsty.

Water is heavy to carry, and was often hard to find. Sometimes wells could be dug and water found then, but that took days to do. So it was the custom to be kind and friendly to visitors, offering them food and water, and time to rest from their travelling.

Abraham knew what it felt like. He often felt hot or cold, hungry, thirsty and tired from the journey. But on this day, they weren't travelling—they were camping out.



It was a very hot day and the sun was shining down brightly. Abraham looked up, and to his surprise three visitors were approaching his tent. These weren't just any visitors. By the looks of them, they were sent straight from God.

You never really know when angels are going to show up. Some think angels only come looking all shiny and bright, proclaiming a message from God. But there may be times when they are disguised, look just like anyone else, and are right there when you need them.

So on this hot day, three very important visitors came to see Abraham, and he was delighted. When Abraham spotted them, he greeted them, and invited them to stay and rest in the shade.

He then had his wife cook them food, while he chatted with the visiting angelic team—the Lord and two important strong angels.

One thing they told Abraham was that he and his wife were finally going to have a child, a son, the one that God had been promising them.

It seemed impossible, because both Abraham and Sarah were very old by then, but it was so exiting to hear!

Have you ever been camping in a tent? The walls of a tent aren't like the walls of a house, and you can hear just about everything that is going on outside, right?

So while Sarah was cooking she could hear the visiting angels telling Abraham the wonderful news about their coming child. It made her smile, and she had a chuckle inside about it, thinking how old they both were.

The Lord knew she thought it was kind of funny, imagining having a child at their age. "Why did Sarah laugh?" the visitor said. "It's true! It really is going to happen!"

What happy news this was. They were both delighted and hopeful, and continued to look forward to this promise becoming a reality. ■



## Isaac

At last the wonderful, long-awaited event took place! Baby Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah—just as God had promised. They must have been the happiest parents around.

They'd waited so long, and at last held their precious little son. He made them laugh, smile, and enjoy doing the things that parents get to do — tell bedtime stories, teach him new things, explore, celebrate, laugh, look at the stars, and have fun.

Isaac was such a joy for Abraham and Sarah! He was the promised son. The Lord promised that he'd have many descendants, and that eventually there would be so many people they'd fill the Earth.

The more children people had, the richer they felt. Having a big family was their greatest treasure, something only God could give them. People were special.

There weren't shopping malls filled with all the latest gadgets and trinkets, or tons of super-fancy houses around to buy, or fast speedy cars to wish for,



or whatever some people think makes them feel rich and comfortable. Those who loved God wanted to have children, friends, brothers, sisters, grandchildren, fathers and mothers, more than just being alone with a bunch of riches.

Nowadays there is a lot less love in people's hearts. People focus more and more on acquiring things and getting possessions — thinking that will fill their heart's need for happiness.

So why do you think that Abraham was a happy man? God did bless him with a lot, but compared to today's standard of living, he really didn't have that much to make his life comfortable.

As he followed what God told him to do, day after day, year after year, he was blessed with plenty of animals and a very big team of helpers. But he had no house to keep him cool in the summer or warm in the winter.



He didn't have a car or van to take him on his journeys. He didn't have a stove to turn on and cook food quickly, or a refrigerator to keep supplies in, filled with a variety of foods, fruit and vegetables.

They had what they needed, and learned to make the foods last as long as possible, and cook them as best as they could on the fire.

They were grateful for their simple meals, and that they had food to eat. But there was nothing fancy about it. No spaghetti, no frozen desserts, no delicious fruit salad with exotic fruits, no bags of mixed nuts from all kinds of countries around the world, no strawberry jam, no freshly-squeezed orange juice on a hot day, or ice to put in their water.

There were no blenders or grinders or food mixers to make things fast and easy to prepare. And there were probably less dishes to wash as well!

At night there was no shower to step into, with warm water and soap to refresh them. A bucket of cold water from the well provided a good wash.

If they needed anything, there wasn't a shop or mall to go into to find it. They either had to do without it, or make it themselves, or get it from someone else who made it, or invent a way to fix things up.

Clothes weren't easy to come by, and it took a lot of work to make even a small part of cloth to use in a garment. Garments did last much longer than today's clothing.

Everything was made by hand, and usually from scratch, which means you not only make the item needed, but come up with the supplies for it also.

To make clothes out of wool they needed to have sheep, care for them, raise them, have the tools needed to shear them, take that wool and make thread from it, then weave it, and sew it into something to wear.

So it wasn't possessions that were making Abraham happy. And he didn't have lots of children, like he would have so enjoyed having.

But his time talking to God gave him the happy feeling of knowing that he was doing just what God had asked him to.—And seeing things work out for the best in the end helped give his heart joy.

God took good care of them, and they had all they needed to survive. His heart was happy and full of faith.

You can be that way too. You could be in a situation where you have little or no possessions, be

away from your family, loved ones, or friends, and still be happy, if you know God and talk with Him as a friend. He can do the most amazing things for you, in ways that you know only He can. As you love and obey Him, you can trust Him to bring the best things your way.

When Abraham and Sarah finally held and played with their little son, their wonderful treasure, given to them from God, it was worth the wait. That child received the very best care his loving parents could give. ■



## Patience, Faith and Rebekah

Abraham's son Isaac had to learn all the same lessons as his mother and father did! — To obey God, trust Him, wait for the best, be kind, and talk with God. He saw things working out for good for him too.

