

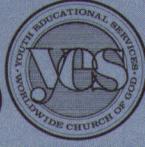
YOUTH



LEVEL 5

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 4



The Fathers of the Promises

THE FATHERS OF THE PROMISES

The wonderful promises God made to Abraham were never fulfilled in his lifetime. Do you know why? Get ready to learn how God continued to work in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to fulfill these promises. Be sure you have your Bible and a pencil or pen.

ABRAHAM'S GREATEST TEST

Do you know why tests are important? Tests in school help you to see how well you have learned your studies. But did you know God gives His chosen people tests from time to time? He wants to see how well we are learning our lessons of life. And He wants *us* to see how we are doing.

Abraham was given an extremely difficult test when his son Isaac was a young man.

"Abraham," God said, "Take your only son Isaac, whom you love, to the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on the mountain I will show you" (Gen. 22:2).

Abraham rose up early the next

morning and prepared to obey God's command. With his son, two servants and the wood for the offering fire loaded upon a donkey, he started toward the land of Moriah.

As they traveled, Abraham had many hours to wonder about God's purpose for instructing him to sacrifice his only son. But he had faith in God to keep His promises through Isaac. He thought God would resurrect his son (Heb. 11:17-19).

On the third day of traveling they came to the chosen mountain. The two servants stayed behind with the donkey while Abraham and Isaac went up the mountain.

Isaac obediently helped his father by carrying the wood. Abraham carried the hot coals for the fire and a knife. "Father," Isaac asked as they climbed, "We have the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb?"

"My son, God will supply Himself a lamb for a burnt offering," Abraham replied as they walked together.

When they reached the proper location Abraham built an altar. He then tied his son and laid him on the wood that he had piled on the altar. This would have been very difficult, if not

ABOUT OUR COVER . . .

Abundant wheat harvests are among the blessings promised Abraham's descendants.

Photo by H. Armstrong Roberts

impossible, had Isaac not been an obedient and cooperative son.

Abraham raised the knife above Isaac's throat. As he started to bring the knife downward a voice boomed out.

"Abraham! Abraham! Don't harm the lad." Abraham relaxed his tensed muscles and breathed a heavy sigh of relief. Laying the knife aside, he bowed his head in thanksgiving to God.

"Now I *know* that you fear Me, seeing that you have not withheld your only son from me," the voice of the angel of God concluded.

You may think it cruel of God to have put Abraham through such a test. But God is always loving and merciful — never cruel. Sometimes He gives difficult tests to those who choose to obey Him. But these tests are to prove their obedience or their faith. Your parents and teachers give you tests for similar reasons — to prove how much you have learned or how willing you are to obey.

Abraham passed his greatest test with the highest marks! He was tried so severely because God was preparing him for one of the highest positions in the coming world-ruling government of God!

After this test God renewed and even expanded His promises to Abraham. "Because you have obeyed My voice, all nations of the earth shall be blessed through Isaac and his children after him. I will multiply your generations as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the sea shore, and they shall control the gates of their enemies" (Gen. 22:17, 18).

A few years after this test of faith and obedience, Abraham and his family

moved northeastward to Hebron. While in Hebron Abraham's wife Sarah died at age 127, having lived a life of obedience to God and full of interesting experiences. Abraham bought a field near Hebron. A cave in this field was used as Sarah's burial place (read Genesis 23).

Do You Remember?

1. God commanded Abraham to go to the land of Moriah and sacrifice his son Isaac because (circle the letter of the right answer)
 - a. God hated Abraham.
 - b. God wanted to punish Abraham.
 - c. God was testing Abraham.
 - d. Two of the above.
 - e. None of the above.
2. Sarah was ____ years old when she died.

GOD SELECTS ISAAC'S WIFE

About three years after Sarah's death, Abraham sent his chief servant to the land of Mesopotamia to find a wife for Isaac. Abraham made his servant swear by the Eternal God of heaven and earth that he would *not* bring back a wife from among the Canaanites. Abraham wanted to be certain that Isaac's wife would come from among his own race! (Gen. 24:2-4.)

