



DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR ANCIENTS, WEEK 6:

The Assyrians, Gilgamesh and Jacob

- Discuss the unique details about Isaac's life from the "Isaac Trivia" section of the Companion.
- Make sure your students understand that Jacob's name means, figuratively, "deceiver." Point out that Jacob will do more than his share of deceiving and being deceived.
- Hold an in-family discussion on the pitfalls of parents choosing favorites.
- If you want to look ahead, point out that Jacob was not the only younger brother who surpassed his older brothers: Joseph, son of Jacob also surpassed all of his older brothers, as did King David and his son Solomon.
- Discuss the great importance of birthrights and blessings. Explain that the son with the firstborn's blessing received a double share of his father's inheritance— twice as much land and wealth as the other sons received.
- Point out that Jacob's blessing had a unique, almost sacred quality— once given, it could not be repeated, even though Jacob and Rebekah had deceived Isaac in order to get it.
- Assign roles and act out the seven parts of Isaac's blessing to Jacob.
- Discuss what Jacob's vision of the angel-filled heavenly stairway God means— that Jacob is the inheritor of the promises that God made to Abraham.
- Discuss the similarities between Jacob and Abraham's servant listed in the Companion.
- Retell the tale of trickery between Jacob and his cousin/father-in-law Laban.
- Retell the tale of the rivalry that arises between Rachel, Leah and their maids. Discuss Jacob's role in what happened between the wives.
- Make sure that your students know how many children Jacob had— twelve— and that the last two, Joseph and Benjamin, were Jacob's favorites because they came from his favorite wife, Rachel. Note that though Rachel was the favorite wife of Jacob, Jesus was descended from Judah who was Leah's son.
- Examine the strange tale of Jacob wrestling with the mysterious stranger from Genesis 32:22-32— the tale in which Jacob receives his new name, Israel. Ask: Does this story seem like something that really happened, or does it seem more like a dream? Whether it is real or a dream, how would you interpret it? Some interpret it to mean that it was the Hebrew people's destiny never to stop striving against God, and never to be abandoned by Him.
- Discuss Jacob's sheep breeding abilities!
- Review and discuss the events in the Epic of Gilgamesh. Compare Utnapishtim, the lone survivor of the Gilgamesh flood story, with Noah.