It may have taken years and years of waiting, but it wasn't time wasted, as in all the waiting he was learning faith and patience. These were two things he needed more than anything any shop has to offer.

Having these qualities will help you accomplish what you need to. They will help you to endure hardship, and learn skills that you'll need to know in order for you to be able to provide what you and your family need:

Faith in God that He's going to make all things right in the end; patience to wait, to keep going, to live peaceably, to be kind to others, to not lose your cool or temper, to try again and again when you most feel like giving up, to not feel you have to have all you need right away, but to wait for the best time. These are things that Isaac also learned.



Isaac waited till he was about 40 years old until it worked out for him to get married. But he'd learned to talk with God, and so he wasn't alone.

He'd spend lots of time outside, praying and communicating with God. One wonderful day as he was outside, having quiet time in thought and prayer, he looked up to see that Eleazar's team of camels had returned. And he was in for a wonderful surprise!

Eleazar was Abraham's most trusted helper and had just returned with his team of helpers and all their camels. Abraham had sent him on a mission to try to find a wife for his son Isaac—someone who knew God and would follow Him too. It wasn't an easy job and the journey was tiring.

Sitting at last by the well of the place they'd travelled to, Eleazar had prayed: "Let the woman who is right for Isaac be the one that offers water to me and also to give water to the camels."



Giving water to the camels which were very thirsty from the trip would take a long time, and a lot of strength too, lifting bucketful after bucketful—as the camels needed to drink a lot!

But then the miracle happened! A sweet woman called Rebekah—God's chosen wife for Isaac, just the one He knew Isaac would really love—came and did just as Eleazar had prayed. After she gave water to the camels, Eleazar gave Rebekah golden jewellery, telling her that he'd explain more later.

The travelling team of men needed a place to stay, and dinner, as well as a place for the camels to rest and food for them to eat. Rebekah and her family said there was room and food at their house for the men and their camels to eat and stay the night.

It was then, while they all sat down to eat in Rebekah's house, that Eleazar told his story to her and her family, and asked if Rebekah would return with him to be Isaac's wife.

That was a big question to think about! What would she decide? She made up her mind and chose to go—the very next day. What a memorable day that was. From one day to the next her life was very different.

She said good bye to friends and family and packed up her things and left with Eleazar and his team to return to their home.

As the camels came closer to Abraham's camp, Isaac was watching, wondering if they came back with only those servants who left on the trip, or if...Could he dare to hope?



Then he saw Rebekah, though her face was covered with a veil. Isaac knew he loved her, right from the start. Rebekah loved Isaac too. They got married and were happy together.

Their journey of faith and patience continued — this time together, as a couple, and in time as parents of two lively, talented twin boys—Jacob and Esau, Abraham's grandsons. That was the beginning of the "many descendants" that God had promised. It had started, and it just kept on going. ■

## Isaac and the Wells

Isaac had learned many things both from his father Abraham, and also from his times alone with the Lord. He'd learned a lot about faith and patience. One particular event that's recorded about his life shows how this helped him.

Water was hard to find at times, and to get it often a deep well needed to be dug. This was hard work, and took a long time. There were no big building tools and machines to help make it fast and easy. So by the time a well was dug, and contained plenty of water for their big team to use, it was a great accomplishment and very helpful. Not only helpful, but it was essential. They needed it daily for drinking, for washing, for their animals, and so many other things.

However, others in the area needed and wanted water too. But there were those that didn't know and love God and who just wanted things to be theirs. When they saw Isaac and his team's well, they didn't say "Ah, there's water around here, let's dig a well too!" But rather, "That well is useful to us, let's take Isaac's well!" And they did.

They said that they were the only ones that could use it, and would push away any of Isaac's team who tried to use it.

So what did Isaac do? He moved. He moved to a new place and dug another well. But can you believe it?! What do you suppose happened next? Those greedy guys came and took over the next well too! So what did Isaac do? Did he say, "That's enough of being gentle and peaceful!" and try to be pushy to keep his hard-worked for well? No. He moved again.



He was probably feeling rather discouraged. But for the third time they dug a well. And this time no one took it, and they used it till it was time to move again.

You never know who is watching you when you are trying to behave well and act kindly. So something wonderful then happened. Isaac's team moved again, and when they were in the middle of trying to dig another well to use in their new place a visitor came.



There was a king from an area nearby, who hadn't wanted Isaac to live in his country. But he noticed how Isaac and his team had behaved, and also saw how God had blessed him with much as a result of his obedience.

The king knew that God was with Isaac, and realised that he wanted to be friends with Isaac and his team. He saw they were good people and that God gave them all they needed, and took care of them because they followed God's way.

Isaac was surprised. "I thought you didn't like us?" he wondered. But the king said he wanted to change. They had a feast and promised to be friends and help each other. That was the first miracle.

Then right when Isaac forgave the king and his people—all those ones who had taken away their wells before—and after Isaac and the king promised to be kind to one another, a man came and told Isaac some great news!

The new well they were just digging was complete, as there was a spring of fresh water in it now! Great! Things were working out wonderfully! It took time and patience, and trying again and again, and not getting angry, and then forgiving others.

