

## In Defense of Jacob

While it was Abraham who was called from the idol worshipping people of Ur to be the first of God's chosen line leading to David and then to Jesus, it was his grandson who sired the twelve sons who became the twelve tribes. These then were the ancestors of those, who 400 years later became the nation bearing his God given name, Israel. With the exception of Moses, Scripture records as much or more detail about the life and person of Jacob than any other Old Testament character. However, as these details are narrated it seems more often than not that an image is formed in the mind of the reader that this was a truly unsavory character, very unworthy of his position in the Messianic line. Superficial reading of his actions seem to depict a sly, unscrupulous bargainer when he gets Esau to trade his birthright for a bowl of red pottage, and a deceiving scheming liar when he receives from Isaac the blessing meant for Esau. He is again branded as a cold heartless and faithless bargainer even with God when he is at Bethel. Then when Laban tricks him into marrying Leah instead of Rachel, the reader cheers this apparent bit of retribution. Then again he appears to connive and cheat Laban out of his herd as he prepares to leave Haran. This is followed by what seem to be acts of defiance as he wrestles with an angel, and evidences of cowardice as he runs and fears retribution first from Laban and then Esau.

Thus, at least from my limited exposure to commentaries and the opinion of others, Jacob is popularly viewed, to varying degrees as a hardhearted, unregenerate, liar, coward and schemer, as well as a selfish, covetous, self-absorbed opportunist. There is but one exception that I know of and that is found in "The Genesis Record" by Henry Morris. It is from this book from which I have drawn a number of the items of defense, which are herein presented. I've heard it said that perhaps the Holy Spirit has included these "insights" into his character in order to give us all hope. Because as it is said, that with Jacob as bad as he was, if God can forgive him, He surely can forgive anyone. Perhaps after reading what follows, some may conclude that there is a totally different message here. Perhaps it is that we tend to be too hasty in making moral judgment that is in condemning others long before we have sufficient evidence and facts on which to base

such conclusions. We may also find it somewhat humbling, as it well should be, that our quick condemning conclusions about people are often wrong and that it is our own of-this-world nature that is more faulty than is the subject of our scorn.

So why would God choose Jacob to father the nation and the line from which our Savior would enter the time and space of His own creation? Of course, the same question could be asked regarding Judah, Rahab, David, etc. on down to the entire Messianic line. Yet for some reason as noted above, Jacob seems to stand out in the minds of many as one of, if not the lowliest, of characters. A closer examination of the Scriptures will, I'm certain, shed a more favorable light on this father of nations. In so doing, we are likely to find not just what has already been suggested above, but also a number of other valuable lessons for ourselves, which of course is the principal purpose for studying the Holy Bible. Based on what I believe the Holy Spirit has put in my heart and shown me through His Word, it seems about time, nearly 4000 years after his passing, to more closely examine what Scripture really has to say about Jacob. I suspect that the ancients knew him better and had a much more favorable perspective of his life than do present-day pastors, teachers and expositors. This defense of Jacob will seek to expose the unwarranted biases, misunderstandings, and translational errors, which have combined to slander and darken the name of a truly great and honorable man of extraordinary faith. While it may not seem so by the length of this paper, in the interest of brevity, I have only referred to, and not quoted most of the Scripture verses relevant to the discussion, except in special cases. I trust that the reader knows the story well and/or will read along in the Scripture as I try to make this long overdue defense of Jacob.

Scripture tells us that after being barren for twenty years, God's promise was fulfilled in that Isaac's wife Rebekah conceived. We are informed that she had twins, and that they fought while in her womb so violently that she asked God why this was so. To this He replied that there were two nations in her womb and that the younger would be over the older (Genesis 25:23) At birth Esau "the hairy one" came out first, followed by Jacob "the heel catcher," clinging to Esau's heel. From Genesis 25:23 it is clear that God intended that Jacob the younger be preferred rather than the first born, Esau. It was the

custom that the oldest son should inherit a double portion of the estate and also become the head of the family when the father died. In this role, he would have full authority as well as responsibility over all political, economical, educational, spiritual and social matters. In this case, however, God intervened by choosing Jacob. Clearly this was due to the extremely important task, which God had assigned this family, the carrying on of the Abrahamic covenant.

Thus we see that even before they were born, God had already chosen Jacob to carry on the Messianic line and had made this known to Rebekah. We are told that God loved Jacob and hated (loved less) Esau before they were even born (Malachi 1:1-3, Romans 9:10-13). Why? How could He make such a strong conclusion before they even had a chance to prove themselves? By now we all know that God is outside of time. Past, present and future are all known to Him. He knew from before the beginning of time exactly what each would think, feel and do every moment of their lives. He knew then, as it is with all things, that you would be reading this at this very moment. Therefore He knew which one of the brothers would be better qualified for His purpose, and on that basis made the choice as He revealed it to Rebekah. One may make the case that both were poor choices and that He seemed to have been stuck with choosing the least inadequate. That is true not just in this case but in everything God does through mankind. For we are all hopelessly corrupt, weak and inadequate for anything God has in mind. "There is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10) On balance, Jacob was no worse than any of us, but God selects whom He will and molds them into what they must be so that He can work His will through them. All of Scripture, as well as our individual Christian walk, is but one continuous example of God's molding the hopelessly inadequate into doers of His purpose. On this basis, Jacob was no worse than any of us. In fact, as this paper will reveal, contrary to popular opinion, he was considerably more righteous and honorable than most.

It is evident that Isaac greatly preferred Esau to Jacob from the beginning to at least well into his old age. Esau was a strong, virile man's man, a great hunter and active outdoorsman, while Jacob stayed close to home and to Rebekah, perhaps cooking, doing

household chores and tending to the herds. Genesis 25:27 calls Jacob a “plain man”. Plain in the Hebrew is “tau” which also means perfect, or undefiled, complete, pious, or mature, the same word God uses to describe Job as, “a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8). As part of our case for Jacob, this is a most important clue, one completely missed due to what appears to be a broadly unfortunate translation into the English versions of the Scripture. The King James translates “tau” as “plain,” the new American Standard as “peaceful”; The New Living Translation refers to Him as “the kind of person who liked to stay at home”; the N.I.V. calls him the “quiet man,” the Douay Rheims Version says, “Jacob, a plain man dwelt in tents; and the Catholic St. Joseph Edition describes him as “...a settled man who stayed among the tents.” How strange that none of these versions give Jacob credit for what I believe God wants us to know about him. Couldn’t they even have more correctly translated tau as “undefiled, pious or complete” instead of “plain”? It would seem that they all had drawn conclusions about him, which prevented them from focusing on anything but the most negative or bland interpretation of God’s very complimentary word “tau”. Surely this one point by itself does not justify such an assertion. However, before we are through, I believe that the case will have been made both for the translator’s bias as well as for the fact that Jacob was far more righteous and of higher moral character than that with which he is credited by most biblical teachers and expositors.

