

CHAPTER 3

SCHEMING JACOB

There are many who scheme and connive and plot and deceive as they travel down life's road. They do this in order to try to benefit and better themselves. Instead of trusting the Lord for His best they try to work things out their way. Often they want what is good (happiness, security, freedom, a bright future, a good marriage, etc.) but they try to obtain what is good in the wrong way.

Are you a schemer? Are you a trickster? Jacob certainly was, and in this chapter we will look at some of the tricks he played. We will also see that God allowed Jacob to be tricked, just as he had tricked others. It does not pay to scheme and Jacob had to learn this the hard way.

The "Heel-Catcher" is Born

Isaac's wife Rebekah had twins. According to Genesis 25:25, who was the elder of the two (the one to come out first)? _____ Who was the younger of the two (Genesis 25:26)? _____ As Jacob was born, what did he grab with his hand (Genesis 25:26)? _____

The name "JACOB" means "heel-catcher, supplanter, one who takes the place of another by treachery or trickery." Did Esau think that Jacob was given the right name (Genesis 27:36)? _____

The Whole Family Was Guilty

Before the boys were born God told Rebekah something very important: "and the _____ shall serve the _____" (Genesis 25:23). Who was the ELDER? _____ Who was the YOUNGER? _____ Thus, God was saying that _____ would serve _____. According to God, which son would be BLESSED, Jacob or Esau? _____

1) **Isaac was guilty.** Even though God had said that the blessing would go to Jacob, Isaac was determined to give it to his favorite son Esau (see Genesis 25:28; 27:1,4). He was fighting against God's will.

2) **Rebekah was guilty.** Even though Rebekah knew God's promise that Jacob (her favorite son) would be blessed, she still tried to bring this about by a deceptive scheme (Genesis 25:28; 27:6-10). She tried to get the right thing in the wrong way.

3) **Jacob was guilty.** He went along with his mother's scheme and became a deceiver and a liar (Genesis 27:12,19).

4) *Esau was guilty*. Esau wanted the blessing that really did not belong to him and when he lost the blessing he was angry to the point of wanting to commit murder (Genesis 27:41). Compare Hebrews 12:16-17.

Every member of the family was in the wrong! But God was in the right and God was working out His wonderful plan.

Scheme #1--Taking Away the Birthright

According to Genesis 25:27, who was the outdoor man and who was the indoor man?

_____ One day Esau came home from the field famished. Jacob happened to have just what Esau wanted: POTTAGE (lentil stew). Instead of giving him the pottage for free Jacob took advantage of the opportunity (see Genesis 25:29-34). He made a deal with his brother: "Esau, you have what I want and I have what you want. I'll give you the pottage and you give me your birthright!" Jacob was able to get Esau to "sign on the dotted line" and the deal was made! Esau was tricked and later he would be very sorry for what he had done (Genesis 27:36).

LESSON:	There are some things in life more important than filling your stomach. Esau was wise for a few minutes but a fool for the rest of his life. He thoughtlessly threw away something very valuable for something that was not very valuable (Hebrews 12:16). Can you think of people living today who act as Esau did?
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Scheme #2--Taking Away the Blessing

We read about Scheme #2 in Genesis chapter 27. Jacob and Esau are no longer boys. They are 77 years old. Their father Isaac is very aged. He is 137 years old and he could not see (Genesis 27:1).

Read Genesis 27:8,12-13. Should parents always be obeyed? _____ Should Jacob have obeyed Rebekah in this case? _____ Why or why not?

_____ In Genesis 27:12 what word describes what Jacob actually was? _____ Consider Genesis 27:13. Suppose you have a friend that wants you to participate in something that is wrong (going to a wrong place or doing something that is wrong). Suppose your friend says something like Rebekah said to Jacob: "Don't worry. If we get caught, I'll take all the blame." What is wrong with this kind of thinking? Is it possible for a person to do wrong and not suffer the consequences? Read Matthew 27:24-25. The Jews said, "We'll take the blame for crucifying Christ. Don't worry Pilate. You just let us do what we want to do and we will take full responsibility." Did this make Pilate innocent? _____ Even though Pilate washed his hands, did God consider him innocent? _____ Did Pilate sin too (see John 19:11)? _____

Rebekah knew God's promise (Genesis 25:23) but she tried a carnal scheme to try to bring it to pass. And Jacob (who was certainly old enough to know better) went along with this scheme and fully participated in the deception.

LESSON #1-	LET US NOT DO EVIL THAT GOOD MAY COME (Romans 3:8). Rebekah and Jacob had a good goal in mind: to get God's promised blessing. But they did evil to try to get the good. This is the sinful philosophy that says the END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS . This is not so! A good end (the promised blessing) does not justify sinful means (trying to deceive Jacob and lying to him). If God has promised us blessing, then we should let Him bring the blessing in His time and in His way.
LESSON #2-	BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT (Numbers 32:23). Rebekah and Jacob were totally exposed and their deception was brought to light. As we are going to see, Jacob's sin was going to catch up with him! Instead of being the DECEIVER he is going to be the one DECEIVED!
LESSON #3-	GOD REIGNS! God is so great that He is even able to use man's evil schemes to bring about His purposes. Man is the wicked culprit and God righteously carries out His wonderful plan. God can use the evil scheme of Joseph's brothers to bring about His will (Genesis 50:20). God can even use the scheming plot of a Judas to accomplish His purpose (Luke 22:22). Read Acts 2:23. Explain how this verse shows that God was able to take the worst crime ever committed by men and use it to accomplish His good purposes.

Jacob Encounters Some Problems

Usually our evil plans and plots do not work out as well as we had hoped. What was the first question Isaac asked (Genesis 27:18)? _____ Jacob was probably hoping that he would not have to lie with his mouth, but his sin of deception led to the next sin of lying (like the downward spiral we talked about in the last chapter).