It worked out far better in the end for Isaac and his team, when doing it the kind and patient way—even though it seemed to take a while to see the good results. They had a place to stay, and friends who would be there for them, and lots of water!

Isaac had learned to hear from God, too, just like his father Abraham had. God told him where to go and where not to go, and as he obeyed things went well.

Isaac and his team not only had all that they needed, but more than most others around. It didn't happen all in the first day, but after years of patience and following God's voice and doing what He said to do, day by day, month after month, year by year, they saw how blessed and cared for they all were. ■



## Dream of Angels

Have you ever behaved in a way that made things real tough for you? Perhaps it was something that you felt you needed to do, but then the results were difficult, made people sad, and caused problems?

Well, that seemed to be happening to Jacob, Isaac's son, when he was a man. He'd taken something that belonged to someone else, something that was special to his brother Esau.

Even when it was time to be born, and the twins were just little tiny babies, they were wiggling and trying to be the first one born. Imagine that! Then when they were much older, as young men, Jacob the youngest convinced the older one, Esau, in return for a bowl of food to eat right then, to promise that he would get the benefits of being the oldest one.

Esau was too hungry to care about it at the time, and so he said it was okay. Jacob got the promise of the benefits of being the oldest, given to him by his brother Esau, in return for food.

Then, when they were older, their father was to bless the oldest, giving a prayer and message about the good things that would come in their life. Jacob took this blessing before Esau went to his father to receive it, pretending to be Esau. It made Isaac, his father, very sad, and Esau very mad.

Jacob could no longer stay there, as he'd upset Esau too much, and had some things he needed to learn. He was sent away to his uncle Laban—his mother's brother. Jacob must have felt like it was the end of his old life, and wasn't quite sure what was to happen next.

When you are really discouraged, sad, at a loss for what to do, feel alone, don't know what is going to happen next, have made others upset, made big mistakes, can't seem to behave right, and keep making the same wrong decisions, you can be sure that God is still around and that He cares about you.

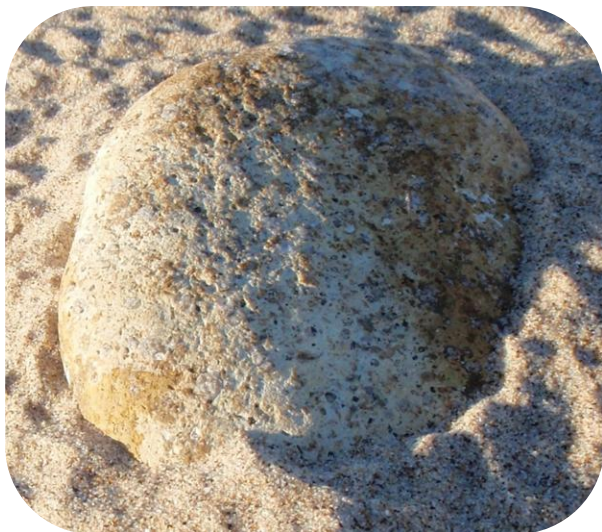
Jacob, on his journey away from home to go and live with his uncle, felt pretty low and like a failure, not knowing what would happen next in his life. But God can change anyone, teach them new things and help them do great things for Him, if they are willing to follow Him. Sometimes it takes a long time of learning difficult lessons before we are ready to do a new and great job.

While travelling, and it was night time, Jacob didn't have anything but a rock for a pillow to sleep on. In his sleep God encouraged his heart so much. He saw a dream of angels and described it as a ladder going from the ground where he was, up into Heaven. Angels were ascending and descending on it, and God was at the top of it.

God spoke to Jacob in the dream and said somewhat the same message that he had given to Abraham, and to Isaac—that he would bless him, and give him many descendants.

He said there would be so many in their family, and those that would yet be born, that they would be in number as the dust of the ground—too many to count! God also told him of the land that would be theirs, in the future.

These men and their families had to believe, one day at a time, one year at a time, that these things promised to them and to their children were



going to happen in time. Things didn't happen right away. It takes a lot of time for some things to happen.

Abraham and Isaac both had to believe God's words and promises to them, and make the right choices—but they didn't see it all happening just then, in their lifetime. They had to do the right thing in order to pave the way for God to bring about just what He had promised in the future.

Can you do that? That surely takes great faith to obey and follow God even when you can't see Him, and even when the things that He promises will happen as result of your faithful obedience aren't seen right away.

In some ways it's like the pilot of an airplane. His job is to get those in the airplane to their destination. He may never see any of the great things the people on board do from there, the countries they travel to next, or the work they do in that country to help others. But if he didn't fly them there, it wouldn't happen.

So it is with each one of you, on Earth. If you believe the things your Heavenly Father, the one Who cares for you more than you'll ever know, tells you—and you do what God knows is best for your life, then good things can happen next.

Even if you don't see the results and effects of your choices to do things God's way, right now, today, and you don't see everything working out to your liking, immediately, don't fret! Don't worry, or give up. "Good things come to those that wait."

When Jacob woke from his dream, he was very amazed, and felt so happy and in awe. It seemed to him that the very door of Heaven was right there! He made a pillar with the stone he used as a pillow, to mark that spot.