Esau on the other hand, seems to fare much better in terms of how “history” views him. He is depicted as a strong macho man, the “apple” of his father’s eye. Yet also, he has taken on a victimhood status, with Jacob as the victimizer. This somehow seems to negate the fact that Esau was an unrepentant profane person and fornicator (Hebrews 12:16) He also took two Hittite wives. Marriage to pagans was expressly forbidden as noted numerous times in the Scripture. In spite of all of this, Isaac much preferred Esau to Jacob and had every intention of giving Esau both his blessing and his double portion inheritance, with all the power, authority, duty and responsibility that it represented. He intended this even though he must have known, as did Rebekah and Jacob, that it was contrary to God’s pronounced plan (Genesis 27:7).

It must have been exceedingly disturbing to both Rebekah and Jacob to see and live with this on-going situation, this obviously strong partiality by Isaac for Esau, this blindness to, or acceptance of, Esau's transgressions as well as his obvious unfit nature as Isaac's spiritual successor in the God chosen Messianic line, as promised by the Abrahamic covenant. Under these circumstances, are not their subsequent actions perhaps somewhat more excusable than they might seem at first? Was there not some justification in their desire to see God's will done, and in fearing that without their intervention Isaac would surely thwart God's will and do the wrong thing perhaps even to his own damnation? In our pious hindsight we might say that they should have left matters to God, that it was not their prerogative to take matters into their own hands, but to let God handle it. Anyone reading this, who hasn't done what was right in his own eyes rather than seeking God's way innumerable times, let him cast the first disparaging remark. However, here as in everything, we also know that God knows all things and therefore He knew what they would do. Of course, He doesn't condone lies and deceit, yet in this case, He allowed this to happen and used it for His purpose, as He has shown us He has done many times in the Old Testament.

First there was the birthright. Scripture tells us that Jacob had made some soup and Esau came home after a long, strenuous day hunting, being very hungry. Jacob, in what must have been a somewhat joking manner, offered him a bowl in exchange for his birthright, never expecting Esau would agree. Surely this issue had been discussed between them before. It's very likely that the differences regarding this matter of the birthright were well known as was Esau's disdain for its value to him. It is also very unlikely Jacob would have denied him the soup had he said no, nor that Esau could not have found something else to eat had that been the case. The message here is not one of any trickery or slyness on Jacob's part, but a disdain on Esau's part for the birthright. They both knew that while it provided a double portion of inheritance, it also carried with it not only economic benefit, but also spiritual, political and protective responsibility for the whole family. Esau was obviously the type who had no desire for responsibility, but preferred his freedom instead. Jacob, of a totally different temperament, and knowing that it was right with God, was ready and willing to assume those responsibilities. As far as the

economical benefits, no doubt Esau saw himself as fully capable of easily acquiring all he needed by other means. Furthermore, the Scriptures provide no evidence to support the idea that Jacob was greedy and thus sought material gain from the birthright. Jacob's primary interest in the birthright was the officiation of the duties and responsibilities to him rather than to Esau, as he knew God had ordained.

Next, in Genesis 27 we have the infamous scene, which begins when Rebekah plots to get Isaac's principal blessing for Jacob, when she realizes that he is about to give it to Esau. It would seem that at this point, 138-year-old Isaac was blind and ailing. Probably expecting that his death was near, he had decided that it was time now to convey the traditional patriarchal blessing to his sons. These were to be the father's final and prophetic statements having Godly endorsements. We know, as did they, that the Abrahamic Covenant in the form of a blessing had been intended for Jacob, but we see that because Isaac so loved Esau over Jacob, that he had every desire and intention of giving that blessing to Esau. Perhaps because of senility in his old age, he had forgotten God's word when his sons were born. Or possibly being so far removed from his direct involvement with God over the many years, he had forgotten what happened on Mt. Moriah. It could be that he had drifted from his faith and believed that his own judgment was superior to some, now faint memory of divine direction he had once received. Clearly, any pleading to Isaac Rebekah may have made on behalf of God's expressed will in the matter, had no influence on him. At any rate, a horrible event was about to take place and she was bent on preventing it and in making things right.

It is evident that Jacob was a reluctant participant in this deception with Rebekah as she took on the role of planner and expeditor of what she believed was God's will. Of course they both knew that its success would be God's will fulfilled. Jacob may have even tried to dissuade his mother, telling her to let God handle it, while she in turn persuaded him that this means of achievement was God's will. Before one judges the ensuing actions too harshly, one should recognize the urgency and serious nature of the situation. Within a few hours, a profound and irrevocable tragedy was about to occur. All her life she had known of the Abrahamic covenant and its great importance. For 73 years both she and

Jacob, and surely Isaac had known that God intended that Jacob would be the one to carry it on. Now God's will was about to be thwarted and her dear husband was about to commit an awful hell-assuring sin, the sin of willful disobedience to a personally delivered directive from God! Who of us can say that under these circumstances, they would not believe they were doing God's will, and would be willing, if they even thought about it, to risk God's condemnation for such a single act of deception in exchange for, if nothing more than, the deliverance of a beloved husband and father from a certain spiritual death. Perhaps one may choose to see this differently but one must, nevertheless, give these two the benefit of any doubt that this may be what they saw and believed. If one feels that these deeds should not have gone unpunished, consider this: Rebekah never again saw her beloved son Jacob, nor he his mother. Isaac lived, perhaps better stated, was alive, for another 55 years, certainly blind and probably sick and ailing in many ways, which probably made just being alive a punishment. And, of course, Jacob spent the next 20 years under the yoke of a heartless, deceiving selfish master, serving faithfully while being tricked and cheated far more and longer than any earthly sense of justice would have considered appropriate. He also suffered fears of reprisals from both Esau and Laban. Jacob did not get a "free ride" out of this, even though I see him as having done nothing other than being an obedient son to his mother and a reluctant participant in a deception.

