

General Church Education



Jacob Returns Home

Genesis 32:24-32

Lesson 13

Jacob's Ladder Religion Lessons

Level 2: The Lord Is Our Shepherd

For ages 7-8 years

Jacob Returns Home

Genesis 32:24-32

Ideas for Parents & Teachers

Twin sons represent goodness and truth. Esau represents goodness or love and Jacob represents truth. As Esau was born first and Jacob followed, so love is more important than truth. However, Jacob becoming master for a time shows how truth must take the lead in our lives to being with. We must work hard to understand what is right and to do it. The truth tells us what is good so that we can love it. If we are faithful, in time, our actions will come from the love in our hearts. Then goodness takes the lead and understanding is the servant; they work together. This happens gradually and always involves temptation. During temptation it may seem as if we are struggling against the Lord, but we are really struggling with our own selfish desires (see *Arcana Coelestia* 4287). We can overcome temptation only with the Lord's help. Then, like Jacob, we gain a new name which stands for a new heavenly quality in our life.

The Lord protected and led Jacob on his long journey from home. Because of Jacob's faith and willingness to work hard, he was blessed with a large family and much wealth. Finally, the Lord led Jacob back to his home to be the new patriarch of the Hebrew Nation—the Children of Israel.

Ideas for Children

- Moral concepts of honor, kindness and forgiveness are illustrated.
- The Lord protects and provides for us.
- The Lord always rewards those who trust and obey Him.

From the Writings

Most Christians think that the forgiveness of sins involves washing them away, like the removal of dirt by water, and that after forgiveness people are clean and pure. The Lord forgives everyone their sins. But they are not forgiven unless a person sincerely repents, refrains from evils, and then leads a life of faith and charity. Then the person receives new spiritual life from the Lord. When a person then looks at the evils of his former life, turns away from them, and abhors them, his evils are forgiven. For the person is now kept in truths and good by the Lord and held back from evils.

Forgiveness of sins cannot take place within an hour, nor within a year. The church knows this, for it says to those who attend the Holy Supper that their sins are forgiven if they begin a new life by refraining from evils and abhorring them. See *Arcana Coelestia* 9014

The sins which a person commits constitute his actual life. No one therefore is freed from sins unless he receives new life from the Lord, which is accomplished through regeneration. No person left to himself is able to do what is good or think what is true; he can do so only with the Lord's help, as is clear in John, "A person cannot receive anything unless it is given them from heaven" (John 3:27). No one can forgive sins except the Lord alone. See *Arcana Coelestia* 9444-9445

Jacob Returns Home

In our last story Jacob left his uncle Laban secretly. Why did Jacob go without telling Laban? (Laban did not want Jacob to leave because Laban had grown rich while Jacob worked for him.)

Can you describe how Jacob and Laban finally parted as friends? (Laban followed after Jacob but the Lord told Laban not to harm him. They made a heap of stones where they promised not to harm each other.)

You remember that eleven sons and one daughter were born to Jacob while he was living in Haran. After Joseph was born to Rachel, his beloved wife, Jacob wanted to return to the home of his father.

Jacob Prepares to Meet Esau

What do you think Jacob was worried about as he came closer to home? How had his brother Esau felt about Jacob when he left twenty years ago? (Esau was so angry about losing the birthright and the blessing that he wanted to kill Jacob.) Jacob was afraid Esau was still angry. He became even more afraid when he heard that Esau was coming toward him with four hundred men. So Jacob did two things.

First, he divided up all the people who were with him into two companies or groups. He thought that if Esau came as an enemy to take revenge and captured one company, the others



might still be able to escape. Then, after praying and asking for the Lord's help, Jacob began to send gifts to Esau. He hoped that these gifts would make his brother feel friendly toward him. What kinds of gifts might Jacob have sent? He sent groups of goats, camels, cattle and donkeys. With each group of animals, he told his servants to tell Esau that these were gifts to Esau, whom he called "my lord," from "his servant Jacob."

Does this remind you of Isaac's blessing to Esau? Esau's blessing promised that in time Esau would break his brother's yoke from his neck and be his own master. Does it sound like this is happening now? Jacob had one more struggle before he actually met his brother. Read and find out about this struggle.