Abraham's servant, realizing the importance of this task, turned to God to lead him to the right woman. When he arrived at the well outside the city of Nahor, he prayed to God to show him whom He had chosen. He prayed that when he asked the right woman for a

drink of water, she would not only give him water, but also offer to draw water for all his camels.

Before he had even finished his prayer a young woman approached the well. He requested water of her and she gave him generously from her pitcher, then offered to draw more water for his camels!

When the servant asked her name he was overjoyed to learn that she was Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel and the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor! Surely she must be the chosen future wife for Isaac!

The servant and those with him were invited to stay with the family of Bethuel. A fine meal was also served. But before he would eat, the servant wanted to explain the purpose of his visit.

After hearing his words everyone agreed that God had led the servant to Rebekah and that God's will must not be hindered. The festive meal continued and Abraham's servant presented many beautiful and valuable gifts of silver, gold and fine clothing to Rebekah and her family (Gen. 24:53, 54).

The following day Rebekah, her handmaidens and all their belongings were prepared for the long journey. When all was loaded upon the camels and with a final blessing from her family, the caravan started back to Canaan.

When Isaac met Rebekah he was impressed by her good manners and beauty. They were married shortly after her arrival (Gen. 24:67). Through this



Isaac was impressed with Rebekah's beauty and good manners when he met her.

couple God would pass on the blessings He had promised to Abraham.

Abraham died at the age of 175. His sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the same cave in which he had buried Sarah 38 years before. Thus ended the life of one of the most important men in all human history.

Most of the promises God made to Abraham were never fulfilled in his lifetime. However, as we will see in this and future lessons, Abraham's descendants through Isaac were to be exceedingly blessed much later because of Abraham's faith and obedience to God. Thus, the blessings enjoyed by the nations of Britain and the United States and other English-speaking peoples over the past 200 or so years have all come as a result of the faith of this one man (Rom. 4:13). These nations have been blessed because they are populated by the "children of Abraham" through his son Isaac and grandson Jacob. (If you are interested in learning more about this ask your parents to read with you Mr. Herbert W.

Armstrong's book, *The United States and Britain In Prophecy*.)

THE BIRTH OF TWO NATIONS

The Bible tells us that Isaac truly *loved* the wife God had selected for him (Gen. 24:67). However, for nearly 20 years they were unable to have a child. Abraham and Sarah had waited 25 years after God promised them a son. Rebekah and Isaac had now waited 20 years for the child(ren) they had prayed for (Gen. 25:20 and 26).

As this long-awaited birth neared, Rebekah realized that all was not going normally with her pregnancy. When she asked God about this she received an unusual but exciting answer.

“Two nations are within you,” God told her, “and two kinds of people will be born from your body. The younger of the two will be the stronger and the older will serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23).

The firstborn, whom they named Esau, was covered from head to toe with red hair! His brother Jacob was born moments later holding onto Esau's heel!

As the two boys grew it was clear to their parents that they were different in many ways. Esau was an outdoorsman. He loved to roam the countryside and became a skilled hunter like his uncle Ishmael. Jacob, on the other hand, stayed near home and learned to manage the family's farm and herds of livestock (Gen. 25:27).

Unwisely, Isaac began to show a greater love for Esau while Rebekah

loved Jacob more. This made the boys grow apart even more as we shall see.

Do You Remember?

1. Abraham's chief servant was sent to Mesopotamia to find a wife for
 - a. himself.
 - b. Abraham.
 - c. Isaac.
 - d. None of the above.
2. God's promised blessings were to be passed on through
 - a. Isaac.
 - b. Ishmael.
 - c. all of Abraham's children.
 - d. None of the above.
3. God revealed to Rebekah that
 - a. Two sons were to be born to her who would become two nations of very different peoples.
 - b. Her twins would be alike in most ways.
 - c. The younger twin would serve his older brother.
 - d. None of the above.
4. Isaac's sons were named _____ and _____.

REBEKAH'S LACK OF FAITH

One time as these brothers grew to adulthood, Esau came in from an unsuccessful hunt, tired and very hungry. He asked Jacob for some food.