Nevertheless, the deception worked, and Jacob received Isaac's blessing. Scripture teaches that such a blessing, like a vow or oath, could not be revoked even though it was given under deceptive circumstances. This is a very serious issue and one worth careful consideration in our own lives. It is a lesson we should all learn. This blessing as with any vow, oath or pledge, which in God's view is a sacred promise, could not, once given, be retracted. It was his binding, irrevocable word. Apparently trickery or ignorance of circumstances under which it was given was no excuse or basis for revocation. Surely, this is an important message for all of us today. Your word should always be your bond, trustworthy and sacred. Scripture tries to teach us this a number of times. For example, in Judges 11, Japhthah, a son of Gideon, became another of the judges over the children of Israel. In order to obtain God's assistance in destroying the Amorties, he vowed to

sacrifice to God what so ever came to greet him as he returned from battle. But it was his daughter, his only child, who came forth. He had to keep his vow. Scripture even points to Pagan culture to hammer home the scary significance of vows. In Daniel 6:8 we find King Darius, being tricked into a decree, which is another form of vow or oath, under which Daniel's enemies sought to have him killed by means of the lion's den. Daniel was highly esteemed by Darius who was grieved over the consequences of his decree, but even as sovereign king, he could not rescind his own vow. Another such case is found in the Book of Ester 3:8-12, when Haman tricked King Ahasuerus (Xerxes the first) to issue an edic (vow, decree) that all Jews within the entire empire were to be killed. Even he could not rescind his own decree whereby other means had to be found to save the people. These are a few good examples of why we are so forcibly admonished by Jesus Himself in Matthew 5:34-37 to never swear to anything when He says, "but I say to you swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the City of the Great King. Neither shall they swear by the head because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your communications be yea, yea, nay, nay for whatsoever is more than these comes of evil".

Now back to the case of Jacob. After things cooled a little, Isaac realized that God had intervened, for he trembled very exceedingly (Genesis 27:33) because he knew, or now remembered God's will. So he repented and called Jacob back, blessed him again with sincerity and told him to go to Padan aram to Rebekah's brother Laban to seek a wife, and not from the pagans as Esau had done. Here again we see evidence of Isaac's backsliding. Just as Abraham had arranged for Isaac's wife, so should he have done for both Jacob and Esau. It was his duty. With Jacob now about 73 years old, this action by Isaac was long overdue. Instead, at this later date, he simply sent him off to find his own wife from a family where he could not even be certain that there was an eligible woman. Had he done his duty, perhaps both Esau and Jacob would have married appropriately.

But now, it appears that Esau may have been planning to kill Jacob, so Rebekah, out of fear, sought to hurry him on his journey. Thus, with little preparation he left home alone without companion or beast, with only what he could carry on this treacherous 500-mile



trip. It was supposed to be only for a few days' stay there while Esau cooled off. Little did he know that he would remain there 20 years, nor did she know that she would never see her son again. There is no evidence that Jacob ever gained any material benefit from his purchased birthright, or that he ever sought it. Probably, however, some 60 years later when he and Esau went "home" to bury their father, whatever estate there was then, they divided as per custom. Both by then were wealthy and had little need for more. Jacob nevertheless did have the birthright and as such carried with him the political and spiritual power and responsibility, as well as, of course, the all important blessing of the Abrahamic covenant which God had intended him to have and which God later reiterated directly to him more than once.

There is another item of interest here worthy of note, which I've not seen in any commentaries. Isaac gave Jacob two blessings, first when he thought he was giving it to Esau, and the other a short time later when he had finally recognized God's intervention and his own failure as a faithful steward. It would seem that when he thought he was blessing Esau, he offered what he intended to be the Abrahamic covenant blessing, but he only gave part of it. As recorded in Genesis 27:28-29, he said, "Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fattest of the earth, and the plenty of corn and wine; let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mothers sons bow down to thee; cursed be everyone that curseth thee and blessed be he that blesseth thee." This is a very important and prophetic part of what God promised Abraham, as history has surely proven. Yet Isaac left out the vital part of the covenant which he then proceeds to transfer in his subsequent blessing to Jacob in Genesis 28:3, 4 where he says "And the God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee that thou mayest be a multitude of people and give the blessing of Abraham to thee, and thy seed with thee, that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham." Why did God choose to allow His message to be bifurcated in this way; and why did the Holy Spirit describe this episode in such detail if there is not something more and significant for us to learn from it? One might conclude that it was merely the result of a sick, old, confused and wandering mind. However, the Holy Spirit would have no reason to record the detail if that was the case. Perhaps Isaac,

who knew from God what the destiny of each of his sons would be, sought to soften Esau's by giving him a little bit of the good that he was supposed to convey to Jacob. What harm would it do to give Esau the fatness of the earth, to have nations and brothers bow, and to be blessed by others while having his enemies cursed. After all, Jacob would still get the Promised Land and be blessed with the seed of Messianic line of Abraham. This is only conjecture on my part, but it has some support in what follows. In Genesis 27:39, 40 in response to the bewailing Esau, Isaac gave him the only blessing he legitimately could, that which was truthful because it was God inspired. The King James Version of these verses, however, is flawed, as also is the 1592 Geneva Bible, flaws strangely perhaps to reflect what Isaac wanted to say and what the translators thought he would have said. Where they say, "Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of the heaven from above," it should say, "thy dwelling shall be away from the fatness of the earth etc." The St. Joseph textbook edition translates his blessing as " without fruitfulness of the earth shall your dwelling be," while the New Living translation says, " you will live off the land and what it yields, and the N.I.V. says "Your dwelling will be away from the earth riches, and away from the dew of the heaven above." That is not the kind of blessing a father wants to give his favorite son! Should one contest this alternative translation by still favoring the King James, it should be noted, that the land into which Esau actually went later, which was called Edom, was in fact harsh and hilly and clearly not a fat, fruitful land. And the Edomites did live by the sword in violence with, and generally under, the subjection of Israel. They would however, at times, "shake off" the yoke just as the blessing foretold. We know that all Scripture, all 66 books penned by over 40 writers, is the inspired integrated work of the Holy Spirit as its single author. Therefore, the subject verses in their original Hebrew were also the work of the Holy Spirit. We also know that God as the Holy Spirit was at work in Isaac. But we had here Isaac, momentarily at least, being the earthly man at odds with the Spirit in him, seeking a better deal for his beloved son Esau as he gave the first blessing. It was Esau to whom he thought he was speaking. Later it was the Holy Spirit irresistibly speaking through him as he gave the real Esau his less than desired blessing. Is it possible that this blessing would have been less harsh had he not tried to restructure

Gods plan? Surly there were other bountiful lands available had God chosen to assign them to Esau. Again I've digressed.