He also made some promises—that if God helped him, protected him, provided food and clothes and all that he needed, that he would obey and follow God.

Also Jacob promised that anything he got, he would give one tenth of it to the Lord. And that is what happened. Jacob had all that he needed as he followed God's plan. ■





## Hard Work and a Family of His Own

It had been a tiring journey for Jacob as he travelled to try to find where his uncle Laban was living. Without a map or telephones or internet, or anything that most people could use today to find out information and find out where a relative lives, it was difficult, and he really didn't know what to expect.

Jacob came near a well at last and saw some shepherds going there to give water to their sheep. Seeing that one approaching was a lady, he offered to help her lift the heavy rock from off the well.

Jacob was so glad to find out that at last he had reached his destination, for it was Rachel, Laban's daughter who was the one with the sheep. He loved her right from the start, and was invited by Laban to live with them.

He didn't sit around doing nothing, but saw what needed to be done and got to work right away helping in all the ways he could.

When Laban asked Jacob what he'd like to receive in return for his hard work, caring for and

guarding the many animals, there was only one thing he asked for.

He loved Rachel so much, that he worked for seven years, day after day, in order to be able to marry Rachel. Time seemed to go by quickly, and before he knew it, a big wedding feast was held.

Though God was caring for and helping Jacob to have all that he needed, and he was happy he was going to get married to a woman he really loved, being there with Laban also proved to be a time of learning lessons for Jacob.

Laban didn't always keep his word. He said he'd do one thing, and then wouldn't stick with it and would change things later on. He was dishonest and not trustworthy.



Perhaps Jacob could understand a bit how his brother Esau had felt, when he himself had been

dishonest and upset Esau so much. Now it was Jacob's turn to feel bad at times, and learn how not to be deceitful.

Finally, after seven years it was time for Jacob's promised wedding to Rachel whom he loved. But instead Laban made Jacob marry Leah instead, the oldest daughter.



This upset Jacob, but he was able also to marry Rachel, if he promised to work yet another seven years. Leah was a gentle and kind woman, and God chose to give her children first and also the most children.

God had blessed and helped Jacob to acquire lots of flocks and animals. He got many of those animals in an interesting way. When Laban said that only the speckled patterned ones could be Jacob's, then the new lambs and baby goats that were born were speckled.

When Laban quickly changed and said that only those with ring patterns and stripes could be Jacob's, those were the kinds that were born next. God made it

be so. So all those grown sheep would be part of Jacob's flocks. And bit by bit he had more and more.

After Jacob had been living there with Laban and his family for about 20 years, God told him it was now time to move, and take his large family and all their cattle and flocks with them. It was a big job, but they packed up and were off on their journey back to the place where Jacob grew up.

Because Laban wasn't very dependable, Jacob chose to leave with his big family at a time when Laban wasn't home. He had gone away for several days at the time of year when the sheep were sheared.

When Laban found out that Jacob and his family had left, he travelled for a few days to catch up to them to find out why they had left.



He hadn't been very nice to Jacob, especially towards the end of Jacob's stay there, when he noticed how large and strong Jacob's flocks were. But God gave Laban a clear message in a dream, about what not to do or say to Jacob when he did see him again.

So Laban obeyed the warning dream, and told Jacob about it. He camped with them for a day, and then said good bye to everyone and left to return to his home.

Jacob's team continued on travelling, till they made it to their destination. Jacob had new challenges to face, including what to do about Esau, his brother, whom he'd offended and made very sad and upset. He'd need to make things right between them again. ■

## Being Friends Again

Do you remember how Isaac, the father of Jacob and Esau, spoke words of blessing to Jacob, thinking it was Esau? And how it had made Esau so angry, that Jacob could no longer live there in peace?

Well, Jacob had to leave, and he had a difficult time living with Laban. However, Jacob had been blessed and had a great abundance of things considered important to people back then.

Jacob and his team, and all the animals—their wealth—were moving back again to his former living area. But there was one thing that needed to be smoothed out. Jacob was extremely concerned and uneasy. What would Esau be like? Was he still upset with him? Would he forgive Jacob for what was done so many years ago?

Jacob knew he was meant to move back there again, but just because the Lord wants you to do something doesn't mean it will all be easy or problem-free.



Jacob needed some encouragement as they travelled nearer to the place where his brother lived. God sent angels to Jacob to show him that he was not alone. That helped give him the courage to keep on going.

Jacob realised that the only reason why he was rich and had so much was because God had blessed him. It wasn't something he could have made happen himself. So he had an idea—to give to his brother a large gift, since he felt he'd made Esau miss out a bit.

Jacob chose many camels, sheep, goats, cows and donkeys to give to his brother. He then sent messengers to tell Esau that he, Jacob, was coming back, and that he had gifts to present to him.





The messengers returned with the news that Esau was coming to meet Jacob, and not just him alone, but with 400 men. This got Jacob pretty worried, wondering what would happen next. It seemed Esau hadn't forgiven him.

Jacob was very desperate for God to bring peace between him and his brother. He wanted them to all live in peace. Jacob knew only God could do such a miracle and change Esau's heart to one holding forgiveness and kindness, and wanting friendship with him. Prayer that was determined to see the answer become a reality was his only hope now.

