

# Leah & Rachel

two sisters, same husband

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## a Genesis 29 - 31

First a little background (covered in the lesson about Rebekah).

### b Jacob's story: Genesis 27 & 28

- c - tricked his father (*Isaac*) & brother (*Esau*)
- d - conspiracy with his mother (*Rebekah*)
- e - flee for his life
- f - refuge with his uncle (mother's brother) (*Laban*)

## g Genesis 29:1-13 Jacob meets the family

Rebekah's family still lived in Haran, northeast of Canaan (see the map with the student sheet about Sarah). The first person in Rebekah's family whom Jacob met was his cousin Rachel. She was Laban's daughter.

Rachel worked as a shepherdess for her father's flock. Jacob was resting at the well, chatting with other shepherds, catching up on family news. Rachel and her sheep arrived, and the other shepherds told Jacob who she was. Jacob helped to water her sheep, and then told her who he was.

*<sup>11</sup> Then Jacob kissed Rachel and cried. <sup>12</sup> He told her that he was from her father's family and that he was the son of Rebekah. So Rachel ran home and told her father.*

*<sup>13</sup> When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him. Laban hugged him and kissed him and brought him to his house, where Jacob told Laban everything that had happened.*

## h Genesis 29:14-20 working for love

Jacob moved in with Laban's family and began working for his uncle..

*<sup>15</sup> Then Laban said to Jacob, "You are my relative, but it is not right for you to work for me without pay. What would you like me to pay you?"*

*<sup>16</sup> Now Laban had two daughters. The older was Leah, and the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was very beautiful. <sup>18</sup> Jacob loved Rachel, so he said to Laban, "Let me marry your younger daughter Rachel. If you will, I will work seven years for you."*

*<sup>19</sup> Laban said, "It would be better for her to marry you than someone else, so stay here with me."<sup>20</sup> So Jacob worked for Laban seven years so he could marry Rachel. But they seemed like just a few days to him because he loved Rachel very much.*

i **Genesis 29:21-30 wedding surprise**

The Bible says, "You harvest what you plant." And that's exactly what happened to Jacob.

Jacob means "he grabs the heel," which figuratively means "deceiver." Jacob had lived up to the meaning of his name. He had tricked his twin brother out of his inheritance and his father's blessing. And he had deceived his father. That was the reason he had to leave home to live in Haran with his uncle. Now it was Jacob's turn to be deceived.

<sup>21</sup> *After seven years Jacob said to Laban, "Give me Rachel so that I may marry her. The time I promised to work for you is over."*

<sup>22</sup> *So Laban gave a feast for all the people there. <sup>23</sup> That evening he brought his daughter Leah to Jacob, and they had sexual relations.*

For the wedding Leah a veil. It was late, the tent was dark, and Jacob was a bit drunk. He didn't realize that he had married the wrong woman until it was too late.

<sup>25</sup> *In the morning when Jacob saw that he had had sexual relations with Leah, he said to Laban, "What have you done to me? I worked hard for you so that I could marry Rachel! Why did you trick me?"*

<sup>26</sup> *Laban said, "In our country we do not allow the younger daughter to marry before the older daughter. <sup>27</sup> But complete the full week of the marriage ceremony with Leah, and I will give you Rachel to marry also. But you must serve me another seven years."*

<sup>28</sup> *So Jacob did this, and when he had completed the week with Leah, Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife.*

Now Jacob had two wives -- sisters. ...a recipe for trouble!

<sup>30</sup> *So Jacob had sexual relations with Rachel also, and Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. Jacob worked for Laban for another seven years [without pay].*

j **Genesis 29:31 - 30:24 then the children**

These verses tell the sad story of conflict between two sisters married to the same man.. Even though Jacob had sex with both of them, Leah felt that he didn't really love her and that his true affection was for her sister. God balanced this injustice by letting Leah become pregnant, but not Rachel. Rachel tried to compensate for her inability to have children by giving her servant to Jacob as a substitute -- a surrogate mother. Then Leah did the same. Jacob was having sex with a total of four women, and the result was twelve children -- 11 sons and 1 daughter. The youngest (at this time) was Joseph, the only child born to Rachel. [Son #12 was born later; all 12 sons and their mothers are listed in Genesis 35:23-26]

<b>Leah</b> [6]:	<b>Bilhah</b> (Rachel's servant) [2]	<b>Rachel</b> [2]:
Reuben	Dan	Joseph
Simeon	Naphtali.	Benjamin.
Levi	<b>Zilpah</b> (Leah's servant) [2]	
Judah	Gad	
Issachar	Asher.	
Zebulun.		

