

## The Sabbath School.

## JACOB AND ESAU.

OCTOBER 10.

GENESIS XXVII : 22-40.

**J**SAAC was of a gentle and retiring disposition. Little is recorded of his life at Beersheba except that he digged wells and worshipped God, ch. 24 : 63. At 40 years of age he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, ch. 24 and 25 : 20. The twins were born when he was 80. They grew up very different types of men ; Esau, adventurous, jovial, ready for any sport ; Jacob a plain shrewd farmer, ch. 25 : 27, who knew how to drive a good bargain, ch. 25 : 31-34. At this time the sons were 77 years of age. Isaac was 137. His eyesight had failed, and the infirmities of age suggested to him the propriety of making his last will and bestowing a blessing on his sons. But he attained the age of 180, ch. 35 : 28. Jacob, instigated by his mother, had recourse to cheating and lying in order to forestall the blessing that rightfully belonged to Esau by priority of birth. The plot nearly failed. V. 22. *The voice is Jacob's*—he had forgotten to simulate the tone of Esau's voice. *But the hands*—skillfully disguised, felt so like Esau's, the old man thought his ears must have misled him. *So he blessed him*—rather, he resolved to bless him as his legal heir. V. 24. *Art thou my son ?* He had still some doubts, and put Jacob on his word of honour. "*I am*"—This shameful and humiliating falsehood cannot be extenuated. He was signally punished for it. He became a slave to Laban for 20 years, ch. 31 : 41. Esau lorded it over him and distressed him, ch. 32 : 7, 8. His wife, Rachel, died by the road-side, ch. 35 : 19. His father-in-law cheated him, ch. 31 : 7. His own sons deceived him, ch. 37 : 32-34. Vs. 25-27. *My son's venison*—a customary covenant sacrifice offered by the recipient of the blessing. *Kissed him*—the invariable salutation in the east, even to this day. *The smell of his raiment*—the aromatic odours of the Syrian fields is proverbial, S. Song, 4 : 11, Hosea 14 : 6. Vs. 28, 29. *The dew of heaven*—in a dry country, where rain seldom falls from March to September, the crops mainly depend upon the copious dews. *Corn and wine*—some parts of Palestine were very fertile, Deut 8 : 7-9. The whole country was famous for its vineyards. The blessing conveyed a prophetic promise of fruitfulness, plenty, power, and divine protection. Vs. 30-34. Upon Esau's return the fraud was discovered. Isaac, though greatly distressed, could not revoke the blessing ; indeed he seems to have recognized the hand of God in it, and, by faith, acquiesced, Heb. 11 : 20. *Bless me, even me*—Esau bitterly bewailed his folly in bartering away his birth-right, ch. 25 : 34. Vs. 35, 36. *With subtilty*—deceitfully, see Gen. 3 : 1. *Supplanted*—true to his name, he outwitted me. V. 37. *Thy Lord*—Though Esau was not personally subject to his brother, his posterity became tributary to the Israelites, 2 Sam. 8 : 14.

LEARN. It is a wise and proper thing to make one's will while in the possession of one's faculties. Jacob's misfortunes teach us that honesty is the best policy.

## Jacob at Bethel.

OCTOBER 17.

GENESIS XXVIII : 10-22.

**E**SAU had threatened Jacob's life for cheating him out of his birth-right, ch. 27, 41. To avert this danger, Rebekah had again recourse to stratagem, representing to Isaac her fear lest Jacob should make a foolish marriage with the heathen Canaanites as Esau had already done to their sorrow, ch. 26 : 3. Would it not be a good thing to send him away for a while among his relations in Mesopotamia ? To this Isaac readily assented, gave him his parting blessing, and bid him go to Padanaram. Jacob, nothing loath, sets out from Beersheba, a solitary wanderer, on his long journey of 450 miles through a rough and desert country. V. 11. *Lighted upon a certain place*—It was not "chance," but a providential guidance that brought him to the spot made sacred by his grand-father, 160 years before, ch. 11 : 8, 13 : 3. *Took of the stones*—of the very same, perhaps, used by Abraham for his altar—for his pillows—a pretty hard pillow, but Jacob was used to "roughing it" and sleeping thus in the open air was not uncommon in that country. V. 12. *He dreamed*—never slept sounder in his life. *A ladder*—dreams often present strange phantasies. The ladder may have seemed a gigantic mountain, its ledges resembling steps or stairs by which it might be ascended. *The angels, &c.*—This affords the key of the vision, namely,—the intimate connection subsisting between heaven and earth by the ministrations of angelic messengers, Heb. 1 : 14, teaching him that, though a wanderer, camping out, and exposed to danger, he was yet encompassed by the presence and protection of God. Ps. 34 : 7. Our Lord himself teaches us that the ladder signified the Son of Man, John 1 : 51—the way to heaven, John 14 : 6. V. 13. *The Lord stood above it*—revealing Himself the Covenant God of Jacob, as he had been of Abraham and Isaac. V. 14. *As the dust of the earth*—a renewal of world-wide blessings, see ch. 11 : 23, pointing to the spiritual seed of Abraham, Rom. 9 : 7, 8. Gal. 3 : 7-9. V. 15. *I am with thee, &c.* If God be with us ; if he will "keep" us ; never leave us ; bring us at last to his heavenly kingdom, we need fear no evil, Ps. 23, and 121 : 5, 8. Isa. 43 : 2, 3. Vs. 16, 17. *Jacob awakened*—to find himself a converted man. *How dreadful*—how awe-inspiring the presence of Jehovah ! Exo. 3 : 5. The more we see of God, the more we are abased on account of our sins. V. 18. *A pillar*—to mark the place against he came back. *Poured oil*—a solemn act of consecration, see Lev. 2 : 1. 1 Sam. 10 : 1, Ps. 23 : 5. Vs. 20, 21. *Vowed*—evidence of his self-dedication to God. *And come again in peace*—he had set out in great dispeace, from Esau's threat. *Then shall the Lord*—His words are not to be considered as implying a doubt, or stipulating conditions ; rather, since God hath promised all these things, I will henceforth consecrate myself, and all that I own, to his service.

LEARN that though we are continually sinning against God, he graciously visits us with undeserved mercies and is willing to pardon all who believe and repent. Isa 1 : 18.