So again, we see Jacob traveling along on foot with only a backpack with some money, proceeding on a 500-mile journey from Beersheba to Haran across a foreign and dangerous land with "only" God as his guide and protector. Finally, after weeks of travel, he arrives at Laban's home seeking a wife with nothing to offer in exchange but himself. There, God immediately fills his heart with love for Rachel, a younger daughter of Laban. As Scripture reveals he spent the next 14 years in servitude to Laban for the privilege of being able to marry her. Although, beyond the simple fact that he must have loved her totally and genuinely with God's love, we know little more of this love story. However, the 14 years of servitude during which he allowed himself to be cheated, deceived, and humiliated all for the sake of his love for her, should make this the signature love story of all times, exceeding even that of Ruth and Boaz, which is regarded as the classic love story. After serving the 14 years, he still had no material wealth of his own with which to care for his growing family. This led to 6 more years of servitude under a complex agreement through which a portion of his shepherding efforts were to accrue to his own account. Even here Laban deceived, twisted and modified their agreement to favor himself. A superficial reading of this portion of the story again seems to cast Jacob as the heavy, the schemer, and the bad guy.

But, before we look under the skin of this episode, let's go back to the long trek from Beersheba. Remember it was also to Haran that Abraham had traveled over 100 years earlier when he left Ur some 600 miles to the south. It was there also where he left his family and finally decided to begin obeying God by journeying to the Promised Land. Laban and others there in Haran were the descendants of those relatives Abraham had left. After traveling the first 70 miles out from his home in Beersheba, on probably the third day, Jacob spent the night at a place called Bethel "the house of God"; the same place where earlier, Abram had built an altar (Genesis 12:8, 13:3, 4). It is also where God had appeared to Abram and later to Isaac. That night, Jacob also experienced a theophany in the form of a dream. This is the famous Jacob's ladder dream where he saw

a two way stream of angels on a wide ladder which extended from the earth to heaven with our Lord standing at the top speaking to him (Genesis 28: 12, 13). Here he heard what he had already known of the Abrahamic covenant. Here God related it to him directly so that there could be no mistake as to whom God had chosen to continue it and the Messianic line. Under these lonely, destitute and frightening circumstances, it must have been exceedingly comforting to hear God say, “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until you have done that and which I have promised you.” Contrary to popular assessments of Jacob’s spiritual quality, I interpret this to mean that from that moment on the Holy Spirit dwelled in him and remained in him pretty much for the rest of his life. Surely, this promise must have also given him great comfort and confidence, and sustained him and his faith under every trying and difficult circumstance for the rest of his life. Having the indwelling Holy Spirit, explains how he could have such a profound and lasting love for Rachel. It also goes far in explaining how he could remain so patient, diligent and loyal to his commitment to Laban for so many years. Remember, he was already around 73 years old when he arrived at Laban’s door to begin his servitude, and 80 when he married Leah, and then Rachel and then started his family. Obviously, the sisters were much younger, being yet for some time in their child-bearing years.

Back again to Bethel, Jacobs’s response to the theophany was to build a small altar as best he could, and to sacrifice to God what little he had, a drink offering of some oil. He then made a sacred vow to God (Genesis 28:20-22). This vow has been widely interpreted as some kind of a bargain he sought with God. This is because it starts with “If,” that is, if, God will take care of him, then this will be his God; he will erect an altar of worship and give to this God a tenth of all he receives. This “if” makes it sound like a cold business proposition, a bargain which Jacob is making with God; “If you do this I will do that” It hardly seems like a submissive commitment to God by a worshiping loving believer. Yet this makes no sense in the context of what had just happened to him and to what he already knew quite well since childhood regarding his God ordained mission. Now if we examine the Hebrew word “im” translated here as “if,” we find that “it is widely used as a demonstrative,” such as lo (see! Behold!) It can also mean,

although, while, yet, nevertheless, verily, or since. So if we replace the “if” with an equally valid “lo,” or since, the vow now becomes contextually appropriate and expresses a sincere gratitude and a love for God, which I believe, it truly was. What about us? John 4:19 says that we loved Him because He first loved us! Can’t we allow Jacob the same privilege? When he said the vow, he was merely repeating what God had just told him, along with a response, which was a life long commitment to God through faith, and through that faith he was made righteous. How different is this from when we, who are born again, first came to believe the Gospel? Didn’t we commit ourselves in some similar fashion to Jesus? In John 12:32 when Jesus says, “...and I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all men to me.” Is this some kind of conditional or bargaining statement, because the translators chose the word “if”? Of course not! Neither was it when Jacob said it.

It is interesting also to note that Jacob is here offering to God a tithe, or a tenth of all he will ever receive. At that time we know of no obligation to tithe. Much later there would be under Mosaic Law (Leviticus 27:30). Before the time of Jacob, Scripture mentions such a thing, just once, that is when Abram gave tithes to Melchizedek. Perhaps Jacob even heard that from his grandfather, because he was already 15 years old when Abraham died. Or, and this is provocative, he may have heard of it from Shem, who didn’t pass away until Jacob was 65 years old! Many scholars speculate, and a Hebrew tradition claims, that perhaps Shem was the mysterious Malchizedek. It certainly is likely that Shem would be a highly venerated personage having been the son of Noah, one of only eight souls to survive the flood, and the true father of the entire Semitic race. Who better to have been the King of Salem, later Jeru-Salem (Jerusalem)? I believe that here at Bethel, we are witnessing in Jacob a real and powerfully committed faith as well as a loving sincere appreciation and gratitude toward God. At that moment he did all he could do, he made the altar, sacrificed, and gave to God what must have been a significant part of his meager food supply. He then backed that up with the only other thing he had, his word in the form of a sacred promise.

Now we should look at the events, which began taking place after Jacob's fourteen years of servitude under Laban (Genesis 30:25, 31:13). This is the speckled cattle episode, where again Jacob comes off undeservingly as the bad guy. During those fourteen years of servitude, Jacob had worked faithfully and loyally, greatly increasing Laban's wealth. Laban knew very well that it was the Spirit of the Lord that had been working through Jacob for his benefit all those years as he freely admits in Genesis 30:27. Jacob also here in Genesis 30:30 gives full credit to God for whatever good his efforts have produced. However, after all these years of servitude, Jacob had nothing of his own in material wealth with which to support his family if he was to leave Laban. However, the Holy Spirit did put it in his heart to leave and to return to his own land; but first he must accumulate a bit of wealth of his own with which to support his growing family, now consisting of 11 sons and an unnamed number of daughters.