“I'll give you all of this soup and bread in exchange for your birthright,” Jacob replied.

Esau was so hungry that he felt he might die if he didn't get something to eat soon. His birthright seemed of little value under these conditions. So he agreed to

sell it to Jacob for the food (Gen. 25:29-34). This was a very foolish decision, but the result fit in with God's overall plan for Abraham's descendants.

Do you know what a birthright is? It is the right of the firstborn son to receive his parent's inheritance. Normally the inheritance, including the blessings promised to Abraham, would have been passed on to Esau, Isaac's eldest son. But Esau gave up his birthright to Jacob. Thus the blessings God originally promised to Abraham were passed on to Jacob.

Years passed and another event occurred between these brothers that greatly affected the remainder of their lives and the lives of their future descendants.



Jacob smiled triumphantly to himself as he watched his brother bolt down the food that cost Esau his birthright.

Isaac was now over 100 years old. He was blind and he felt that he might not live much longer. Before his death he wanted to ask a blessing from God for his eldest son. He called Esau to his side and instructed him to go hunting for a deer. After the hunt Esau was to cook the deer meat (venison) in a way that his father especially liked. Then Isaac would ask God's blessing upon his eldest and favorite son.

Esau gathered his bow and arrows and started off on his hunt.

Meanwhile Rebekah, who had been nearby, heard Isaac's instructions to Esau. Because she loved Jacob more and felt that he would be a better heir to his father, she wanted him to receive Isaac's blessing from God.

She worked out a plan in her mind as she rushed to find Jacob. "Do exactly as I tell you and you shall receive your father's blessing from God," she told Jacob. Rebekah then told Jacob what his father had said to Esau.

"Now, go to the flocks and bring me two young goats," urged Jacob's mother. "I'll cook them the way your father likes his meat. When you take it to him and he eats of it he will ask God's blessing upon you. Hurry now, before Esau returns!"

The whole idea sounded impossible to Jacob. He was sure his father could easily tell him from Esau even though Isaac was blind. But his mother insisted that he hurry.

When Jacob returned Rebekah cooked the goat meat so it smelled and tasted like venison. She then wrapped

Jacob's hands and neck with some of the goat skins and had him put on some of Esau's clothes. Now he would feel and smell like Isaac's favorite son.

"Here I am, father," Jacob called, trying to sound like Esau as he entered Isaac's tent.

"Who are you?" Isaac asked.

"I am Esau, your firstborn son," Jacob lied. "Sit up now and eat of my venison and bless me as you have said."

"How have you found the deer so soon, my son?" Isaac asked, sensing that something wasn't right.

"The Eternal God has shown me where to hunt, my father," lied Jacob again.

"Come near that I might feel you and know that you are Esau," Isaac requested.

After smelling the clothing and feeling the hairy hands, Isaac was still puzzled. "The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are the hairy hands of my son Esau. Are you really my son Esau?"

Once more Jacob lied to his father, assuring him that he was Esau.

Isaac then ate of the food that Jacob brought. Afterward he kissed his son and asked God's richest blessings upon him. Before you read on, turn in your Bible to Genesis 27:28-29 and on the lines below write out this wonderful blessing from God to Jacob. _____

As soon as his father finished his

prayer, Jacob excused himself and hurried from the tent. Moments later Esau arrived with the venison he had prepared. When Isaac heard his son call to him he trembled with emotion.

"Who are you? And who is he who has just given me meat and received God's blessing from me?" Isaac asked in shock.

When Esau heard his father's questioning reply he cried out, "Bless me also, my father!"

Both realized at once what had happened.

"Jacob is well named!" Esau exclaimed bitterly. "His name means supplanter (remover or replacer) and truly he has now taken my place two times. First my birthright and now my blessing also! Have you nothing for me, my father?"

"I have made him your master," Isaac replied sadly. "You and your children shall be servants to Jacob and he shall receive the blessings of heaven and earth!" However, Isaac also had a blessing for Esau, but it was nowhere near as great as Jacob's (Gen. 27:39-40).

