

JACOB BECOMES ISRAEL

'Tis the law of the land, as the second born twin
My father's inheritance is not mine to win.
So Esau my brother will make good his claim
Unless I can get him to give me his name!

Here he comes hungry and desperate for food,
I'll sell him my pottage. Don't want gratitude.
I demand what I've craved for, - his precious birthright.
He buys it. I've got it! He is too weak to fight.

Years pass and father is old and is weak
His final blessing is all I now seek.
Mother she hears his request to Esau.
She plans with my help to rob him once more.

"Yes, Dad, it's me, this is Esau your son;
I've brought you as asked for your venison."
He feels my arms, although doubting my voice,
But my outright lie, it gives him no choice.

I kiss him as asked and the blessing is made
I've fooled the old man with a simple charade.
I have now the blessing. Deception is sweet.
I go to my mother. Our plan worked a treat!

Although I've tricked Dad, sure I know the truth,
But when Esau finds out he goes through the roof!
With both Dad and Esau exceedingly cross, -
A faint hint of conscience, - is my gain loss?

Rebekah my mother tells me to flee,
For Esau my brother will gladly kill me.
I turn my back as I run for my life:
The birthright and blessing has left bitter strife.

Before I leave home, my new life just guessing,
Isaac my father still gives me his blessing.
"God Almighty shall bless thee and thy seed."
Is this fair reward for deception and greed?

So where is the Lord God of Abraham?
And what shall I do in Pandanaram?
For there I must flee, and look out Laban.....
I'm never to see my mother again.

I am now alone, - no mother to guide,
Her last wish for me was to find me a bride,-
A daughter of Laban, of her kith and kin
Far off in Haran my new life will begin.

My flight needs be swift, and the journey is hot
Each step I consider the things I have not.
Yards turn into miles, new landscapes in view,
Each step one step further from all I once knew.

The journey is long, some six hundred miles
I reach a day's end and rest for night's while.
The stones cold and hard on my weary head.
My loneliness stark on my makeshift bed.



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I sink fast to sleep and I dream a dream,
A ladder, here to heaven, its strange theme;
Angels of God ascending, descending,
Their constant motion a message impending.

The Lord God of my fathers speaks to me!
“I give you my promise with certainty:
I am with thee, and will give you true rest.
And in thy seed shall all families be blessed.”

“I will bring you again into this land,
For you will never leave My guiding hand;
I will not leave thee until My plan done.”
I feel His true love, as father loves son.

I awake all a trembling and much afraid
For God was present in the place I was laid.
I thought all alone was my lying down,
But the house of God was my eiderdown!

I get up straightway quite shaken in thought
The presence of God was something not sought!
I make a pillar from pillow of stone,
A simple sign I’m no longer alone.

I speak now to God as friend talks to friend
I state my terms if my life is to mend.
“If You will be with me and give me food
The raiment I need and all that is good,

Why, then will I praise the Lord as my God.
This pillar will stand as His house and rod:
What ever You give me I shan’t complain
And I’ll give you a tenth of all I obtain.”

I continue my flight, days carry on,
God’s promise a strong staff to lean upon:
I feel a change has run through my being,
But there’s plenty of Jacob in what I’m still seeing.

Now I reach Haran, a pastoral scene.
My throat cries for water cool, clear and clean.
I see me a well and three flocks of sheep,
The end of my journey: I’m tempted to weep!

I make myself known to the shepherds there,
But it’s Rachel I see with long flowing hair.
It’s love at first sight that begins a new start
I will love this woman with all my heart.

I tell of my family, break down in tears,
The flight from my home has seemed like long years.
She runs to her father and he runs to see me,
His sister’s son here, unexpectantly!

I willingly work for Laban her Dad,
Just being near Rachel makes me so glad,
And after a month he asks me what pay?
Her hand in marriage is all that I say.

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To work seven years is what he does ask;
With Rachel my prize this just is no task.
The time it speeds by, our love is so clear;
At last the time comes, and everyone's there.

You reap what you sow has often been said
'Twas Leah not Rachel I took to bed.
The deception of Laban just desert
But that didn't stop the depth of my hurt.

Now seven more years did that Laban seek:
And gave me Rachel the end of the week.
I loved her so much, and gave her my all.
Leah had what was left, - that less than small.

My petty mind towards this my first wife
Had its effect on the rest of my life:
Leah bore children, but Rachel bore none;
She prayed hard to God to give her a son.

God's plans are better than those I devise:
It's fairly obvious He is more wise!
But one needs to listen to know what they are,
Will my selfish thoughts keep my God afar?

I thought many things in these years of time
Of what I'd done wrong, of each moral crime,
But I also took stock of the here and the how
That my future depended on what I did now.

Dear God you promised my seed would be blest,
But you've left Rachel barren, - why this test?
I have me ten sons, I care for them all
"But where is Rachel's child?" to God I call.