When Laban asked what he wanted for wages, Jacob said he wanted nothing heretofore earned. Does that sound like greed, or a cunning soul speaking after 20 years of unpaid servitude? He asked only for a chance to develop his own herd from there on, for he knew that God would supply his needs. He agreed to continue serving Laban, but for doing so he asked only that all speckled cattle and goats as well as brown sheep yet unborn were to be his, while all of the normal animals would be Laban's. By being unwilling to accept any gift or wages, he was refusing to become indebted to this man whom he knew to be an ungodly, cheating, selfish schemer. This deal, however, provided God an opportunity to now bless Jacob materially as he had Laban through Jacob, and to do so in a way that could only be seen as divine intervention. The agreement, which Jacob structured, was ridiculously unfavorable to him and eminently favorable to Laban, in fact Laban well recognized this, at least initially. Here Jacob not only restricted himself to keeping only the off-colored animals yet to be born, but he further limited what was to be his as being only those off-colored animals born of normally colored animals. That is, he would not even claim any of the off-colored cattle born to off-colored animals in Laban's herds. To the world that is to Laban, his sons, and any other, who knew of it, this must have seemed to be the working of a senile old fool. Most likely, Jacob became a laughing stock of all who heard of the agreement, and Laban must

have felt secure that he would have Jacobs's servitude for the rest of his days, because under these conditions Jacob would never have enough to leave.

At this point, in the defense of Jacob, it is appropriate to step back and recognize the significance of this particular event. Jacob was no fool. He knew where he stood with God, he knew the ludicrous nature of the agreement; he knew that only through God's intervention could this be turned to his favor. He had faith because he was this "plain" man this "tau," in reality this "perfect undefiled, complete, pious, and mature man" as God Himself had described him in Genesis 25:27 as previously noted. This is simply another expression of Jacobs's great faith, which somehow seems to again get obscured, this time as a result of a misunderstanding regarding the "striped rods." When we look carefully under the surface of these events, we see a man endowed with the Holy Spirit which does not seem to come and go, but remains with him to the end of his 147 years, even as he then confers those awesome prophetic blessings on his 14 sons.

Now regarding this issue of the striped wooden rods. Those already critical of Jacobs's character are quick to again condemn him for some new kind of trickery or deception as he placed the rods in the water troughs. Thoughts turn to the likelihood that this was some ungodly pact with the devil. A kind of hex or marking, or prenatal influence on the cattle to make them somehow by seeing stripes, have more striped or speckled offspring. There is no scientific evidence that supports this as being effective, nor that this was his intention! There is, however, a very compelling explanation, which in no way dishonors him. Jacob had been a shepherd nearly all of his 89 plus years and was no doubt a keen and intelligent observer in animal husbandry. He knew from all these years of observation about the reproductive abnormalities, which are explained, today by what is known about genetics. That is, that although a species may have certain dominant traits, there are lesser traits, which will occasionally manifest to produce somewhat modified, in this case, off-colored offspring. These variations, however, are normally far too infrequent to be counted on to generate significant numbers of such mutants. So what possessed Jacob to make such a grossly unfavorable agreement? We need only to look in Genesis 31:7-13 to see that he was not alone in this. God was the planner and Jacob the

obedient, trusting and faithful servant. Note here also that he again gave God all of the credit for the miraculous results. It was God and He alone, who influenced the higher than “normal” ratio of mutants!

It is well known today, and as evidence indicates, it was also known in ancient times, that certain woods, such as the poplar, hazel and chestnut, do contain substances which act as fertility promoters or aphrodisiacs in animals. That is just what Genesis 30:38, 39 says, that when the flocks come to drink from the watering trough containing the rods, they did conceive. The word “conceive” is a translation of the word in Hebrew “pacham” meaning “to be hot” thereby suggesting that they more readily came into “heat” and thereby increased their sexual activity. Verse 39 says that they “...conceived before the rods and brought forth cattle ring streaked, speckled and spotted.” This suggested to the casual reader that somehow the rods caused more mutants. The fact is that the aphrodisiac simply cause a larger number of total births, while as Scripture clearly says, it was God who influenced the genetics to better favor Jacob. Therefore what Jacob was doing from the practical earthly perspective, would normally have benefited Laban far more than himself, absent of course God’s intervention. It should be noted that had he been trying to somehow “mark” the animals, that is to cause them to breed mutants by simply their seeing or being near stripped wooden rods, why wouldn’t he have scattered them around the whole area and made fence (or fences,) posts and railings out of them, etc.? But instead he put them in the watering troughs where, and only where, the secretions from the wood could be ingested. Clearly, it was the nondiscriminating effect of the aphrodisiac in the wood which he had over the years observed or heard of, which he employed to increase the general herd population, not any underhanded, deceiving, or deceitful scheme of a twisted, morally defunct mind to somehow benefit only himself.

Next we read in Genesis 30:41 that Jacob separated the strong of the herd from the weak and only placed the rods in the water where the strong would drink. The result of this would have been the same distribution of normal to mutant offspring as already noted, again a situation much more favorable to Laban. The difference here is being that he was attempting to strengthen both herds equally by causing only the stronger to proliferate at



a faster rate. This, of course, was good stewardship (or shepherdship) on his part, providing absolutely no advantage to himself. Again however, it was God who influenced the gene selectivity, which in the end caused Jacobs herd to grow faster with strong healthy cattle. Then in Genesis 30:42 we find he did not apply the rods to the water when the weaker cattle drank. This of course would cause less proliferation of the weaker cattle thus benefiting all of the herds. But here again God intervened, by strengthening Jacob's herd and allowing Laban's herd to get progressively weaker. It seems that now was pay back time for Jacobs's faithful hard labor and honesty, and for Laban's greed and wickedness. When seen in the light of these facts, where is the substance to the allegations that Jacob stacked the deck or did anything dishonorable? It was God, not Jacob, who arranged the cards to give Jacob the winning hand, all in accordance with His own righteousness and justice. The problem here for us as we more informatively read this episode is two-fold. First, is that God's intervention here is more subtle than is often the case in other stories, and the second, that by now our minds have become so prejudiced against Jacob that whatever transpires is somehow construed to be just one more example of his cunning, deceitful nature. We are accustomed to seeing God's work as very compellingly evident such as 90-year-old Sarah being restored to fertility or Gideon's 300 routing 135,000 Philistines, or a parting of the Red Sea. Here, as in all aspects of Jacobs's life, God as the Holy Spirit in him was clearly at work during these events. But His fingerprints are so faint we must look most carefully in order to see them in all their glory and be less ready to jump to unfortunately wrong conclusions about Jacob.

