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The Faith of Jacob

11: 21

The faith of Jacob DIG: Does it surprise you that Jacob is in the Hall of Faith? Why? Why not? How would you characterize Jacob's faith throughout his lifetime? What were Jacob's failures? Then why is Jacob in the Hall of Faith? How do we know that the blessings Jacob gave to his two adopted sons is an example of faith concerning future things?

REFLECT: Do you know anyone who is a righteous person that others think badly of? Who are some contemporary "heroes of faith" that encourage you today? What does it mean to you to have your sins forgotten as far as the east is from the west? What kind of blessings have you given to your children? How will you be remembered?

The Bible says that **those who are righteous will live their lives by faith (Hebrews 10:38 CJB quoting Habakkuk 2:4 CJB)**. Therefore, many people don't understand why **Jacob** would be included in the Hall of **Faith**. After all, wasn't **he** a liar, a deceiver? Didn't **he** steal the birthright from **his** brother Esau? Well . . . **Jacob** certainly wasn't perfect, but in contrast to **his** brother, **Jacob was a righteous man (Genesis 25:27)**. The NIV says **Jacob was a quiet man**, and the NKJ says **he was a mild man**. But the Hebrew word *tam* is *always* translated elsewhere as *righteous, perfect, or upright, whole, complete, blameless or without blemish*. For example, when speaking of **Noah**, the Bible says: **Noah was a righteous (tam) man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God (Genesis 6:9)**. **ADONAI** puts **Jacob** in the same company as **Noah**. And again, when the **LORD** was speaking to Satan **He** said: **Have you considered my servant Job. There is no one like him; he is blameless and upright (tam), a man who fears God and shuns evil (Job 1:8)**. Again, **ADONAI** puts **Jacob** in the same company as **Job**. It does not mean sinless perfection, but it has the sense of *righteousness, or a man whose heart is right towards God*. As a result, the word *tam* is *never* translated **quiet** or **mild** anywhere else in the TaNaKh. Then why is it translated **quiet** or **mild** in most Bible translations? Not because it doesn't make sense in the context, but because it does not fit people's preconceived notions about **Jacob**. Here is the beginning of this trend that the way **Jacob** is portrayed by Scripture (*tam*) is the opposite of the way **he** has been portrayed by many

pastors, commentators and even some Bible translators. This is a very dangerous proposition (**Revelation 22:18-19**).



Therefore, because **Jacob was a righteous man**, he stayed **among the tents** of **his** father (**Genesis 25:27**). Regrettably, **Jacob** is often portrayed as a mama's boy, but this is not what it means at all. **Jacob** chose the same occupation as **his** father, that of a shepherd and shepherds lived in **tents**. This was true of Abraham and it was true of **his** father **Isaac**. Being a shepherd was not the job of a sissy. The Bible tells us how much suffering **Jacob** had to endure as a result of being a shepherd. David would be a shepherd, and it was no easy task, protecting **his** flock from both **the lion and the bear** (**First Samuel 17:34-37**). **Jacob** chose to be a shepherd, and work within the family unit and within the covenant, in contrast to being **a hunter** and **a man of the world** like **his** brother **Esau**. Unfortunately, the parents mirrored the conflict between **the** twin **boys**.

Two unwise **parents** only added fuel to the fire of any potential problems that **Esau** and **Jacob** might have had with each other. **Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau**. Literally, the Hebrew reads that **Isaac had game in his mouth**. Because **Isaac** had a preference for **wild game**, **he** had a preference for **Esau**. Not exactly a spiritual outlook, but then again Abraham wasn't sinless and neither was **his** son. With the understanding that **Rebekah** told **her** husband the prophecy of **the LORD** when **she** was pregnant, **Isaac** basically ignored the choice of **God**. At some point it seems as though **Rebekah** had also told **Jacob** of **his** destiny. **ADONAI** said: **Yet I have loved, or chosen, Jacob, but Esau I have hated, or not chosen** (**Malachi 1:2b-3a**). **She** initially favored **Jacob** because **she** wanted to follow **the LORD's** will. And because **she** believed **ADONAI**, **she** knew that **Jacob** was **the son** of promise and not **Esau**. As a result, **she** and **Jacob** became kindred spirits, and **Rebekah** loved **Jacob** because **God loved Jacob** (**Genesis 25:28**).

