

became very rich. He had large flocks and camels and donkeys, and men and women servants.

- Verse 42 shows more deceitful dealings on **Jacob's** part. He did this to build wealth. But trouble was just over the horizon.
- Test this idea using the names of the sons *in their birth order*:

I will praise the Lord for He has looked on me and granted good fortune. Happy am I because my wrestling God is making me to forget. God hears me and is joined to me. He has purchased me a dwelling. God will add to me the Son of His right hand." (The words in light face are supplied to complete each thought.)-- © 2003 Word of Truth Radio.com



Jacob's Family Structure

GENESIS CHAPTERS 29-30

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Genesis Previously		
Mankind Created	Nations Formed	Abram Covenanted
Abram at War, is Honored, Land Boundaries Specified		
Sarai substituted, then Rejected Hagar; the Lord supported Her Expanded Names given to Sarai and Abram.		
Abraham was Visited and Warned about Sodom Sodom Was Destroyed, but Lot and Daughters Were Saved.		
King Abimelech takes and quickly returns Sarah		
Isaac is born, then Hagar and Ishmael are dismissed		
The near-sacrifice of Isaac and the death of Sarah.		
Isaac Marries Rebecca		
Isaac prays for a son and received two. God blessed Isaac.		
Jacob acquired both the family birthright and family blessing.		
Then Jacob left Canaan to Marry. He saw a stairway to heaven.		

James E. Smith writes an insightful summary of this section: "God was preparing Jacob for spiritual leadership in the chosen family. Part of that discipline was in forcing Jacob to see himself as he really was, a worldly, deceitful schemer. Laban, his employer, was a mirror image of Jacob with respect to character, and for twenty years the patriarch had to look at that disgusting image."

JACOB ARRIVED AT THE RIGHT TIME

(1) Then Jacob went on his way and came to the land of the people of the east. (2) He looked up and saw a well in the field where three flocks of sheep were lying beside it. The people gave water to the flocks from that well. The stone covering the top of the well was large. (3) When all

the flocks were gathered there, the men would roll the stone from the top of the well. Then after giving water to the sheep, they would put the stone again in its place on top of the well. (4) Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" They said, "We are from Haran." (5) He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him."

- The **journey** was about 400 miles to **Haran**, where other greater family members lived. While Abraham's servant Eliezar had arrived with lavish gifts, camels and servants, **Jacob** arrived with the shirt on his back and little else.
- He arrived where his cousin Rachel was working. The **shepherds** had a custom of waiting until all of the **sheep** were present to move the **rock** that covered **the well**. **Jacob** could already see that he had made the proper connections for reaching Laban, his uncle.

RACHEL ARRIVES — PERFECT TIMING

(6) He asked them, "Is he well?" They said, "He is well. And see, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep." (7) Jacob said, "See, the sun is still high. It is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Give water to the sheep, and return them to their field." (8) But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered and they roll the stone from the top of the well. Then we will give the sheep water."

- Yet another case of God's timing. Laban's daughter was approaching. **Jacob** wanted to talk with **Rachel** alone, but could not get the shepherds to move on.
- **Bradford** describes the wells: "Water wells were important places because much work was involved to create one, and much care was involved in maintaining it. Further, a well was owned by someone; either the local king, or in this case, a local family. And since the humans of the settlement the well was dug for needed water

of his sons. (36) Then he traveled three days away from Jacob. And Jacob was left to care for the rest of Laban's flocks.

- **Laban** removed any animals that were speckled or spotted, sending them **three days** journey away.

(37) Then Jacob took green sticks of three kinds of trees. And he cut white marks in them, showing the white which was in the sticks. (38) He took these sticks which he had cut and set them in front of the flocks, in the place where the flocks came to drink. And the animals mated when they came to drink. (39) So the flocks mated in front of the sticks. And the young that were born had spots.

- First of all, it may have been a miracle. Gen 31:12 **And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.**
- Or it may have been a clever trick on **Jacob's** part. There are indications in the narrative that he knew the science of selective breeding. By careful breeding, he not only produced animals with the markings he desired, but he was also able to produce stronger animals for himself and feeble ones for Laban.
- Perhaps the **peeled** rods were just a trick to hide his breeding secrets from others. Whatever the explanation, **Jacob's** wealth increased during his final six years of serving Laban.