This was more than Esau could bear. He expected that his father would die soon. After Isaac's death Esau planned to murder his scheming brother! (Gen. 27:41.) In his anger and bitterness, Esau must have told his plan to someone and somehow Rebekah heard of it.

JACOB'S JOURNEY AND DREAM

Concerned for the life of Jacob, Rebekah thought of a way to protect her

avored son. She went to Isaac to express her fear that Jacob might marry a Canaanite woman as Esau had done. She suggested that Jacob should go to Haran to select a wife. She said nothing to Isaac about her concern for Jacob's life.

Isaac agreed with his wife and instructed Jacob to make the journey to Mesopotamia to seek a wife from his mother's family (Gen. 28:3-4).

With his father's instructions and blessing Jacob set out for the city of Haran, the home of his grandfather Bethuel. He started northward through the central mountains of Canaan. One evening he set up camp near the town of Luz (Gen. 28:11, 19). Before lying down for the night he chose a smooth stone for a pillow. As he fell asleep he began to dream. In his dream he saw a long stairway stretching from the earth up into the sky. Angels moved up and down this huge stairway and the member of the God Family who later became Jesus Christ spoke from above its upper end. "I am the Eternal God of Abraham and Isaac," He said. "I will be with you and protect you on your journey. This land where you lie will become yours and I will bring you back to it again."

This dream seemed so real to Jacob that when he awoke he felt certain that he was at the very location of God's house — at the gateway to God's throne in heaven! He set up the stone he had slept upon as a monument and named the place Bethel, which means "House of God" (Gen. 28:16-22).

This dream affected Jacob deeply. As

he journeyed on toward Haran he was less fearful of his angry brother. He also relied less upon himself and trusted more in God and His promise of protection and guidance.

Do You Remember?

1. Jacob pretended to be his brother Esau in order to
 - a. deceive his aging mother.
 - b. gain favor with God
 - c. receive the firstborn's blessing from his father.
 - d. None of the above.
2. Rebekah had nothing to do with Jacob's stealing his brother's blessing. True ___ False ___.



Using a stone for a pillow, the weary Jacob dreamed of a huge stairway descending from heaven.

3. Jacob dreamed that he saw a stairway leading from the earth to

LIVING IN HARAN

Following many more days of difficult travel, Jacob neared the city of Haran. When he asked shepherds at the city well concerning his Uncle Laban, he was directed to an approaching flock of sheep.

“That is one of Laban’s flocks coming now,” the shepherds replied. “His daughter Rachel is herding them.”

After he helped with the watering of the flocks, Jacob told Rachel who he was. She was so surprised she ran immediately to tell her father. Laban hurried out to meet Jacob and invited him back to his tent.

When Jacob had been in Haran for a month, Laban offered to begin paying him wages for the work he was doing. Jacob considered the matter and then suggested that he work for Laban for seven years in exchange for marriage to his daughter Rachel. Laban tried not to appear too eager as he accepted Jacob’s offer. He would much rather have his daughter marry Jacob than one of the local men of Haran. And seven years labor from a hard worker such as Jacob would be worth a great deal to him.

Jacob had loved Rachel almost from the moment he met her at the well. The years passed for him like a few days as he looked forward to his marriage to this beautiful young woman.

When the seven years were completed, Laban prepared a great feast to

celebrate the marriage. Many people were invited to attend. And as was customary, this would be a week-long celebration!

However, the morning following the first night of the celebration, Jacob was shocked almost beyond belief. In the light of day and with the heavy veil removed, Jacob discovered that he had been married to Laban’s oldest daughter Leah instead of to Rachel! Jacob was learning that his mother’s brother could be just as crafty and deceitful as his own mother. He was furious and went to Laban to demand an explanation.

Laban replied rather matter-of-factly that it was customary in Mesopotamia for the eldest daughter to marry before her younger sisters. “However,” Laban continued, “I will give you Rachel also if you will agree to two conditions.”

Jacob’s trust in his new father-in-law was at a low point as he listened to his conditions. “First, finish out the week-long wedding feast without creating an embarrassing scene before all the leading citizens of the city. And second, work for me another seven years.”

