

Journey Through H1Story: Jacob and Rachel, and Leah

Text: Genesis 29:1-35

Introduction:

After leaving Bethel, Jacob arrived at a well near Haran (his destination). There he met Rachel, a daughter of Laban (Rebekah's brother), whom Jacob would soon ask to be his wife.

I. Jacob Meets Rachel. – Gen. 29:1-12

- A. Jacob asked about Laban from the people at the well near Haran, then Rachel arrived and the people told him that she was Laban's daughter.
- B. Rachel was a shepherdess.
 1. She was a woman who worked.
 2. She was responsible for her father's flock.
- C. Jacob helped Rachel water the flock and introduced himself, then Rachel ran and told her father, Laban.

II. Jacob Meets Laban. – Gen. 29:13-20

- A. Laban ran to meet Jacob as soon as he heard from Rachel.
 1. Laban probably remembered that time when Abraham's servant, Eliezer, went to them to ask for Rebekah, his sister, to be the wife of Isaac, Abraham's son. – Gen. 24:28-61
 2. If Jacob was Isaac and Rebekah's son, then he too, was quite wealthy.
 3. Laban warmly received Jacob and he stayed with them for a month.
 - ***"He stayed with him for a month: Laban showed this great hospitality, not only because of custom, and not only because Jacob was his nephew; Laban also knew that Jacob would inherit a significant fortune from his father Isaac."*** ^[1] (David Guzik, *Jacob's Marriages and Children*)
- B. Laban offered Jacob compensation for working for him.
 1. ***"What should your wages be: This might sound like a nice offer, but really Laban let Jacob know if he wanted to remain among them, he must stay as a hired servant. Jacob was the son of a man of tremendous wealth. Certainly he was not lazy, but he wasn't used to hard work. Servants did the hard work back home; now Jacob was the servant."*** ^[1]
 - ***"Jacob's reaction in this situation would reveal much of his character. This demonstrates the principle that you never know what kind of servant you are until others treat you like a servant."*** ^[1]
 2. Jacob asked to marry Rachel for seven years' worth of labor.
 - ***"I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter: The offer to work for seven years was essentially a dowry. Though Jacob came from a family with great wealth, he left home with no money. Before he could take a woman in marriage he had to provide a dowry to demonstrate he was fit to support a family and to compensate for the taking of the daughter."*** ^[1]
 - ***"Seven years was a very generous offer, far above a normal dowry. Jacob didn't want to risk a refusal. When Laban saw how badly Jacob wanted Rachel, he knew he could take advantage of him."*** ^[1]
 3. Laban accepted and Jacob worked for Laban for seven years.

III. Jacob Marries Leah. – Gen. 29:21-30

- A. After seven years of working for Laban, Jacob asked for Rachel to be his wife.
- B. Laban prepared a wedding feast in response to Jacob, but gave **Leah**, his elder daughter, to Jacob as his wife instead of Rachel.
 - 1. *"The wedding feast was usually a lavish event lasting seven days. A wide variety of food was served along with wine, which was sometimes fortified with spices."* ^[2] (Footnotes, Amplified Bible, [The Lockman Foundation](#))
 - 2. *"Laban must have made sure that Jacob was thoroughly intoxicated before he attempted to switch the daughters."* ^[2]
- C. Jacob realized it was Leah whom he married and **complained** to Laban about it.
 - 1. *"It was possible for Jacob to be fooled because of the wedding customs of the day. According to those customs, the wife was veiled until she was finally alone with her husband in the honeymoon suite. If it was dark by the time Jacob and his new bride were alone together (something Laban would not have difficulty arranging), it helps explain how Jacob was fooled."* ^[1]
 - 2. *"We assume that Leah was in agreement with this. Yet even if she was not in agreement, she was under the absolute authority of her father."* ^[1]
 - *"The absolute authority of the father in the home of that culture also explains why Rachel allowed this to happen."* ^[1]
- D. Laban gave tradition as an **excuse** saying that they did not give the younger daughter in marriage before the older.
 - *"Now if that were the custom then Laban should have told him the custom back at the beginning of the seven years."* ^[3] (Chuck Smith, Verse by Verse Study on Genesis 29-31)
- E. Laban proposed that Jacob finish the week of the wedding feast and then she can marry Rachel, but he will have to work for him for **another** seven years.
- F. Jacob agreed to Laban's terms and married Rachel, then worked for seven more years.
 - 1. *"Now here we find the case of polygamy but even as we read of it, we see the difficulties that exist in a polygamous relationship as there begin to develop jealousies and rivalries and so forth among the wives."* ^[3]
 - 2. *"And so we find that here there is really no strong biblical injunction against it. It was something that was accepted in that culture at that time. And of course, it came to its maximum under Solomon. But by the time we come to the New Testament and the purposes of God are more clearly defined, when the church is developed, polygamy is definitely prohibited."* ^[3]