(40) Then Jacob divided the lambs. He made the flocks look toward Laban's flock of the animals which were black or with spots. And he put his own flocks by themselves. He did not put them with Laban's flock. (41) When the stronger animals of the flock were mating, Jacob would put the sticks in the water in front of the flock so they would mate by the sticks. (42) But when the flock was weak, Jacob did not put the sticks in. So the weaker animals went to Laban and the stronger ones went to Jacob. (43) Jacob

brought good to me because of you.” (28) Then he said, “Tell me what you want to be paid, and I will pay it.”

- After 14 years, **Jacob** wanted to return to Canaan. He had fulfilled his work contracts for his wives.
- **Laban** learned that his present wealth came because of the **Lord's blessing** on his son-in-law.
- Two masters of deception are at combat. **Laban** didn't want **Jacob**, Laban's daughters and grandchildren to leave.

JACOB CREATES HIS OWN ESTATE

(29) Jacob said to him, “You know how much I have served you and how I have cared for your cattle. (30) For you had little before I came. But now it has become very much. The Lord has brought good to you everywhere I turned. But when will I be able to give much to those of my own house also?”

- **Jacob** rightly asked that he build his own estate. He had been paying for his wives for fourteen years.

(31) Laban said, “What should I pay you?” Jacob said, “Do not pay me anything. If you will do this one thing for me, I will again feed and take care of your flock. (32) Let me go through your whole flock today. Let me take out of it every sheep and every goat that has spots, and every black lamb. These will be my pay. (33) So my fair actions will answer for me later, when you come to look at what I have been paid. If you find any sheep or goat without spots or any lamb that is not black, you may think of them as stolen.” (34) And Laban said, “Good! Let it be done as you say.”

- Nearly all **sheep and goats** in that region had solid colors. Laban probably thought **Jacob** had made a poor bargain.
- **Laban** means *white*, so the white sheep go to Mr. White.

(35) That day Laban took out all the male goats with spots and all the female goats with spots, every one with white on it, and every black sheep. And he put them into the care

daily.....and the animals that were part of their lives also had to drink regularly as well.....the well became a place of meeting for the country folk, much the same as the city gates was the place of meeting for city folk.”

(9) He was still talking with them when Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she cared for them. (10) When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the top of the well. And he gave water to the flock of his mother's brother Laban.

- **Bradford** comments: “We're told Rachel is a shepherdess; this is a somewhat unusual occupation for a woman in this area of the world; Bedouin women of the Sinai and Arabian Peninsulas, hundreds of miles to the south, often tended flocks and herds..... but Mesopotamian women and eventually Israeli women did not.”
- **Jacob** may have been considerably stronger than the shepherds because he could move the **stone** for **Rachael**.

(11) Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to cry for joy. (12) Jacob told Rachel that he was of her father's family, the son of Rebekah. And she ran and told her father. (13) When Laban heard the news of his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him. He put his arms around him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then Jacob told Laban all these things. (14) Laban said to him, “For sure you are my bone and my flesh.” And Jacob stayed with him a month. (15) Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are one of my family, should you serve me for nothing? Tell me, what do you want to be paid?”

- Not a romantic **kiss** for **Rachel**, but one for a relative, as in verse 13. **Rachel** ran to tell her father **Laban**, the head of the family. This was exciting. **Jacob's** story convinced **Laban** that he was really a relative. Soon **Laban** wanted to make a formal working agreement with **Jacob**.

LACKING A BRIDE PRICE, JACOB OFFERS TO WORK SEVEN YEARS FOR RACHEL

(16) Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older one was Leah, and the name of the younger one was Rachel.

(17) Leah's eyes were weak. But Rachel was beautiful in body and face. (18) Jacob loved Rachel. So he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

(19) Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to another man. Stay with me."

- **Jacob** had become interested in **Rachel**, but he had no bride-price. He had arrived with little or nothing. So he volunteered to work for **seven years** to earn her as a wife.
- **Jacob** had bypassed the older daughter who was not as attractive. **Rachel** was beautiful. **Laban** agreed because he didn't want **Rachel** to be married to someone else — probably a man who didn't believe in the one true God. **Prager** observes: "Laban does not seem particularly enthusiastic about the match. His comment implies nothing positive about Jacob—he is simply a better choice than a non-family member as a future son-in-law."