He prayed with all his heart, in humility, and quoted the promises God had made to Abraham and to Isaac, that they'd be blessed with many children and grow into a great nation. In prayer he expressed to God that he was only returning to this land because He had told him to, and had promised it would go well.

When Jacob rose the next day he chose what the gift to his brother was to be, and sent it with his messengers.

Gifts back then were different than they are now. He wanted to give Esau 220 goats, 220 sheep, 30 camels and their colts, 50 cows, and 30 donkeys. That was a big gift!

Next he sent all his possessions, and teams of his family and children, and the rest of his animals on ahead. Jacob needed time alone. While everyone else travelled, and prepared to meet Esau, giving the gifts and being friendly, Jacob stayed back for a little while to pray and talk with God alone.

An angel met him once more, and Jacob begged for a victory in this matter. He wasn't going to just pray a little mild prayer, one that he didn't really expect anything to happen. But he held on to that angel, he wrestled, he pleaded, he wouldn't let go until the answer was granted.

He was all night struggling, praying, pleading. Finally when it was dawn, the angel asked Jacob to stop, and let go of him. But Jacob still wouldn't give up. He said he wouldn't let go until he got God's blessing to make things go well in this next part of his life. Then the blessing was granted.



Jacob then had the courage and faith to travel on to meet with his brother. Jacob had the gifts sent on ahead, to be brought to his brother. Next came the teams of children and mothers. Finally Jacob approached, walking in humility.

As was the custom of showing respect, Jacob bowed down to the ground, not just once, but seven times, before he stood in front of Esau his brother.

The miracle he prayed for had happened. The brothers hugged, talked, and were friends again. Esau forgave Jacob, and they parted again, each going their own way—this time happily.

So if you have something that isn't going well between you and someone else, this story holds some tips for you: be patient, pray, be humble, give generously, pray some more, do what God's asking you to do, ask for angels to help you, and be kind. You'll most likely see things change for the better, though some changes may take some time. ■

## Comparing and Coats

Seeds of jealousy and pride can be dangerous if you are trying to live in love and harmony with your brothers and sisters. Jealousy and negatively comparing with others can show up in all kinds of ways. Perhaps your brother or a friend seem to always be the first to get things they'd like, or it seems your parents do nice things for them that they never did exactly the same for you.

It's a dangerous thing to let that little ugly feeling start to stick around, like a plant taking root. Because once you do, things in the garden of your life will only get you down more and more, and soon you may feel angry and upset all the time. You have to stop those thoughts right when they first start.

Perhaps it's true, that someone got something nice today that wasn't given to you before. But the feeling and thought that tries to creep in, that "it's because you aren't special or loved", will make things so much worse! That thought tries to not only take away your happiness right then, but ruin the friendships you could have and the happy times you could be having.

Every day there will be things that others get that you never did! That's because every day is different for each person on Earth. Something new—or many new things—happen to each one on Earth each day, to help them learn something.

But there's not only sad or difficult things that happen—but good things also, or else people would get too discouraged trying to learn all of the lessons their life might be teaching them.

So sometimes great things, happy things, happen to others—or at least things appear that way to you, as you observe what gets given to others, or an event in someone else's life. Then there are the hard things too—really hard.

When you see someone get something you wish you could have had, and never got, it's good to remind yourself that it's like a little bit of encouragement for the many other difficult things they are having to learn and experience, or will yet have to .

Not everyone can have all the good things at the same time. Each one's day is different from anyone else's on Earth. Think of it like fruit trees, or gardens and plants. Each different type grows best, and produces fruit best at different times of the year,

and in different parts of the world. And each type of plant can manage to hold what is best for them.

If the mango tree was feeling bad that its fruit was much smaller than the watermelon, and the watermelon vine was sad that it couldn't stand tall and strong and have as many pieces of fruit on it as the mango tree, it would be silly! Watermelons wouldn't do well if they were on a tree. So each one has the things that happen in their lives that seem different—some good, some not so good—but all are for a purpose.

If you use the things you learn in life to do good for others, and you don't waste your time or thoughts on trying to notice how others seem to be getting more and better things first, then you'll be much happier. In time, when things change, and it's your turn to get the better things, and others are having a harder time, you'll see how things really do all balance out.



When others are feeling bad and thinking that you have better things than they do, it doesn't help them if you tell them how great you think you are. Walking in loving humility, and not always talking about everything wonderful that you feel is happening to you, might help.

Put yourself in their place and say things that are kind, thoughtful and encouraging to them. Give them hope that things will get better for them too. Show love and kindness, and bring to their attention the good things that they might have forgotten or failed to see, due to their looking at the present lacks or losses. Point out the things that they are better at than you. Lift them up with your humble way of speaking.

One boy learned this the hard way. He was Jacob's son Joseph. Jacob had many sons, but one day he made a special coat just for Joseph. Isn't it nice to sometimes be the only one to get something special that's just for you? It can feel better than just getting something that's the same as everyone else has received, right?

Everyone wants to feel that cosy feeling of being loved as an individual. It's good to remember that. So when someone seems to be the only one getting something nice, remember that you like it when that



happens at times to you too, and you wouldn't want people to get sad about that.

Don't you want people to act glad that you are enjoying something? It shows love when you can be glad that someone is happy.