Jacob took a long time before answering.

“I will agree to both conditions,” Jacob finally replied. “Rachel is worth more to me than fourteen years of labor!” Laban sighed deeply and smiled with relief.

At the end of the marriage feast for Leah, Jacob was given Rachel in marriage as well. Marrying more than one woman was a common practice in those times. However, even though God

allowed men to have more than one wife, He intended that each man have only one. The trouble that followed in Jacob's family reveals, in part, why this is not the practice in God's Church today (read Titus 1:6).

JACOB'S FAMILY GROWS

For seven more years Jacob worked for Laban as he had agreed. Leah bore him several sons during this time while Rachel was childless. Rachel became so jealous of her older sister that at one point she foolishly demanded of Jacob, "Give *me* children as you have Leah or I will die!"

"Am I God?" Jacob answered. "Only He can remove the barrenness of your womb!"

Rachel, of course, knew that her demand was foolish. She next decided to use the same plan that Sarah had tried many years before. She offered her personal servant, Bilhah, to Jacob that she might bear a child for her. This only increased the jealousy between the two sisters just as it had between Sarah and Hagar. Next, Leah offered her hand-maiden to Jacob for the same purpose.

By the end of the seven years Jacob had eleven sons by these four women. Only one son was born of his favorite wife, Rachel. Meanwhile, Jacob's work during these fourteen years had made Laban a much richer man. But Jacob had nothing to show for his years of labor other than a temporary home and a large family. He now asked Laban to allow him to go out on his own and begin to build an inheritance for his sons.

"I know that your efforts have made me a richer man," Laban replied. "But you don't have to leave me to begin earning for yourself and your children. Name your wage and I will pay you what you desire."

After discussing the matter they agreed that Jacob would keep as his wages all the spotted and ring-marked animals from Laban's flocks and herds. However, before Jacob could count these animals, Laban sent his men to remove all the males with these markings. By doing this he felt he could prevent all but a very few animals with spots or ring-marks from being born.

As the years passed, however, it became clear that God caused Jacob to prosper in spite of all that Laban did to try to prevent it.

After working six more years for his father-in-law, Jacob's herds and flocks far outnumbered Laban's. Because of this Laban and his sons openly scorned Jacob (Gen. 31:1-2).

Now God once again appeared to Jacob. "Return to the land of your fathers and I will be with you and bless you there as I have done here in Haran," God told him (verse 3).

Jacob was eager to leave Haran now but he was fearful that Laban would try to stop him again. So Jacob waited for a chance to leave secretly. This chance soon came. When Laban was several miles away overseeing the shearing of his sheep, Jacob instructed his workmen to take down his tents and pack all his family's belongings for a long journey.

LESSONS FOR US TODAY

At this point we should pause in our story and review a valuable lesson Jacob was learning — a lesson that we all must learn also. Through the dream at Bethel, God told Jacob to trust not in himself but in God. He and his mother, Rebekah, had tried to work things out their own way rather than turning to God and trusting in Him for the blessings He had promised to Abraham. Their way led to distrust, hatred and even a planned murder.

God wanted Jacob to learn to be open and honest in his dealings — not secretive, scheming and dishonest. He wants these same character traits in each of us as well. We must also learn to be honest and to trust in God to direct events to fit His overall purpose for us.

An important point to remember about God's laws is found in the New Testament in Galatians 6:7. Turn to it and write this scripture on the lines below.

This verse shows that our actions toward others will determine how others act toward us. If we are honest in our dealings with others, God will see to it that in the long run we will receive like treatment in return. Jacob learned this principle of God's Law. Because of his deceitfulness toward Esau, he was

treated in the same way by Laban years later.

Remember this New Testament scripture and Old Testament example whenever you are tempted to be dishonest or deceitful. Do not deceive yourself into thinking you can get away with breaking God's Law in any way. God's penalty for sin is *automatic* and *sure*! Weeks or months or years may pass, but eventually "you will reap what you have sown."

