



[Genesis 25:27](#)

(27) So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.

New King James Version

Of [Jacob](#), [Moses](#) writes, "So the boys grew. . . . Jacob was a mild [*plain*, KJV] man, dwelling in tents" ([Genesis 25:27](#)). Some modern translations render "mild" or "plain" as "quiet." Unlike the more volatile Esau, Jacob's temperament was virtually devoid of peaks and valleys. Despite this quietness, other scriptures show Jacob had distinct character contrasts, including a strong streak of craftiness. The biblical narrative portrays him as a man keenly alive to his own interests.

These characteristics probably made him less appealing to others, perhaps even a puzzle others avoided penetrating. Like Esau, he is shown to be a physically strong, robust person, yet quiet, reflective, pastoral, timid, steady, orderly, and contemplative.

It is interesting that each parent favored the son whose characteristics were most unlike him or her. The quiet peacemaking [Isaac](#) rejoices in the woodsy wildness of the adventurous Esau. The vigorous, take-charge Rebekah finds an outlet for her tenderness in the quiet, reflective, hesitant Jacob.

Genesis 27 shows Jacob, with Rebekah's urging, using food, clothing, and craftiness to take advantage of Isaac's blindness and deceive him. Other scriptures also show Jacob cunningly deceiving Laban, his father-in-law. The Bible shows a clear contrast in personality between Esau and Jacob. Jacob, rather than using his physical strength like Esau, employed perseverance and dogged tenacity, preferring to use clever deceptions and inventive strategies to achieve his ambitions.

Undoubtedly, he was creative, a man who looked and planned ahead. He did not merely live for the moment. He was always planning how to get the upper hand and the best of a deal to come out on top. Clearly, he was not above lying to get what he wanted.

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However, he was persistent and persevering, and over a lifetime, he became a better man by far than his brother.

The story of these two sons also parallels the fable of the race between the tortoise and the hare. Jacob, like the tortoise, through much plodding persistence succeeded, while the more colorful Esau, like the hare, failed because he beat himself. Though Jacob was also his own worst enemy, he never despised or turned his back on the hallowed things of [God](#). With the help of God's calling, he overcame, and in the end, he became one of the great men in the history of Israel. He is not labeled as worldly like his twin but a true man of [faith](#) like his father and grandfather before him.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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