Now, making coats back when Jacob was around was no simple thing. It took lots of time and effort. First they had to raise sheep, care for them and provide all that they need to grow strong and healthy and to grow good thick wool. Then came the job of sheering the sheep, and washing the wool. Then the thread had to be made from the wool.

To colour the thread, and not just leave it brownish-white, was a whole different process than it is today. There were no shops where they could buy clothing dye. They had to figure out how to make the dye, and do it themselves.

Then came the long task of weaving and sewing it into clothes, one thread at a time. So, when Jacob gave Joseph a coat made of many colours, it was a big gift.

It would have been very hard for old Jacob to have made 12 coats—one for each boy, right? He wouldn't have had much time to do anything else, and it would have taken a very long time. But Joseph's

brothers allowed those weeds of feeling angry towards Joseph into their heart.

Then, adding to it all, Joseph began to have some special dreams. Perhaps it would have been better not to have told his brothers about them. The dreams seemed to be telling how important Joseph was going to be, even more important than his brothers—that they would bow down to him one day.

The reason for the dreams wasn't to make Joseph feel proud and important, nor was it to make his brothers feel upset. God gave those dreams, and that special coat, and all the things that seemed to be going better for him, as a preparation. He was about to have the most difficult life of all of them.



The brothers may not have had a coat like Joseph's, but what happened next didn't happen to them either.

All things work together for good to them that love God—and this story shows that clearly. Joseph had been sent to check on his brothers, who were older and taking care of the flocks at quite a distance away. The brothers felt they'd had enough of having Joseph around. Some of them decided to send him far away, to live in Egypt, with some travellers who were passing through right then on their way to Egypt.

They thought if he wasn't right there with them anymore, then they'd be happier. But that really didn't make them feel better. The brothers felt sad and afraid in their heart for so many years, because of the wrong they'd done, and their daddy missed Joseph so much.

It didn't make their father all of a sudden do all of these nice things for them. In reality things were worse, because their father was so very sad all the time.

The Lord was with Joseph as he began to work in Egypt, doing his best, even though the work was hard, the language was new for him, and he was there without his family. Eventually, things worked out for

good, as you'll find out when you read on. But there was a long time of difficult feelings for everyone as a result of the choices those older boys made.

So the way to change that bad feeling when you are comparing and jealous, thinking someone else is getting all the best things, and that you aren't, isn't to just not have them around, or to try to make things hard for them.

Instead do as Jacob did with Esau—pray for peace and friendship, share and give what you can, be humble, think of others as better than yourself, and realise that God has a plan for each person, and things won't always be the best all the time for everyone.

Each person will have their turn-of-events, and hard times, maybe even harder than you've ever had or will have. If it's going rough for you now, you can be encouraged that things will get better one day, or special things will happen as time goes on, as you keep choosing God's way and loving Him more than anything and anyone else. ■

## Joseph in Egypt

A change in your life can happen overnight sometimes. You can be doing the same thing for a long time, and then all of a sudden, **BOOM**, everything changes. Things don't always look so great after a sudden change. But good things can happen like that too.

So if things aren't going that great, and it just seems like it will never end, don't give up hope—good things that affect your life positively, in a big way, can happen any time, when you least expect it to.

You never know what will happen that day when you wake up in the morning. But one thing you can be sure of is that if you are diligently working hard and doing what's right, in the best way—God's way—wonderful things will happen. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow, maybe a week from today, or maybe it'll happen a year or two from now.

But don't give up hope and don't stop doing things in the best way you can. It happened to Joseph. Maybe it'll be your turn soon. Just keep doing your best, what you know to be right, and soon enough it will pay off.

Joseph had found himself suddenly in Egypt, away from his father and home. One day it seemed he was getting all the best things, and the next he was a servant, working very hard for a man called Potiphar. But even though it seemed wrong to Joseph to be there instead of back home, the Lord was with him, and he did the best work he could.

Potiphar noticed that everything Joseph did worked out well. The crops grew well and things flourished. He was so trustworthy that Potiphar put him in charge of his entire household and all his business. He wasn't lazy, and though it wasn't his favourite place to be, or his favourite job, he did the best he could and worked diligently. God blessed all that he did.

People noticed that things were different with Joseph around. He made a difference for the better.

No matter where you are or what happens to you, you can have a positive effect on the situation and the people around you, if you love God, pray, and let Him help you



to make things better. Rather than just getting down and despondent about what's going on, or what you miss or how bad things seem for you, with you and God as a team you can have a positive effect on any situation, and good changes can happen.

Well, as nice as it might sound to say, "And they lived happily ever after," that's not what happened next. More sudden change was around the corner. God had new things for Joseph to learn, in a different and seemingly worse situation.

It's a good thing to remember that when things are going well, it's really God who is making it all work out well for you—and to thank Him for it, and to remind others that it's really Him doing it. So the next stage of Joseph's life gave him a fresh reminder of how things can change. Only God is constant and the same.

Things might be difficult for you, but things could also be worse. It's good to think about the good that you do have, reminding yourself how it's better than a situation someone else might be in.

So things seemed to change for the worse again for Joseph, and he learned a lot in the next part of his life. One day he was in charge of Potiphar's household and business, and the next day he was put in prison for



no good reason. Potiphar's wife was unhappy with her life and the things she had. She then told others things about Joseph that were not true.