Jacob learned this lesson well. After twenty years of working for a deceitful father-in-law, he was totally cured of treating others this way. As you continue to read about Jacob's life you will see this clearly. From this point on, his dealings with Laban, Esau and others were always open and honest.

How honest are you? It's not too early for you to practice this lesson in your own life. Try it. You will see God's laws in action in your own life just as you have seen them in Jacob's life.

Do You Remember?

1. Jacob worked many years in order to marry _____, Laban's younger daughter.
2. Crafty Laban deceived Jacob into marrying _____, his oldest daughter.
3. By the time Jacob left Haran his sons numbered _____.
4. A basic principle of God's Law is that we shall reap _____.

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Produced in cooperation with Imperial Schools.

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BIBLE MEMORY

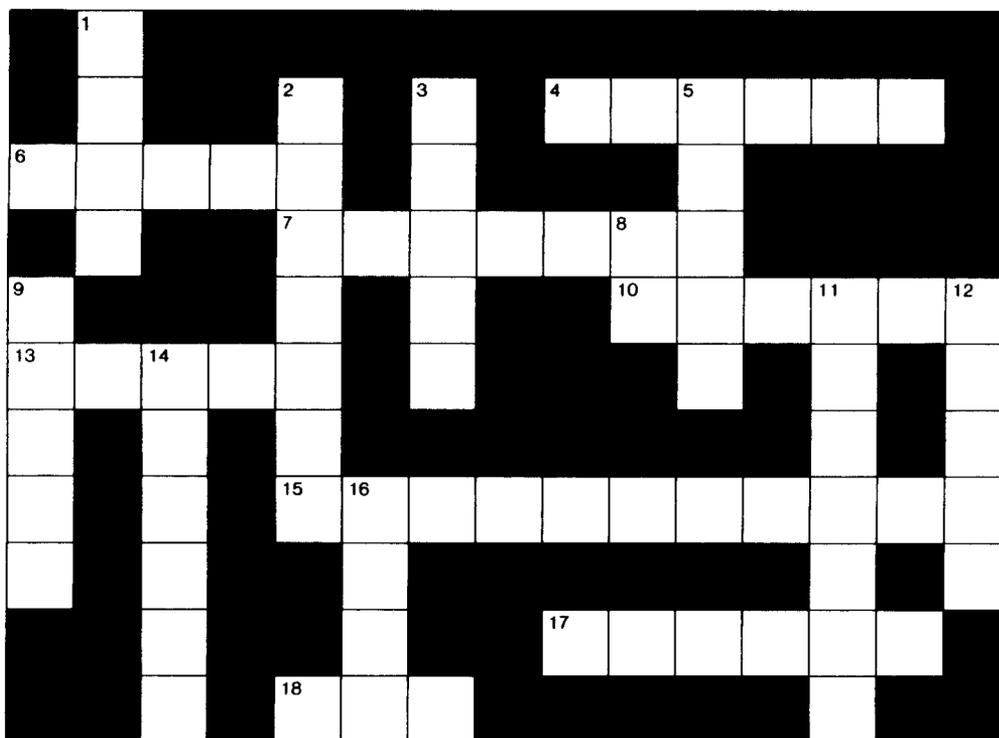
Twelve Tribes
of Israel

Reuben
Simeon
Levi
Judah

Zebulun
Issachar
Dan
Gad

Asher
Naphtali
Joseph (Ephraim, Manasseh)
Benjamin

PEOPLE AND PLACES
CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

- 4. Name of land promised to Abraham
- 6. Isaac's younger son
- 7. Isaac's wife
- 10. Name of land where Isaac was to be sacrificed
- 13. Abraham's wife
- 15. Land of Abraham's nativity
- 17. City name, means "House of God"
- 18. City near where Jacob dreamed of a stairway into the sky

DOWN

- 1. Jacob's first wife
- 2. "The Father of the Faithful"
- 3. Jacob's father-in-law
- 5. Abraham's brother
- 8. "I ___" — name of God
- 9. Abraham's promised son
- 11. Isaac's half-brother
- 12. City where Laban lived
- 14. Jacob's second wife
- 16. Jacob's brother

The answers will be in your next lesson.