

The Story of Joseph

Deceiving Jacob

Part 8 – March 11, 2012

Remember what it says at the *very beginning* of our story?



This is the account of *Jacob*. – *Genesis 37:2a NIV*

It's the account of how God changed the heart of a dyed-in-the-wool deceiver. Flashback 107 years to the birth of Jacob and Esau. While she was pregnant, God had told Rebekah, the wife of Isaac (brother of Ishmael) that her older son would serve the younger. (Gen 25:23)

The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him [Hairy] Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping [Hairy's] Esau's heel; so he was named [Foot Grabber] Jacob. [And because of Foot Grabber's later reputation, his name also came to mean the deceiver; and etymologists (people who know where words come from) say that's the origin of saying that someone is "pulling your leg"] – *Genesis 25:24-26a NIV*

Now, flash-forward 107 years back to our story ...

Then they got Joseph's robe, slaughtered a goat and *dipped the robe in the blood*. – *Genesis 37:31 NIV*



They wouldn't waste the meat *or* the moment. It's a readymade feast to celebrate the new color on that hated coat: *red!* But then, they'd seen red whenever they looked at it.

Flashback to Jacob as a young man, cooking up his favorite recipe: Scheming Red Stew ...

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" (That is why he was also called [red] Edom.) Jacob replied, "First sell me your birthright." "Look, I am about to die," Esau said. "What good is the birthright to me?" But Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. [Jacob was conniving his plan long before Esau was considering his future] – *Genesis 25:29-33 NIV*



Now flash-forward to when Jacob is 76 years old.

Under the direction of his deceptive mother, Rebekah, Jacob undertakes a daring plan to deceive *his* father, a now-blind Isaac, with a dead goat and *his* brother's best clothes!

Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the Lord before I die.' Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies." Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing." His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me." So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took *the best clothes of Esau* her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing." Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The Lord your God gave me success," he replied. Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not." Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied. Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing." Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me." So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed." – *Genesis 27:6-27 NIV*

Generational sin isn't a mystery; it's pretty matter of fact. Kids absorb the dysfunction they grow up in. So, if we refuse to identify and deal with it, it'll be reflected in our children.

Flash-forward 31 years: there's no gentleness or preparation for the tragic news. Jacob's sons want to hurt him for neglecting, rejecting, and hurting *them*.

They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." [They're good. Deceiving without *technically* lying. They let Jacob jump to his own conclusions] – *Genesis 37:32 NIV*

We're all born believing that we're precious, and we *are*; because we're created in God's image. But we're precious *and* blemished. So when a parent fails to cherish us as our intuitive expectation requires, anger, bitterness, and resentment sets in. It's a type of neglect that leaves us feeling unworthy of loving attention.



Jacob excelled in raising blemished kids, both in his family and his flock.

Flashback 17 years: a 90-year-old Jacob is about to leave Uncle Laban's (the brother of Jacob's deceptive mother), until that is, Jacob strikes a deal with his deceptive uncle ...

“What shall I give you?” [Laban] asked. “Don’t give me anything,” Jacob replied. “But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages.” ... “Agreed,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.” That same day [Uncle Laban] removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. – *Genesis 30:31-32, 34-35 NIV*

[But God miraculously intervenes, as Jacob later recalls] “In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were *streaked, speckled or spotted*. The angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ I answered, ‘Here I am.’ And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are *streaked, speckled or spotted*, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.’” – *Genesis 31:10-12 NIV*

What an incredible insight! Jacob gets to be the first person in recorded history to practice selective breeding! And it’s *so simple* ... maybe *too simple* ... it can’t be *that simple* ...

Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, they mated in front of the branches. And [“Abracadabra!”] they bore young that were *streaked or speckled or spotted*. – *Genesis 30:37-39 NIV*

God was faithful, but Jacob’s self-delusional magic only deepened his self-destructive assumption that God’s Word *plus* a little prestidigitation and manipulation was a *winning* combination!



Today, there are a variety of Jacob Sheep. But the pure breed is thought to have originated in Syria more than 3,000 years ago. They have four black horns, and they look like little Holstein cows! Talk about *precious and blemished*! Jacob did this for six years.

By the way, etymologists trace “abracadabra” back to the Hebrew word, “avra k’davra”, which means “It will pass as I speak”.

Isn’t this what we tend to do? God’s Word *plus* maybe a few words and manipulations of my own? God wants us to do everything we possibly can within His Word and absolutely nothing without. Instead of his streaked, speckled, and spotted flock symbolizing God’s sovereignty and grace, Jacob’s blemished flock embodied (literally) and epitomized his lack of trust in the Lord.

Now, 11 years later, God allows the schemer to be schemed, the tricker to be tricked, the deluded deceiver to experience the ultimate deception, to bring about a deep work within his soul.

He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces.” – *Genesis 37:33 NIV*

The irony is, it's the *brother's* who've been deceived, by an adversary who prowls like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet 5:8) They end up *consumed* by guilt and shame and fear. In Revelation (12:9-10), Satan is referred to by his strategy; he's called both the deceiver *and* the accuser. That's *how* he devours! He tries to tempt and frighten us into adding our *abracadabra* to God's promises, and then relentlessly accuses us for doing it.

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth [A coarse, black cloth] and mourned for his son many days. [And after this time of mourning is over, the sons begin to realize the magnitude of the error that they've made in calculating their father's response] All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son." So his father wept for him. – Genesis 37:34-35 NIV

He'd rather die and be with Joseph than live and stay with them! His grief is compounded by the fact that *he* was the one who sent Joseph all alone, so far from home, on such a dangerous journey. Grief is necessary and healthy. But Jacob's grief is abnormally prolonged, and desperate. His grief consumes him for 22 years!

Even as we grieve, our eyes should be on God. But Jacob's eyes are only on the grave; and he grieves as one *without* hope. This is the brokenness of a schemer, God has mercifully brought to the utter end of his ability to manipulate and control. And now he must learn to completely trust.

With his eyes on the grave, he's temporarily lost sight of God's promise to bring His unblemished Word through Jacob's very blemished family in order to redeem those who will trust.

... it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed ... but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. – 1 Peter 1:18-19 NIV

And when Jesus returns, riding a white horse into the battle in the valley of Armageddon, (Rev 16:16) guess what Jesus is wearing. Flash-forward to the end of the age ...

He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. – Revelation 19:13 NIV

Whose blood is on His robe: His enemies'? Nope, He's coming *to* the battle, it hasn't begun. It's His *own*, it's the precious *and unblemished*, atoning blood of the Lamb of God! And guess what lies at the southeast entrance into the Valley of Armageddon (a.k.a. Jezreel Valley) ... Dothan! The *same* Dothan where the brothers sold Joseph, and dipped his coat in blood.

And what happens just after Jesus wins this battle?! The deceiver, the accuser, the one who roars like a ferocious animal seeking whom he may devour, Satan himself is thrown into ... *the pit!* The *bottomless, waterless pit!* (Rev 20:3)

Joseph's robe represents the sin of those abracadabra-brothers, being *temporarily* covered up by the blood of a blemished goat. Jesus' robe represents the sin of those who trust in the Word of God, forever washed away by the blood of the unblemished Lamb.

It all comes down to those who trust and those who don't, those who bow and those who won't.