The next item worthy of examination and discussion regarding this defense of Jacob is his flight from Laban. Here, the general conclusion seems to be that Jacob sneaked away in the night like a thief and a coward. Certainly he did leave without telling Laban, but he did so because God had directed him to leave and he knew that Laban would not have let him go with his wives and his cattle (Genesis 31:1, 2). Laban already coveted his now superior herd and had no intention of letting his daughters and grandchildren leave, even though they did belong to Jacob. Laban had grown sons and many men as well as friends to enforce this stay and would have used them to do so. This is evident from the fact that

he did gather a superior force and go after Jacob with every intent of taking everything and probably killing Jacob, until God again intervened while he was enroute. God warned him in a dream to not do ill to Jacob (Genesis 31:24).

It is interesting to note that before leaving, Jacob explained everything to Leah and Rachel. It is evident here (Genesis 31:4-16) that they both loved and respected Jacob and saw his righteousness as well as that of his actions and his cause. Furthermore, they deeply resented their father's deceitfulness and selfishness as well as his evident lack of respect and concern for them. We should also note that Jacob was meticulously careful to take absolutely nothing belonging to Laban, both for the sake of his honesty and also so as not to give Laban any legitimate excuse to go after him or to have any reason for retribution. Nevertheless, had God not intervened, Laban surely would have killed Jacob, or at least left him alone in the desert and taken everything.

So it was a frustrated and angry Laban who arrived at Jacobs's caravan wanting to take spoils but fearing the wrath of Jacob's God. Under the circumstances, all he could do was feign hurt feelings and disappointment that he had not been allowed to send them off joyfully and graciously. His one legitimate claim, however, was the theft of his idols, which Rachel had taken, but of which Jacob knew nothing. After searching the camp in vain and then going through the motions of fashioning a sort of non-aggression pact between him and Jacob, Laban left. Later when Jacob knew Rachel had the idols, he removed them from the caravan and buried them.

Even this little idol incident has a message, as does all Scripture, if we can only notice it. There are at least four possible reasons why Rachel decided to take Laban's idols, which were his religious figurines. Perhaps it was to spite her father, a pay back for his ruthlessness and lack of caring for his daughters. Or maybe she thought that the absence of the idols would be a sign or a motivation to lead him to believe in the true God. It could also be that she herself had some residual faith in the pagan beliefs she had been raised under before knowing Jacob. A fourth possibility is the one I lean to because of Genesis 31:14-16 and the following. It's possible that she considered them as symbols of

inheritance and property rights which she might later use to claim that which she believed was being denied her and which she was owed. This idea gains some additional credence based on certain archaeological finds in the 1930's called the Nuzi tablets. The inscriptions on these tablets alluded to the idea that certain of these types of terraphin or idols were associated with such rights. But for whatever reason Rachel may have had, Jacob would not allow them to remain with his family or with those under his control.

In line with this, it is useful to note that most surely Laban and most of the population in Pandonaram had heard of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, yet there is nothing in the Scripture to indicate that there were any believers. Even after 20 years of close association with Jacob and the power of the Holy Spirit in him as represented by his extraordinary fruitfulness, there is no evidence that Laban or anyone else became a believer. Jacob must have witnessed to his wives and children, but the surrounding idolater's influence must have made it difficult for him to be very effective. The subsequent actions and behaviors of his sons is adequate testimony to these influences and to the weakness of their faith, at least until their later years when they were in Egypt under Joseph. It's confirming to note that the last of eleven sons, Joseph, who was a child when the family left that influence, had by far the highest moral, spiritual qualities.

Looking at this from the other direction, we must give great credit to Jacob and our wondrous God who sustained him. Here was Jacob totally alone in his faith in a world where there were only idol-worshipping people. For twenty years through God's grace, because of the Holy Spirit in him, he resisted the inevitable temptations and remained faithful to the only true God. Only the invincible sustaining power of the Holy Spirit could have caused this. Think about this for a moment. If you are of the faith, consider spending 20 years completely surrounded by idol worshipers. Of course, most of us already live under these conditions. But we have our precious Bible as well as fellow believers, our church, our Pastor, our radio and T.V. evangelical programs as well as libraries and Christian book stores full of inspirational literature. Jacob had none of these. Remember also that these idols were not just benign figurines in the spiritual sense. There were real supernatural powers capable of delivering favors behind every

one of them. Had there not been, they would have soon lost their attractiveness and their worship worthy qualities. Of course these powers were and are limited because they are satanic, but nevertheless they did, or did seem, to deliver enough in the material sense to keep the worshipers believing as they did. Can any of us honestly say that we are certain that we would have been immune to any backsliding under the conditions Jacob endured? Put in this context, is it becoming evident that we are discussing a man whose stature should rightly be described a little more favorably than just “plain”(Gen 25:27)?

Our next excursion into the heart of Jacob carries us with him through the mountains of Gilead as he continues his journey back to Canaan. As he drew closer to home, he realized that he must soon encounter another potentially very grave danger, that of a possibly very angry vengeful and powerful man, his brother Esau. However, as he began this next leg of his journey after parting from Laban, he was again met by a host of angels, just as he had over 20 years earlier at Bethel. Here again God was assuring him and evidencing His protective powers. Jacob called the place of this encounter Mahanaim that means “Two Hosts.” This would appear to signify the comforting fact that his strength to resist Esau was now greater than that represented by his militarily untrained shepherds and servants. However, he had no way to assess the physical earthly power that these angels could or would provide. He didn’t have the benefit we have in these matters, as Scripture so generously provides. He couldn’t know as we do that one day some 1200 years later, under King Hezekiah, one angel one night would destroy 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (2Kings 19:35). This was, of course, but one of God’s many protective blessings on Jacob’s progeny, his ordained namesakes, and the Children of Israel.