Notice the next embarrassing question that the father asked in verse 20. "How did you kill the animals and prepare the meat so quickly? Esau usually takes more time than this!" Notice how Jacob answers (verse 20). Not only does he lie but he brings God's Name into it! Does this make the sin even worse?

In verse 21 Isaac says, "Come near. I want to FEEL you!" Jacob surely must have been getting hot under his goat's collar by now! Notice verse 24. Lie follows lie!

Isaac Gets Right With the Lord

Isaac was determined to give his blessing to his favorite son Esau even though God had revealed otherwise (see Genesis 25:23). Finally when Isaac discovered that he had been tricked into blessing Jacob, he "trembled very exceedingly" (literally, he trembled with a great trembling greatly)--see Genesis 27:33. **HE WAS CAUGHT IN THE ACT!** God caught up with Isaac and Isaac finally realized it. He realized that he was tricked into doing what he should have done all along! It is as if Isaac were saying, "Lord, You are right and I am wrong. I have been fighting against Your will all these years but now I'm ready to surrender. I want You to have Your way! I have blessed Jacob and **HE SHALL BE BLESSED** (Genesis 27:33)."

Jacob Goes To Get A Wife

Jacob made a journey to Haran to find a wife. When a man is 77 years old it is a good time to begin thinking about marriage! Jacob's mother Rebekah was also from Haran. Jacob began his journey not only to find a wife but also to get away from Esau (see Genesis 27:41-43).

This was a dangerous and difficult trip. Jacob had to travel hundreds of miles **ALONE**. And remember, he was not the kind of person who loved the great "out-of-doors." He enjoyed staying at home near Mother (Genesis 25:27). It was on this trip that God met with Jacob in a special way (Genesis 28:10-22). God began doing a work in Jacob's heart, but there were still many lessons that God had to teach Jacob. Finally Jacob arrived at his destination and he met Laban (Genesis 29:13-14). **JACOB HAS FINALLY MET HIS MATCH!** Laban wasted no time in hatching a fantastic plot to catch the heel-catcher and to out-deceive the deceiver! Jacob's sin was going to catch up to him!

The Trickster Is Tricked!

Laban happened to have just what Jacob wanted: **RACHEL** (see Genesis 29:15-20). Instead of giving him Rachel for free, Laban took advantage of the opportunity. He made a deal with Jacob. Does this remind you of the deal that Jacob once made with hungry Esau? (see Scheme #1)

It is as if Laban were saying something like this: "Jacob, you have what I want and I have what you want. I'll give you Rachel and you give me seven years of hard work." Laban was able to get Jacob to "sign on the dotted line" and the deal was made! This again reminds us of the time Jacob forced Esau to sign on the dotted line!

Seven years seemed like nothing to Jacob (Genesis 29:20). He would gladly have "climbed the highest mountain, crossed the hottest desert and sailed the deepest ocean" for her! He would gladly put in seven years for the girl he loved!

At the end of these seven years Jacob is 84 years old. The time has come for the wedding (Genesis 29:21-22). Instead of giving him Rachel, who did Laban give him (Genesis 29:23)? _____ Remember, during the wedding the bride is veiled! Jacob thought that it was Rachel but he was completely mistaken, and in the morning, "BEHOLD, IT WAS _____" (Genesis 29:25). Jacob was tricked! Does this remind you of another earlier case of mistaken identity?

You can imagine the conversation of that night:

JACOB:	"The voice does not sound familiar. Who are you?"
LEAH:	"(in a pretend voice) I'm Rachel." Compare Genesis 27:18,19,22 and see Scheme #2. The heel-catcher was caught! The fox was out-foxed!

What Should Jacob Have Done?

Laban explained to Jacob that it was a custom in that country not to give the younger daughter before the firstborn daughter (Genesis 29:26). Wasn't it nice of Laban to wait until now to tell him of this custom! Laban told him that he could also have Rachel in seven days but there was a catch to it: "You have to work **seven more years** to pay for both wives!" See Genesis 29:26-27.

What should Jacob have done when he discovered that it was Leah instead of Rachel? He should have done just what his father did when he discovered that it was Jacob instead of Esau. He should have "trembled with a very great trembling." He should have cried out and said, "Lord, my sin has caught up with me! The way I have been treated and tricked is just how I treated and tricked my father. Lord, You have now trapped me and I am getting just what I deserve. Help me to be content with Leah. I want to do Your will!"

Did Jacob do this? _____ Instead of claiming the wife God had given him, he H _____ her (Genesis 29:31)! He hated the wife that God gave to him! But the Lord greatly blessed Leah. God gave her six children (three times more children than any of Jacob's other wives had. His other three wives each had only two children), and most importantly God made Leah the mother of the Messiah! Leah gave birth to JUDAH and Christ came from the line of Judah (Matthew 1:2-3).

The Deceiver Is Deceived Again

Read Genesis 37:31-35. Isaac was deceived by his son Jacob. Was Jacob ever deceived by his sons? Jacob used the skin of a goat to deceive his father into thinking that he was hairy Esau. Was Jacob deceived by the use of a goat? _____ Esau learned of the deception on the very same day, but Jacob did not learn of the deception against him until years later when he finally discovered that Joseph was alive. Scheming Jacob had to learn some very hard lessons during his life.

It does not pay to scheme and connive and plot and deceive. It does pay to trust the Lord and let Him work things out. Remember, there will always be those who like Jacob will be deceiving and being deceived (see 2 Timothy 3:12-17). But keep in mind that there is one Person that you will never be able to trick: "Be not _____; God is not _____ for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (GALATIANS 6:7). Jacob sowed deception and later that's exactly what he reaped. May we not follow in his steps.