Prager, Dennis. *The Rational Bible: Genesis* (p. 369). Regnery Faith. Kindle Edition.

LEAH IS SUBSTITUTED FOR RACHEL

(20) So Jacob worked seven years for Rachel. It was only like a few days to him, because of his love for her. (21) Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife so I may go in to her. For my time is finished." (22) And Laban gathered all the men of the place together, and made a special supper. (23) But in the evening he took his daughter Leah to him. Jacob went in to her. (24) Laban also took Zilpah, a woman who served him, and gave her to his daughter Leah, to serve her.

- After **seven years**, **Jacob** called attention to the agreement that he could marry **Rachel**. **Laban** threw an evening

- **Leah** bore **Issachar**: *reward*. There was serious strife in the home. This is standard with polygamy.

(19) Leah was going to have another child and she gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob. (20) Then Leah said, "God has given me a good gift. Now my husband will live with me, because I have given birth to six sons." So she gave him the name of Zebulun. (21) Later she gave birth to a daughter, and gave her the name Dinah.

- This **sixth** son was named **Zebulun**: *honor*.
- This record shows one daughter, **Dinah**, but there were others. Genesis 46:6-7 records the family move to Egypt: **They also took all their livestock and all the personal belongings they had acquired in the land of Canaan. So Jacob and his entire family went to Egypt-- sons and grandsons, daughters and granddaughters--all his descendants.**

Dinah is mentioned here because chapter 34 will be about her.

"GOD REMEMBERED RACHEL"

(22) Then God remembered Rachel. God listened to her, and made her able to have a child, (23) and she gave birth to a son. Then she said, "God has taken away my shame." (24) She gave him the name Joseph, saying, "May the Lord give me another son."

- It wasn't mandrakes, but the **Lord's** choice.
- Being childless was a disgrace in that society.
- **Joseph**: *may he add*. She wanted yet another child. Years later, **Joseph** was *added back* to the family.

(25) When Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, so I may go to my own place and my own country. (26) Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served. Let me leave, for you know how much I have served you." (27) But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, stay with me. I have learned that the Lord has

LEAH'S RESPONSE TO RACHEL

(9) Leah saw that she had stopped giving birth. So she took Zilpah, the woman who served her, and gave her to Jacob as a wife. (10) And a son was born to Jacob through Zilpah, the woman who served Leah. (11) Then Leah said, "Good things have happened to me!" So she gave him the name Gad. (12) A second son was born to Jacob through Zilpah, the woman who served Leah. (13) Then Leah said, "I am happy! For women will say that I am happy." So she gave him the name Asher.

- Now **Leah** copies her sister and offers her servant for a wife. There is competition among the women. Verse 13.
- **Gad**: good fortune.
Asher: happy.

(14) During the time of gathering grain, Reuben went out in the field and found some fruit. He brought it to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Give me some of your son's fruit." (15) But Leah said, "Is it not enough to take my husband? Would you take my son's fruit also?" So Rachel said, "Jacob may lie with you tonight if you give me your son's fruit."

- The **fruit** of verse 15 was mandrakes. **Barnes**: "*Mandrakes*" - the fruit of the "mandragora vernalis," which is to this day supposed to promote fruitfulness of the womb." **Rachel** was willing to barter a night with **Jacob** for the mandrakes. Note that they did not work. It is **Leah** who bears children next.

(16) When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went to meet him. She said, "You must sleep with me tonight. For I have paid for you with my son's fruit." So he lay with her that night. (17) And God heard Leah and she gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob. (18) Leah said, "God has given me my pay because I gave my husband the woman who serves me." So she gave him the name Issachar.

wedding party, but substituted **Leah**. Elements here sound like what **Jacob** did to Esau. The Jewish historian **Josephus** say, "Jacob lay with her that night, as being both in drink and in the dark." (*Works of Josephus*, Winston, Chapter 19, verse 7). Wine in **Jacob** may have obscured the switch in brides. Those involved in the deception included **Laban**, **Leah**, and **Rachel**.