Our prayer is answered, at long last, our son;
Our Joseph special, the others I shun!
I can't help myself: my favourite boy,
Born of my old age and my constant joy.

A voice within says its time to return
Back to my homeland where I was born.
Agreement with Laban finally made
We leave him behind, peace promises trade.

It's been twenty years, my wealth now vast grown,
Since I left my home with seeds of hate sown.
I must obey God and thus journey on,
But I fear Esau, I did him great wrong.

I've tried to be good, prayed most of the time
I know that my God has made my life fine.
He's given me sons, my inheritance sure,
But this final test makes me feel insecure.

I robbed my brother: How can I appease?
I'll send him a message from bended knees.
My servants come back with news that bodes ill:
He's got four hundred men! Their mission to kill?

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I forget about God. What to do? Quick!
The fear and the panic makes me feel sick!
I divide my people in to two bands
So there might be one to escape his hands.

I then pray to God, and say to him straight,
I am not worthy; I've turned to you late.
You gave me a promise if I returned
Deliver me please, I'm feeling so spurned.

I think then as Jacob, just what to do,
I had prayed to God but got back no clue.
I'd been too busy to listen to Him;
I got on with my plans, the future looked grim.

I set out a present for Esau mine,
Goats, ewes, rams, camels, foals, asses and kine;
I sent them in droves with spaces between,
A message of peace that might make him serene.

But I was still restless and fear ruled my mind
I took my wives and my sons from behind:
We passed over ford Jabok late that night,
I then stayed behind to settle my fright.

*And Jacob was left alone;
and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.*

I look up to the stars in the chilly night sky
And remember the ladder with angels on high.
Twenty years have now passed since that vision of God;
I'd been alone, but with the Almighty had trod.
So what then had I learned in this passage of time,
Was that ladder to heaven still there to be climbed?
I felt the burden of my mortal self pleading, -
The Jacob of old, self-importance, self-heeding:
Responsibilities for my sons and my wives,
If I was to die what would become of their lives?
I had things to do that others counted upon;
The "me" in my thinking was powerfully strong.
I had tricked and deceived, and Esau now coming,
He may be my brother but I'd left him fuming.
My father would be waiting if I survived night;
I do not want to end up with fight after fight.
I wrestled on and on with this false sense of man,
When light began dawning: drop self for God's plan!
The depth of the cosmos again filled me with awe,
For beyond all the faint stars God's kingdom was more.
My own place in His plan was suddenly made clear;
If I just followed God I'd have nothing to fear!
His is the power, the all-presence, our true Guide,
Oh Father I feel You, Your Love right by my side!
I must get rid of Jacob, let God's man shine through:
My seed is not human but the one Father true.
The inheritance promised is spiritual, strong,
The material outlook, once persuasive, is wrong!
The false sense of me fights for one final point
The hollow of my thigh becomes touched out joint.
I refuse to allow this sore physical thrust



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To displace my mental and spiritual trust.
I feel new victory, understanding day-dawned:
And seek my God's blessing from the angel-thought spawned.
The old Jacob vanquished, I have won this new name:
"Israel", - that's it, a prince with God's power and fame!
But the angel thought nameless with which I'm then blessed,
I have peace within, I've found deep humble rest.
I'll call this place "Peniel", it's name now reserved:
I've seen God face to face and my life is preserved;
For in seeing God, I have seen His creation:
He's the Father of all and not just one nation.

The sun now raised up, and Esau comes near
With four hundred men, but no longer I fear.
My family line up, before them I go,
I bow seven times, my progress is slow!

Esau sees me and runs, embraces me tight,
Falls on my neck, we both hug! It's all right!
With brotherly love he gives me a kiss
We weep many tears in our new found bliss.

I show him the fam'ly God gave to me,
He asks 'bout my presents bountifully
No longer he seeks to take what now mine,
Keep that thou hast is his answer divine.

I urge him receive the gift from my hand
For with God's good grace is now where I stand.
I see in his face the pure face of God:
His spiritual self, man not of the sod.

We speak as equals, true brothers at last,
Our new found friendship is firm and held fast.
He accepts my gifts with every good grace
And we say our goodbyes face to fond face.

My life so changed. Is it less than one day
That submission to God showed me the way?
The past had been bad; no part of me now,
'Tis the present that counts, that I can vow.

Although I have wealth beyond every dream
I know it is God that makes my life gleam.
"God Almighty shall bless thee and thy seed"
To see God as my Father was my need.

God's promise fulfilled: He guided my hand
And He led me back to the Promised Land.
I'd had to get Jacob out of my thought;
To yield all to God a lesson well taught.

I still make mistakes, but Almighty God
Is a powerful, loving, guiding rod.
As Israel I kneel, a new life begun:
In this I'm clear: I am wholly Thy son.