She wanted Joseph to help make her happy and fix the problem she was having with feeling she wasn't getting all that she wanted. She didn't like a lot of things that were happening in her life, and wanted more and better things.

She wanted Joseph to do sneaky, dishonest things in order to get the things she wanted, thinking that it would make her happier. But when Joseph refused, choosing to only do what he knew was right and best, she was upset and told people that Joseph did something wrong—that it was his idea to try to do something naughty that Potiphar wouldn't like.

Potiphar loved his wife and believed her made-up story. It made him upset to think that Joseph, who he trusted, might have done the things his wife falsely reported. He didn't want Joseph around anymore, so he was put into prison.

Joseph chose once again to make the best of the situation. Things probably looked like they couldn't get any worse. Has that ever happened to you? But when things look like they are at their worst, be encouraged, things can only get better then, right?

The man in charge of the prison was impressed with Joseph and saw he was a good man and did things well. Joseph was kind to people, and whatever he did God blessed.

Pretty soon Joseph was well-trusted and put in charge of a lot of things. He didn't just think about the way he felt, or that he missed his father and home, but he talked to people, finding out what they were feeling, and tried to help encourage each one that he could.

It was his caring about others, as well as his ability to hear from God to get solutions and the right things to say to people, that eventually made the next positive turn of events take place.

Joseph noticed that Pharaoh's butler and baker, who were also put in prison for a while, were feeling rather sad. They said it was because of the dreams they'd both had the night before. Thinking there was no one who could tell them what the dreams meant, they were despondent. Joseph had faith in God and knew that anything that people need to know, God could show and tell them.

Joseph prayed and God showed him what the dreams meant. And amazingly enough, they came true! The dreams told of how long they'd be in prison, and

what Pharaoh would decide about them. What Joseph said the dreams meant came true! In three days the butler and baker were released from prison. One got to go back to his job, and the other wasn't allowed to work for Pharaoh again.

Joseph's caring about them and getting the meanings of their dreams from God was a key to the next very good change that happened. No matter where you are, or what situation you are in, you can choose to show kindness and thoughtfulness to others; to pray and hear what God wants to tell you; to say what He wants you to say; and do your best in what you have to do.

Sometime later it was Pharaoh's turn to have some important dreams. He desperately wanted someone to tell him the meaning of them. It's a good thing that Pharaoh did try to find out, as they were dreams from God, telling him of what was to come.

Something he needed to do something about. It really was very important. But who could help him? Pharaoh didn't know how to hear from God like Joseph could, and neither could his advisors. The butler remembered all of a sudden about what happened when he told Joseph his dream, while they were together in prison.

Now for the big and wonderful change! Can you imagine what it would feel like to be in a foreign country, without your family, to be in prison because people said untrue bad things about you, and then from one day to the next, to be in charge of the whole country, nearly as important as the king?

Well, that's just what happened to Joseph. As soon as Pharaoh heard that there was a man who could possibly tell him the meaning of his dreams he wanted to see Joseph immediately!

So on a day that seemed very much like any other, down in that dreary prison, all of a sudden the king's men came and took Joseph out of prison. They helped him get all cleaned up, shaved, in nice clothes, and brought him to the king. Just like that. But if Joseph hadn't been practicing all that time, day by day, to hear from God, to work well and wisely, he wouldn't have been ready and fit for what was needed.

Before he knew it he was standing before Pharaoh, telling him that God had given Pharaoh the dreams to tell him what was about to happen—dreams about seven good ears of corn and seven fat cows; dreams that ended with seven bad looking corn, and seven very skinny cows. There were to be seven very plentiful years in Egypt, followed by seven severe and

difficult years of famine, where food would be hard to come by.

A plan and a man were what was needed. A plan to set aside extra food from the plentiful years to store up for the years of difficult times, when food wouldn't grow—and a man to make it happen and be diligent and in charge. A wise man was needed.



Pharaoh thought for a minute about who could do it. It didn't take long until he realised, "Oh, you! Why not you? I think you'd be the best one for the job!" And he chose the man standing in front of him, telling him God's words. That's how Joseph was chosen, and given the job and responsibility of ensuring that food would be available all throughout the time of famine.

It would be seven years until they would see it come to pass. But no time could be lost. They had to work like they knew it would happen—all because God said it would. Boy, were they glad when those difficult years did indeed happen, that they had believed God's warning, took diligent action, and weren't lazy or complacent, thinking everything would always be nice and fine and plentiful.

It probably looked like it would always be great, for a long, long time. But Joseph and Pharaoh chose to believe that forewarning, and Joseph worked hard, getting people to grow lots of crops and to give the extra to be stored up.

So on that day Pharaoh gave Joseph a big special job, Pharaoh's own ring from off of his hand, a golden necklace, fancy nice clothes, a royal chariot, a wife, and a new name: Zaphnathpaaneah. Pharaoh made Joseph the most important man in all the country, besides himself.

Everyone had to listen to him and obey him. And when the seven difficult years of famine and crops not growing happened, they were so glad they'd all listened, obeyed and did their best to work hard, save up and do just as God had told them to.