Thus, when he suddenly learned that Esau was rapidly on his way to meet or intercept him with 400-armed men “...then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed” (Genesis 32:7). This is the first time it’s been noted that Jacob feared, and also the first possible evidence of anything but a rock-solid faith in God. We might assume that the appearance of the host of angels and God’s repeated promises to him should have precluded fear of anything. Perhaps for himself he had no fear. But he had the God-given responsibility of

protecting his family. It would seem, however, that here for a short while he may have questioned his own understanding of God's promise when it came to earthly preservation. God had promised to never leave him until He had done all He said He would do (Genesis 28:15). However, Jacob already had eleven sons, and he had no way of knowing that it would be twelve tribes that were to issue from him. Perhaps he reasoned at that moment that the promise had already been fulfilled, that the promised seed and the nations that would follow had already been provided for, and that therefore his usefulness was over. At any rate, after a very beautiful heart-felt prayer (Genesis 32:9-12) he did what was customary and prudent under the circumstances by dividing the caravan into two parts so as to give one a chance to escape, while the other was engaging the adversary. Realizing their importance to God's plan, he probably put his sons and wives in the one that could escape. He also sent ahead gifts to Esau amounting to 580 animals, not as a bribe, but to show his brother that he was coming in friendship and not himself as a plunderer as perhaps Esau might well have reasoned. That it couldn't have been Jacob's intent to try to bribe Esau so that he would spare him is evidenced by the common sense fact that such a gift offered to an angry vindictive plunderer would only have whetted his appetite and made him realize what a great abundance of spoils awaited him.

Now, having done all that was prudent under these troubling circumstances, he went off, most likely back across the river to be alone, probably to again spend the night in prayer. But instead "...there wrestled a man with him until the break of day" (Genesis 32:24). What on earth was that all about? And what did the Holy Spirit want us to learn from His recording of this event? It is evident that this was another and most significant encounter with an angel. But perhaps it was not an angel in the usual sense, but in fact the Chief of all angels, the preincarnate Christ. This is probable because of Genesis 32:30 where Jacob says "...for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved" Even Hosea in 2:3, 5 refers to this as the appearance of both angel and God. It should be noted that this was not an isolated Old Testament appearance of our Savior. His physical manifestation is recorded several times. He was one of the three angels who appeared as men to Abraham when he promised Abraham and Sarah a son, and also when He revealed His

plan to destroy Sodom and Gommorrah (Genesis 18); He appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-6); He appeared to Joshua as Captain of the Lord's hosts (Joshua 5:13-15); and He was the fourth man in the fiery furnaces (Daniel 3:25).

But why did they wrestle? Perhaps we can get closer to the answer by examining the meaning of the Hebrew word here translated as wrestle. Wrestle appears only three times in the entire Old Testament. It occurs in Genesis 30:8, where Rachel speaks of having wrestled with Leah regarding conceiving children. Here the Hebrew word is "pathal" otherwise used to connote a "struggle," to be "morally torturous or froward, to show self-unsavory," but obviously not some physical activity. The other two times the word wrestle is used are both here in Genesis 32:24, 25. Here the word is "abag" the principal meaning of which is "to bedust, ie: grapple: -wrestle." Thus to "bedust" or "grapple" are the stronger definitions. Certainly grapple is more in context with the narrative when we see that the meaning of grapple is to "hold fast, seizing or gripping, to grip, to hold close." At the end of this all night engagement the "angel" finally had to wound Jacob to get him to let go, to remove his grip. Here Jacob exhibits great strength, tenacity and perseverance, as he grabs onto the Angel and holds him all night rolling and twisting in the dust of the ground. The word "bedust" according to the Oxford dictionary means nothing more than to cover with dust. This is what they must have had all over them after a whole night of this activity.

What an exhibition of chutzpah by Jacob! What confidence, strength, faith and dogged determination this 93-year-old, tired and weary and stressed man displayed! By comparison this makes Abraham's bargaining with God in Genesis 18, seem like juvenile bantering. Here he is alone in the dark desert intent on kneeling and praying to his God when he sees this figure in front of him. He clearly recognizes him from the first to be an angel of the Lord. He certainly has seen enough of them to recognize one when he sees him. So what does he do? He grabs onto him and tries to extract from him a blessing. From Scripture (Genesis 32:26) we only know the tail end of their all night conversation. However, the blessing was most likely central to it. The "Angel" surely could have ended the matter whenever he chose. But instead He apparently assumed not only a

human form but also human physical limitations for their encounter. It is evident that because of Jacobs's extraordinary strength and tenacity at daybreak, the "Angel" had to apply a bit of supernatural effort in order to break Jacob's grip. This seems to have been to slightly dislocate his thigh joint, which resulted in a permanent limp. Thus, Jacob actually prevailed over the "Angel" as far as the natural physical contest was concerned.

Couldn't it be that the episode was some kind of a demonstrative test much like God imposed on Abraham and Isaac on Mt. Moriah? Couldn't it also be the hand delivered message by God himself in a way acknowledging and rewarding Jacob for his lifetime of faithfulness, and now also validating and announcing his divinely ordained fatherhood of the family from which would spring the chosen nation and later the Messiah? For in the end, God pronounced him to be "...Israel, for a prince has thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed." I believe that "prevail" means far more than simply having won a wrestling match. Jacob prevailed spiritually over a lifetime of temptations and adversities and having never lost his faith and trust in God. The Hebrew word for Israel is "Yisrael" meaning "he will rule as God" and is derived from two root words "sarah" (to prevail to have power as a prince,) and "el" (strength, mighty, especially Almighty). Couldn't this also be a prophetic pronouncement relating to Revelation 7, where 144,000 are chosen and sealed, 12,000 each from 12 tribes of Israel, and then in Revelation 14 where they later stand with our Lord on Mt. Zion as He prepares to rule with them, as He will when He finally sits on the throne of David? Thus he was no longer just the supplanter or heel catcher, but he could now be called the "Prevailer, the one who fights victoriously with God," "A Prince with God."

To an observant reader of the whole of Scriptural references to Jacob, it is evident that he spent much time in prayer and was a man of extraordinary faith and love of God. While he may not have, for a long time, fully understood all of its ramifications, he was, nevertheless, well steeped in the knowledge of the awesome responsibility God had placed on him regarding the Abrahamic Covenant. Certainly many of his prayers were prayers for guidance as to how to fulfill this responsibility, which must have been his major concern. At this particular moment he was particularly concerned about this,

given the grave danger that he perceived may be galloping toward him from the south. Then suddenly here before him is at the very least, an informed and influential representative of God. What better opportunity would there be to settle this matter, to get answers to his questions, which may have been burning in him all his life, and to also go for broke in seeking a powerful, reassuring and lasting blessing that would carry him through to the end of his life? Thus it was that he boldly enlisted that incredible strength of will and tenacity which he had always possessed, even in the womb, as he decided to grab on to this physical manifestation of the One from above and to there settle that which had been unsettling to him all his life. His risky challenge succeeded. He received the blessing as well as a most illustrious immortal name, the name of a great nation, God's chosen nation that was to manifest some 400 years later.