Read Genesis 32:24-25. Jacob sent his family over a nearby brook and passed the night alone. But a very strange thing happened. An angel came, and Jacob wrestled with the angel all night. Jacob seemed to conquer, but what happened to him? (His hip was out of joint which made him lame.)

Jacob must have felt very much alone and the night must have seemed very long. But he held on in this struggle and would not let go of the angel. Finally he asked for a blessing. Let's find out what happened.

Read Genesis 32:26-32. What new thing did Jacob get after he struggled so long and hard? (A new name: Israel.)

You notice that his new name ends with what two letters? (EL.) These letters form one of the Hebrew names for God and are found in many other Hebrew names as well. For example, you can see these letters at the end of Bethel, which means "house of God." The new name of Israel means "prince of God." This name change meant that Jacob or Israel would feel even closer to the Lord and that he would feel strength from the Lord as he came home to establish his family in Canaan.

Does this name change remind you of others you have learned about? (Abraham and Sarah had an "H" from Jehovah added to their names to show their closeness to the Lord.)

From this point on Jacob is called Israel. Have you heard of the twelve sons of Israel? You will often hear of the twelve sons of Israel because they became the heads of the twelve tribes whose stories are told in the Old Testament. Do you know the name of the twelfth son? (Benjamin.) Benjamin, the youngest son, was born after Jacob and his family returned to the land of Canaan. Rachel was his mother as well as Joseph's.

Jacob had trusted and obeyed the Lord through all the years when he was away from the home that he loved so much. Now he was finally coming home.

Do you remember the dream Jacob had on the first night of his journey away from home? (Angels on the ladder to heaven and the Lord at the top.) What did the Lord promise Jacob? (To be with him on his journey and bring him safely home again.) What did Jacob promise the Lord? (To worship Him and to give a tenth of all he had to the Lord.)



When Jacob finally met his brother, it was a friendly meeting. They hugged each other and cried with joy. Esau forgave Jacob, and the brothers became friends. Esau wanted Jacob to live near him, but both of them had become rich and had large families and many possessions. It would be difficult for so many people to be close and live off the land, so Esau lived in the mountains of Edom and Jacob went back to the place near Shechem where Abraham had camped when he first came to live in Canaan. He was reunited with his father Isaac after all those years.

Forgiveness and Mercy

Esau forgave his brother Jacob. What is forgiveness? It means to stop being angry and wanting to punish someone for what they did that was wrong. Here it means that Jacob would not be punished for deceiving and stealing from Esau. And Esau did not hold on to any bad feelings about Jacob because of what he had done. Esau treated Jacob kindly even though Jacob had done things that really hurt him.

Did Jacob deserve to be forgiven? He seems to have grown kinder and less selfish. When you have hurt someone, do you feel that you would like to be forgiven and get a new chance to try again? Yes, we all have times when we need to be forgiven. The Lord knows that, and He is always willing to forgive us if we are truly sorry for what we have done. When we are truly sorry, we try not to repeat the hurtful behavior. The two brothers became friends and lived in peace. Forgiveness and mercy help us experience the love and peace of heaven.

Discussion Questions

- What was Jacob worried about as he prepared to go home? (That Esau was still angry with him and would be his enemy.)
- What can you tell about Jacob's last night by himself on the journey home? (He wrestled with an angel and received a new name: Israel.)
- What is important about the name Israel? (It ends with "El" from one of the Lord's names in Hebrew and therefore shows that Jacob or Israel was close to God. It means "prince of God.")
- Why do you think Jacob was led back to his beloved home and forgiven by his brother? (Jacob had worked hard and tried to be an honorable man for twenty years in Haran. Jacob trusted and obeyed the Lord. The Lord had promised to protect him and bring him home.)
- Were you surprised at the friendly meeting of Jacob and Esau? Why do you think forgiveness and mercy are important for people to live together? (Everyone makes mistakes. The Lord wants us to forgive each other when we are sorry for what we have done.)

Activity Overview | Jacob Returns Home

Recitation

Learn the recitation by heart.

Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it.... This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven! Genesis 28:16-17

Songs

The Twelve Sons of Israel

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-the-twelve-sons-of-israel/>

Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me

Listen or download at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/song-jesus-tender-shepherd-hear-me/>

Activities

Choose one or two.