(25) When the morning came, Jacob saw that it was Leah. He said to Laban, "What have you done to me? Did I not work for you for Rachel? Why have you fooled me?" (26) **Laban** said, "It is not allowed in our country to give the younger in marriage before the first-born. (27) Complete the wedding week of this one. Then we will give you the other one also if you work for me seven years more."

- **Bradford** remarks: "Then, Jacob gets a taste of just how devastating deceit and betrayal can be: after the wedding ceremony, Laban switches out Rachel for Leah, his older and as yet unmarried daughter. No doubt, Jacob instantly thought back to that day he disguised himself as his brother and fooled his father; he must have assumed that what he was now experiencing was simply God's payback for the dirty dealing he had perpetrated upon his father, Isaac, and his brother Esau several years earlier."

(28) **Jacob** did so and completed her wedding week. And **Laban** gave him his daughter **Rachel** as his wife. 29 **Laban** also took **Bilhah**, a woman who served him, and gave her to his daughter **Rachel**, to serve her. 30 So **Jacob** went in to **Rachel** also. He loved **Rachel** more than **Leah**. And he worked for **Laban** seven years more.

- Naturally, **Leah** was in on the ruse. **Jacob** had substituted himself as the younger for his older brother Esau. Now the older daughter is substituted for the younger **daughter** and **Jacob** is deceived and forced into polygamy for the years ahead. **Jacob** stayed another **seven years** to pay for **Rachel**.

- This incident is added proof of the ancient nature of the Genesis document. Marrying sisters was prohibited by the Law of Moses that came later.

While your wife is living, do not marry her sister and have sexual relations with her, for they would be rivals. Leviticus 18:18

LEAH BEARS FOUR SONS

(31) When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, He made her able to give birth. But Rachel could not give birth. (32) Leah was able to have a child and she gave birth to a son. She gave him the name Reuben. For she said, "The Lord has seen my trouble. Now my husband will love me."

- Furthermore, **Leah** has a child, **Reuben**, meaning *He has seen my misery*. Life was a misery for her. To his credit, Jacob honored his agreement and kept **Leah** as a wife even though she had deceived her way to being his wife.
- **Leah** found the sexual relations did not make her **husband love her**. Neither did bearing **sons**. His heart was set on her sister.

(33) Then she was going to have another child and she gave birth to a son. She said, "The Lord has given me this son also, because He has heard that I am not loved." So she gave him the name Simeon. (34) She was going to have another child and she gave birth to a son. She said, "Now this time my husband will be joined to me because I have given birth to his three sons." So she gave him the name Levi. (35) She was going to have another child and she gave birth to a son. And she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she gave him the name of Judah. Then she stopped giving birth.

- Leah had four sons for Jacob, hoping that Jacob would **love** her. It didn't work. In several places in Scripture, the ladies are recorded as *Rachel and Leah* rather than *Leah and Rachel*. Jewish tradition sees this as a subtle reminder of Leah's deception of Jacob. There is a case in Ruth 4:11.

- **Simeon**: *one who hears*.
Levi: *attached*.
Judah: *praise*. He was in the line of Christ. Matthew 1:2.
- Jacob's firstborn came from Leah as did the leader of the priests and the national leader.

RACHEL BECAME JEALOUS

(30:1) When Rachel saw that she had not given birth to any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I am going to die!" (2) Then Jacob became angry with Rachel. He said, "Am I taking God's place, Who has kept you from giving birth?" (3) Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, the woman who serves me. Go in to her, and let her give birth for me. Even I may have children through her." (4) So she gave Bilhah to him for a wife, the woman who served her. And Jacob went in to her. (5) Bilhah was going to have a child and she gave birth to a son.

- **Rachel** blamed **Jacob** because she did not become pregnant.
- **Rachel** then substituted **Bilhah** and she **bore a son**. This is the same scheme used by Sarah and the same wording too. Genesis 16:2.

(6) Then Rachel said, "God has done the right thing for me. He has heard my voice and has given me a son." So she gave him the name Dan. (7) Bilhah, the woman who served Rachel, was going to have another child. And she gave birth to another son for Jacob. (8) So Rachel said, "I have fought a hard fight with my sister, and I have won." She gave him the name Naphtali.

- **Dan**: *He has vindicated*.
Naphtali: *My struggle*.