The passing over of the firstborn is one of the most striking features of **Genesis**. Five times this happened: (1) with **Seth** being chosen over Cain, (2) **Shem** being chosen over Japheth, (3) **Abraham** being chosen over Haran, (4) **Isaac** being chosen over Ishmael, (5) **Jacob** being chosen over Esau, (6) **Joseph** being chosen over Reuben, and now (7) **Ephraim** over **Manasseh**. **Jacob** gave the birthright to **Joseph** by changing the status of **Ephraim and Manasseh** from grandsons to **sons**.³²³ In this way, **Joseph** inherited a double portion of the inheritance because **his sons** would then be included as equals among the brothers.

As previously stated, **Jacob** was far from perfect, and was sometimes a neglectful father (see the commentary on **Genesis**, [to see link click Ib - The Rape of Dinah](#)). But in the final analysis, **Jacob's sins** were forgotten by **ADONAI** just like Abraham and **Isaac's** sins. **As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our sins from us (Psalm 103:12 GNT)**. This is a very comforting Scripture for the believers of all ages. It doesn't mean that we are perfect, or make mistakes, but in the final analysis we are declared **righteous** by **the Creator**.

So by **faith** **Jacob**, when he was dying, blessed each of **Joseph's sons**, and **worshiped as he leaned on top of his staff** (quoting **Genesis 47:31**). As he was dying in Egypt (see the commentary on **Genesis Kz - Then Isra'el said to Joseph: I am About to Die, but God Will Be With You**), **Jacob** blessed **his son Joseph** through **his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh** (see the commentary on **Genesis Kx - Jacob Adopted Joseph's Two Sons Ephraim and Manasseh**). After receiving the oath from **Joseph** that he would be carried **out of Egypt** and buried with **Abraham** and **Isaac**, **Jacob** continued to be bedridden with a lot of time on **his** hands. Alone on **his** bed, he must have frequently reminisced, recalling the amazing events of **his** long walk with **the LORD**. One day, when **Joseph** came to visit **him** with **his two** Egyptian **sons**, **God** inspired **Jacob** to prophesy over **them**. This resulted in **Jacob** adopting **Ephraim and Manasseh** and elevating **them** to the status of full Israelite tribes along with **Joseph's** other brothers. Therefore, there were fourteen tribes of **Isra'el**, although no more than twelve are listed at any one time in the Bible. As we shall see, **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** has a specific reason for choosing some and omitting others, but many times **Ephraim and Manasseh** are included in the place of **Joseph**.

Then Isra'el (Jacob's new name, see the commentary on Genesis Hw - Jacob Wrestles with God) said to **Joseph**, "I am about to die, but God will be with you, and take you back to the Land of your fathers. And to you I give one more portion of land in Canaan than to your brothers" (**Genesis 48:21-22a**). **Jacob** believed that **God** was able to keep **His** promises, and he did not hesitate to give prophetic blessings to **Ephraim and**

Manasseh. He worshiped as he leaned on top of his staff showing the weakness of **his** age. But **he** knew as **he worshiped** that in these blessing **he** was speaking the Word of **God**. As it was with **Isaac**, so it is with **Jacob**.³²⁴

This picture of **Jacob worshiping** (Greek: *proskuneo*, meaning to kiss the face) **ADONAI** as **he leaned on top of his staff** near the end of **his** life presents a beautiful picture of **faith**. It was fitting for **Jacob** to make this request in this way, for **the staff** was a sign of **Jacob's** pilgrimage. It was characteristic for **one** who lived **his** life as a stranger and an alien. We see why the writer of **Hebrews** chose this passage to summarize **Jacob's** life as a pilgrim believer who in the face of **death**, lays claim to the future through the exercise of **faith**.³²⁵