

Dear Friends,

GENESIS 28: 10-11

Jacob is in a deserted, desolate place. He is the one who prefers the indoor life of the tents to the outdoor life of the field. But he is away from home and preparing to sleep outside. The sun sets. Remember this moment. Keep your eyes open for when the sun rises again. The sun having gone down Jacob is in the dark. There is darkness all around him, there is darkness within him. Jacob is the great schemer, who is always cooking something up. But for him things have not gone according to plan. He's been forced to run away in order to save his own skin. What's happened since we last met him?

Well, we watched him trick his twin brother. He persuaded Esau to sell his precious birthright for one simple bowl of lentil stew. This first act of deceit was followed by another. The second was cooked up by Rebekah, Esau and Jacob's mother. Isaac, their father, wanted to give his blessing to Esau as his firstborn and favourite child. Rebekah was aware of this and took action. She had received the oracle in which it was revealed that Jacob would be the stronger one whom Esau would serve. In wresting Isaac's blessing away from Esau and to Jacob, Rebekah may only have been trying to be in tune with the prophecy. Or it may just have been that Jacob was her favourite child. To get the blessing Jacob had to pretend to be Esau. Isaac asked him "Who are you?" And he replied "I am Esau". Jacob may suffer for this later. He who deceived his father may one day be deceived himself.

When Esau finds out that Jacob has tricked him a second time, he is furious. He knows that Isaac will soon die. He decides that when this happens, he will kill Jacob. Rebekah becomes aware of his plans and makes a plan of her own. A plan to keep Jacob safe. She sends him away to her brother Laban. She says that it will be "for a while". She can't bear the thought of being separated from her favourite son for too long, so it will only be "for a while".

Rebekah also has another reason to send Jacob away. Esau has married two Hittite women. Rebekah feels that they have made her life bitter. She does not want any more of that with Jacob. She persuades Isaac to send Jacob back to her country. There her brother Laban has daughters. It would be better for Jacob to marry one of them. Abraham's servant took the same journey to find a wife for Isaac. He went with ten camels and great wealth. Jacob goes on foot with just his staff, which acts as a stick to help him on his journey and weapon should he need protection.

Rebekah and Jacob say their goodbyes. They put on brave faces. Rebekah watches Jacob go. When he's far enough away so that she knows he won't be able to see, she allows herself to cry. She comforts herself with the thought that it's just "for a while". She will never see him again.

God bless you,

Tony