**k Genesis 31 sneak exit & Rachel's deceit**

After Jacob's second 7-year obligation to his uncle was up, he continued to working for Laban. Jacob became rich. Laban and his sons became jealous. Jacob, Leah, and Rachel all agreed to leave.

*<sup>17</sup> So Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, <sup>18</sup> and they began their journey back to Isaac, his father, in the land of Canaan. All the flocks of animals that Jacob owned walked ahead of them. He carried everything with him that he had gotten while he lived in Northwest Mesopotamia.*

*<sup>19</sup> While Laban was gone to cut the wool from his sheep, Rachel stole the idols that belonged to him. <sup>20</sup> And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was leaving. <sup>21</sup> Jacob and his family left quickly, crossed the Euphrates River, and traveled toward the mountains of Gilead.*

Yes, it was Laban's turn to get tricked. And, wow, was he mad!

*<sup>22</sup> Three days later Laban learned that Jacob had run away, <sup>23</sup> so he gathered his relatives and began to chase him. After seven days Laban found him in the mountains of Gilead.*

Laban had two complaints against Jacob.

*<sup>26</sup> Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You cheated me and took my daughters as if you had captured them in a war. <sup>27</sup> Why did you run away secretly and trick me? ... <sup>30</sup> I know you want to go back to your home, but why did you steal my idols?”*

*<sup>31</sup> Jacob answered Laban, “I left without telling you, because I was afraid you would take your daughters away from me. <sup>32</sup> If you find anyone here who has taken your idols, that person will be killed! Your relatives will be my witnesses. You may look for anything that belongs to you and take anything that is yours.” (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen Laban’s idols.)*

Now, Rachel has one more deception, one more trick to play on her father.

*<sup>33</sup> So Laban looked in Jacob’s tent, in Leah’s tent, and in the tent where the two slave women stayed, but he did not find his idols. When he left Leah’s tent, he went into Rachel’s tent. <sup>34</sup> Rachel had hidden the idols inside her camel’s saddle and was sitting on them. Although Laban looked through the whole tent, he did not find them.*

*<sup>35</sup> Rachel said to her father, “Father, don’t be angry with me. I am not able to stand up before you because I am having my monthly period.” So Laban looked through the camp, but he did not find his idols.*

**l Genesis 35:16-20 The end of Rachel's story**

Rachel died in childbirth with her second son - the last child born to Jacob.

*<sup>16</sup> Jacob and his group left Bethel. Before they came to Ephrath, Rachel began giving birth to her baby,<sup>17</sup> but she was having much trouble. When Rachel's nurse saw this, she said, "Don't be afraid, Rachel. You are giving birth to another son."<sup>18</sup> Rachel gave birth to the son, but she herself died. As she lay dying, she named the boy Son of My Suffering [Hebrew: Ben-Oni], but Jacob called him Benjamin.*

Benjamin means "son of my right hand."

*<sup>19</sup> Rachel was buried on the road to Ephrath, a district of Bethlehem.*

- m* Which of the two sisters became the ancestor of Jesus?  
*n* Compare **Genesis 35:23-26** [see page 2 of this leader's guide] with **Matthew 3:2**.

*<sup>1</sup> This is the family history of Jesus Christ.  
He came from the family of David,  
and David came from the family of Abraham.  
<sup>2</sup> Abraham was the father of Isaac.  
Isaac was the father of Jacob.  
Jacob was the father of Judah and his brothers.*

Judah's mother was Leah.

#### LESSONS FOR US:

- ✓ Trickery and Deceit -- bad idea.
- ✓ Polygamy -- really bad idea!
- ✓ God blesses, even when we don't deserve it.