IV. God Blesses Leah. – Gen. 29:31-35

- A. When the **Lord** saw that Leah was unloved, He made her bear children while Rachel was barren.
- B. Leah's first four sons:
 - 1. Reuben – *"Because the Lord has seen my humiliation and suffering; now my husband will love me [since I have given him a son]."* (vs. 32 AMP)
 - 2. Simeon (God hears) – *"Because the Lord heard that I am unloved, He has given me this son also."* (vs. 33 AMP)
 - 3. Levi – *"Now this time my husband will become attached to me [as a companion], for I have given him three sons."* (vs. 34 AMP)
 - 4. Judah – *"Now I will praise the Lord."* (vs. 35 AMP)
 - ***"She called his name Judah:*** The fourth son born to Jacob, again through Leah, was named **Judah**, meaning **Praise**. Apparently, Leah stopped naming her children to reflect the pain and longing in her heart. At this point, she focused on God and could praise

Him.” [1]

- C. *“So the names of the boys were actually indicative of her desires to be accepted, to be loved, and they probably were born within a year of each other.” [3]*
- D. After Judah, Leah stopped bearing children for a **while**.

V. Spiritual Insights and Principles.

- A. *So Jacob served [Laban] for seven years for [the right to marry] Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.* (Gen. 29:20 AMP)
 - 1. Purpose and passion make a difference in a person's **perspective**.
 - 2. Time and effort didn't seem to matter to Jacob for he had a purpose (marrying Rachel) and was passionate (in love) with Rachel.
 - 3. He loved Rachel so much and was set in marrying her that Jacob was **willing** to serve Laban for seven more years (serving him for a total of fourteen years). – Gen. 29:30
 - 4. *“This clearly demonstrates an important principle: true love waits. Jacob was willing to wait **seven years** for Rachel.” [1]*
- B. Commentaries on Leah's eyes:
 - 1. *“**Leah's eyes were delicate**: There is some dispute as to exactly what this phrase means. Some think it means her eyes were bad and she couldn't see well. Others think it means her eyes were dull, not beautiful and full of life like her sister Rachel's eyes.” [1]*
 - 2. *“Some believe that that means she was blue-eyed. Her eyes were not the real deep dark brown which were considered the strong, stronger eyes.” [3]*
 - 3. *“**Leah tender-eyed**—that is, soft blue eyes—thought a blemish.” [4]* (Robert Jamieson, Commentary on Genesis 29)
- C. Jacob must have been an **excellent** worker since Laban wanted him to work for him for another seven years.
 - 1. It's not as if Laban did not want to give Rachel to Jacob and even said that it was better for him to give Rachel to Jacob than to another man (Gen. 29:19).
 - 2. Laban was actually **blessed** when Jacob worked for him. – Gen. 30:27
 - 3. Laban wanted Jacob to work for him longer, for as long as “legally” possible, kind of how Jacob got the birthright “legally” from Esau.
- D. Jacob, the one who exploited his brother for the birthright and deceived his father for a blessing had been exploited and deceived by Laban, his father-in-law, to work for more than a decade for the love of his life, Rachel.
 - Rachel was someone he had to work for and could not **cheat** his way to get.
- E. Insights on Jacob being deceived by Laban:
 - 1. *“**Why then have you deceived me**: Significantly, Laban's deception towards Jacob was similar to the deception Jacob put upon his father Isaac and his brother Esau. This is an example of Jacob reaping what he had sown. Jacob exchanged the younger for the older; Laban exchanged the older for the younger.” [1]*
 - 2. *“When Jacob deceived his father and cheated his brother, God did not change His plan to choose Jacob to receive the birthright. Instead, God took Jacob to the school of difficult experience to discipline him. This shows that our disobedience may not derail God's plan for our life, but it will greatly affect how we end up experiencing it. One might spend 20 years*

- working for someone like Laban while God teaches a few things.” [1]*
3. *“Now I am certain that in this Jacob could not help but remember the deception that he had pulled upon his dad disguising as his brother.” [3]*
 4. *“Though we can see this was God’s correction upon Jacob, it in no way justified Laban’s deception. The fact that God **does** work all things together for good never excuses the evil things man does.” [1]*
- F. God’s **grace** for an unloved wife.
1. *“**When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved:** God’s compassion on Leah is touching. She was truly the innocent party in all of this mess. God can bring comfort and blessing to a wife and meet her needs even when the husband acts in an ungodly manner.” [1]*
 2. *“Isaiah 54:5 says, **For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name.** Husbands are responsible to care for their wives. Yet when they do not, God can meet the needs of a hurting wife, needs that may be neglected by the husband.” [1]*
 3. *“Leah, though she was neglected by Jacob and despised by Rachel, had a great purpose in God’s plan. The two greatest tribes came from Leah, not Rachel: Levi (the priestly tribe) and Judah (the royal tribe). And most importantly, the Messiah came from Leah, the less-attractive sister who was neglected and despised but learned to look to the LORD and praise Him.” [1]*

Conclusion/Application:

Despite his terrible experience with Laban, Jacob accomplished his goal of having a wife from among his mother’s relatives. It took him many years, but God kept him and blessed him with his own family. Things may not have turned out the way Jacob initially planned it, but God was able to uphold His promise to him, **His** way, and in His timetable.

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1. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/genesis/genesis-29.cfm?a=29013
 2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+29&version=AMP>
 3. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/smith_chuck/c2000_Gen/Gen_029.cfm?a=29013
 4. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/jfb/Gen/Gen_029.cfm?a=29013