Beyond this episode, there is little more to be said in terms of "A defense of Jacob". Scripture records several more events in his life but none worthy of mention in this context. It is evident that the Holy Spirit remained in him to the end and that God spoke to him favorably several more times and continued to protect and guide him. He suffered the loss of his beloved Rachel as she gave birth to his twelfth son, Benjamin, and he grieved greatly when he thought he had lost his favorite son, Rachel's first born, Joseph. However, later of course he finds that Joseph is not only alive but Prime Minister of Egypt, which was at that time, the world's greatest empire. After the "wrestling" episode, Jacob lived another 50 years and died in bed just after pronouncing God-inspired prophetic blessings on his fourteen sons. (He had adopted Joseph's sons Ephraim & Manassas).

Aside from the Scripture narrative, there is one more issue regarding the "Defense of Jacob" which needs to be addressed. That is, all the Biblical characters whose names were divinely changed, such as Abram to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Simon to Peter, and Saul to Paul, retained only their new names and were never again referred to by their former names. All of those except Jacob. He became Israel, but also remained Jacob in many Scripture references. The popular assumption regarding this only exception seems to be aligned with the common, yet unwarranted, perception of his unsavory character. It



suggests that when he is of the flesh, that is being a “bad guy,” he is Jacob, and when he is of the Spirit, that is being a “good guy,” he is Israel. The name Jacob appears 352 times in the Scripture, while Israel appears 2539 times. A review of each of these, fails completely to establish any correlation regarding this assumption. Yet we know that there is nothing arbitrary, accidental, or coincidental in the Scripture. Every word, every “jot and tittle” has specific purpose and meaning. Therefore, there is a reason why he is sometimes Jacob and other times Israel, but it has nothing to do with any good guy-bad guy condition or action. The answer I have concluded is very simple. When the Scripture refers to him as a man, he is called Jacob. When he is the titular head of the clan or the future nation, or when he is involved in any way associated with these roles, he is called Israel. For instance, in Genesis 48:2 “...and one told Jacob and said behold thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself and set up in bed.” Here the man Jacob was told, and the father of the clan, Israel must now assume that role. In Genesis 47:27, 28 “And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt in the country of Goshen, and they had “...and Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years...” Here, quite obviously the “Israel” as they are referred to is the entire clan including Jacob, but then Jacob the man is noted to be also living there as if he were separate and distinct, but he is so only because this is the way the Holy Spirit chose to tell us the age of Jacob the man. To have called him Israel there, and in that context, would have been confusing and inappropriate. It should be noted also that throughout the Scriptures his progeny is always called the “Children of Israel”, or the “Men of Israel,” or “the House of Israel.” They are never called the Children of Jacob no matter how wicked they were. If this good-bad myth had any substance it would seem that it should have carried over as well into a descriptive punctuation of their character as a people. In Numbers 23:23 we read, “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.” The Hebrew for enchantment can also mean divine prognostication, or diligent observation, while divination can be determination by lot or used of a soothsayer; this would seem to suggest an “equality of quality” of the two names. It’s saying that there is no divine judgment relative to Jacob nor is there any nefarious allegation against Israel. Then again in Numbers 2 4:5, we read, “How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.” The Hebrew for tent “ohel” also means dwelling, home or

tabernacle, while the Hebrew word here used for tabernacle “mishkawn” can also mean shepherd’s hut, dwelling place, and tent. Again it is evident that there is no intent to express a qualitative distinction between the person Jacob or Israel. It is simply equating, yet distinguishing, between man Jacob, Israel and the Tribe, Nation Israel. This is further evident in Numbers 2 4:2 where “...he saw Israel abiding in tents according to their tribe...” At this point in history, Jacob is long gone, yet he is here in these verses where we see him lovingly commemorated and equated with his progeny. From all of this it should be evident that he had to retain the name Jacob and to be called such in those cases where calling him Israel would have been confusing, because Israel also became the name of the tribe and nation. It’s as simple as that! Why read more into it than the Holy Spirit has intended.

This concludes my “Defense of Jacob”! I pray that whoever reads this will now think a little more compassionately toward him, because I am convinced, as I believe this paper proves, that he has been unfairly maligned. I suspect that our Lord believes this also, because there is not one word anywhere in the Scripture where He condemns or rebukes or criticizes Jacob the person, or his actions or his behaviors. In fact, as already noted in Genesis 25:27, God calls him “tau” that is, not only “plain” but also “complete, pious, gentle, dear, perfect undefiled, upright.” Nowhere does He retract, modify or diminish that assessment of him. On that basis, from where do we draw the right to override our Lord’s pronouncement and adopt a contrary one? If one looks carefully at the sagas of the other great patriarchs, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Soloman, etc., Scripture reveals far more blemishes on their souls, and many more growing pains as they groped their way along the pathway toward faith and righteousness, than are recorded about Jacob. There doesn’t appear to be anyone innately more reverent, faithful and obedient to the Lord than Jacob, with the possible exception of Joseph, his son. Even Joseph, however, exhibited some spiritual pride in his youth.

I have felt compelled to write many papers during these six wonderful years since our Lord laid his hand on me and adopted me as His son. Often, I have felt inspired and “pushed along” as I wrote. However, this is the first time that I not only felt I was being

pushed along, but also that Someone else was actually doing both the steering and the navigation. I pray that the result will be as gratifying for the reader as it has been for me.

Looking back at the above, and the many dozens of hours of effort it represents, I realize from past experiences that some will question the worthiness of this effort. It may seem that it could have been better used to glorify our Lord in a much more meaningful manner. After all what difference does it make in the long run how good or bad Jacob was? I have also pondered this issue myself many times and often wondered whether or not this kind of effort was serving Him, as He would prefer to be served. Surely, there are better ways, and as He prompts me, I always try to obey these as well. Beyond that, all I can say in response is that I know that I am part of the Body, and as Paul says in 1Corinthians 12:12 “For as the body is one, and has many members and all members of that body, being many are one body, so also in Christ.” In verses 14 and 15 he continues, “For the body is not one member but many. If the foot shall say, “Because I am not the head, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? I see myself as perhaps a toe or little finger, of no great importance, yet nevertheless part of the body. I believe that these writings are one of the functions, which the Holy Spirit has assigned this toe to provide within the body. I pray for His continued desire to assign me whatever tasks He would have of me. Finally I praise you, dear reader, for having the fortitude to have persevered to the end of this long tome, and I pray that it was worth that effort.