- Activity 1 | Animals for Esau Mural
- Activity 2 | Make a Picture of the Lord's Face
- Picture to color

Additional Activity Ideas

- Try to memorize the twelve tribes of Israel by watching *The Twelve Sons of Jacob* video at <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-the-twelve-sons-of-jacob-song/>

Activity 1 | Animals for Esau Mural

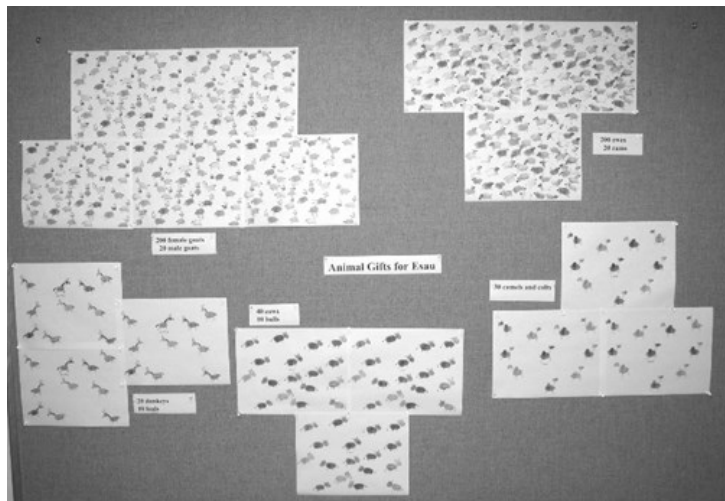
Use finger and thumb prints to make a mural depicting the animals Jacob prepared as a gift for Esau. Add legs and facial details with a fine-tip marker or pen. *Note:* if completing this activity with a group of children each child could represent one kind of animal with a thumb-print image. If completing the activity with an individual child, choose a way of representing these large numbers, e.g. one animal print per 10 animals of each kind.

Materials

- 1 large piece colored paper for mounting the finished project
- blank pieces of white paper to make animal stamps
- black stamp pad
- black fine tip marker or pen
- list of animals Jacob sent ahead as gifts for Esau

Instructions

1. Review the animals Jacob sent as gifts for Esau:
 - 220 goats (200 female; 20 male)
 - 220 sheep (200 female; 20 male)
 - 30 camels with their young
 - 50 cows (40 female; 10 male)
 - 20 donkeys and 10 foals
2. Learn how to make each animal by following the directions on the following page.
3. Give child(ren) directions to follow so they can make their own prints.
4. Mount finished print pages together to create a mural.



Activity 1 | Animals for Esau Mural

GOAT



Thumb-print body



Pinkie-print head



2 lines for neck



4 lines for legs



Nose, ear, eye



Curly horn, tail

SHEEP



Thumb-print body



Pinkie-print head



4 lines for legs



Ear, tail



Nose, eye

CAMEL



Thumb-print body



Pinkie-print head



Pinkie-print hump



2 lines for neck



4 lines for legs



Ears, nose, tail

COW



Thumb-print body



Finger-print head



2 lines for neck



4 lines for legs



Horns, tail

DONKEY



Thumb-print body



Pinkie-print head



2 lines for neck



4 lines for legs



Mane, tail



Nose, ears, eye

Activity 2 | Make a Picture of the Lord's Face

Jacob is frightened about meeting Esau because of the unjust things he did to him (stealing the birthright and blessing). When they meet though, Esau forgives Jacob and Jacob begs him to accept his gift. He says that in seeing Esau's face it was "as though [he] had seen the face of God" (v. 10).

- What does God's face look like?
- The angels see Him in the sun of heaven.
- He is always before them.
- What qualities might we see in the Lord's face?

Make a picture of the Lord's face and hang it where it can be seen to remind you that the Lord is always with you. Choose one of the following methods to make a special picture.

Supplies

paint crayons, crayons or colored pencils

paper

options: chalk in soft sun colors, adhesive magnets or a clear plastic frame with magnet on the back

Project Method Choices

1. Using paint crayons draw the Lord's face on a piece of paper. Wash over the drawing with water to create a special effect.
2. Draw the Lord's face on a piece of paper. Cut a sun shape around the drawing. Chalk around the drawing with soft sun colors to show the Lord as the angels see Him in heaven.
3. Draw a small picture of the Lord's face. Attach a magnet to the back or frame in a clear plastic frame and display on an appliance such as a refrigerator.