Joseph and his wife had two sons, and he felt so happy then with a family of his own, and keeping busy helping the king and the whole country. Good things can happen suddenly. And so can difficult times. But if you are praying, talking and listening to God, and doing your best, you'll be ready for it. You can help to make things better, no matter what kind of situation you find yourself in. ■

## Food in Egypt

A time of famine, a time when the corn and other crops didn't grow, finally came. It happened just as Pharaoh had dreamt. Everyone was grateful that so much food had been stored up in Egypt during those years of plentiful harvests. But it wasn't just in Egypt that there was a lack of food. All the surrounding lands were struggling as well, and the people were very hungry.

Jacob and his sons and their families needed food. News spread that there was food in Egypt, and so off to Egypt the sons travelled—all except for the youngest. Benjamin stayed back with Jacob. He was Joseph's special brother—the only two children that Rachel had. Jacob still missed Joseph so much that he didn't want Benjamin to leave on a trip—just in case something happened to him, or he had to stay in Egypt.

By this time Joseph looked very Egyptian in the way he was attired, and he could speak the Egyptian language well too. So when his brothers come to buy food from Zaphnathpaaneah, the man who was in charge of all the saved corn in Egypt, they didn't recognize him at all. Although Joseph could see right



away that they were his brothers, he kept it a secret for a while.

Joseph realised when his brothers bowed down before him—as he looked like a powerful Egyptian governor—that this was the meaning of those dreams he'd had so long ago. He'd dreamt that their sheaves came during a harvest and bowed down before his sheave.

It seemed like such an odd dream at the time, but he saw then his brothers bowing down to him as they came to get food. Sometimes things happen to us that we really don't understand at the time, but they all make sense later on, and we realise that it had helped to prepare us for what was to come.

At first it was hard for Joseph to let his brothers in on the secret—that was really him, that he was the one people were calling Zaphnathpaaneah. He looked different, he spoke a new language, and he had been through a lot of



difficult times and hard work as a result of their actions towards him. Joseph realised then that it was ultimately God who made things work out the way they did, and that He placed him in charge, so his whole family could have food.

It's hard to go through difficult times, especially when you don't know or see the good that can come from it. But it's a wonderful moment when it all makes sense, and you can see that it has worked out better in the end. You are so glad for it after all, because it's helped you and others in some way that wouldn't have been possible if things were to have only been as you originally wished them to be.

Joseph saw the good in it all now, and showed his brothers love, kindness, and forgiveness in spite of all that had happened. He even returned to them the money they spent buying the grain, arranging to have it hidden in their sacks of grain.

The food they bought from Egypt didn't last forever, so after some time they were compelled to return to buy more. The second time the brothers came to Egypt, they brought Benjamin with them as well. Joseph had missed him so much that he insisted the next time they came that Benjamin, their youngest brother, needed to be with them.

Joseph was so glad to see him! He made a feast in his own house for all his brothers, though he continued to keep his identity unknown to them all. But when it was time for them to leave and his brother Benjamin was going back home with them, it was hard for him to see them go.

At last he told them all who he really was! It was very unexpected news for the brothers to hear. They had no idea what had become of Joseph. They were worried what would happen.

Would Joseph forgive them, or was he still very upset with them? To their relief, Joseph, who had chosen to see the good in the situation, forgave them and still loved them.

In fact he loved them all so much that Joseph and Pharaoh then invited them—all of them along with their families and father Jacob—to come and live there in Egypt where there was food.

The famine continued on for quite some time, and this way they didn't have to make the long trip again and again to get food for their families. Joseph made sure they all had what they needed while living close by.

It was a great, wonderful, exciting, change—on the move again! Wagons were sent from Pharaoh, to help load up their belongings and to carry the children, as well as their ageing father, all the way to Egypt.

Hearing the news that he was going to get to see Joseph again made father Jacob very happy. Suddenly he found new energy to travel yet again, even though he was very old and tired.

Isn't it funny how just thinking of something can change the way that you feel? Has that ever happened to you? Something can seem like a difficult job, and you feel too tired to do it, but then you hear that something is about to happen that you are really looking forward to, and all of a sudden you are buzzing with energy, and are able to do the job quickly.



Even the opposite can happen too. You'll be happily going along doing what you need to, and then a discouraging thought comes to your mind, or someone says some unkind words, and the more you allow yourself to think about it, the more it gets you down. You then find yourself unable to finish the job very well. You feel tired, uninspired and want to quit—all because of a negative thought, or because of something someone said.

Thoughts are very important, as all these brothers found out. But words and thoughts of kindness and encouragement can be like fuel in a vehicle which help us all to get where we need to go much more quickly, with renewed energy.

It was a wonderful moment when Jacob finally got to see his son again, and Joseph his father. They hugged and cried for a long time. Though those years had been tough for all of them—they'd each learned many lessons, and in the end it worked out better than if things had only gone seemingly well for them.

Difficult times come to everyone, but if we choose to believe that good will come in the end, if we are following and trusting the Lord and having faith in Him, it will not only help to make things easier for us but also help to bring good things our way.

God knows what is happening to each one, and those who love and trust Him, and try to do the things He asks, will find that in the end things are much better than they would have been if things had only been easy, and only as they originally wanted them to be.

God has a way of turning things around for good for those who love and obey Him, no matter what ends up happening, no matter what difficulty or hardships they face.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) ■*

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