



# BEGINNINGS

## A Study of the Book of Genesis

Sanctuary Bible Studies – Woodbury Lutheran Church

### Session 24, Jacob in Paddan Aram (Genesis 29-30)

#### 1. JACOB MEETS RACHEL (29:1-14)

- Jacob may have heard of this well from his mother Rebekah, who recalled meeting Abraham's servant, Eliezer, there as he looked for a wife for Isaac (Gen 24).
- The well was a communications center for the shepherds of the region, who waited for all the flocks to arrive before they removed the great stone from atop the well.
- Vs. 9: Rachel is a "shepherdess."
- Jacob must have had a strong sense that Rachel would be his wife, perhaps recalling his mother's experience there.
- Vs. 11: A kiss brings tears of joy.
- Vs. 14: Laban's words, "You are my own flesh and blood," were actually used in this region at this time in an adoption ceremony.

#### 2. THE TRICKSTER GETS TRICKED (29:14-30)

- Vs. 14-18: Laban's offer to pay Jacob for his work brings a wedding proposal from Jacob, who asks for Rachel. He'll work seven years to have Rachel for his wife. He had no money or flocks with him despite the great inheritance waiting for him back home. His work would be the payment which custom said he owed Laban for his daughter. The beauty of Rachel is contrasted with the "weak eyes" of Leah. What seems to be a fine plan to get a wife will turn out to be a deception by which Laban gets 14 years of work and marries off both his daughters.
- Vs. 20: The seven years of work "seemed like only a day to Jacob" because of his deep love for Rachel.
- Vss. 21-22: Jacob has to remind Laban that his seven years are up. Laban invites the community to the wedding feast, which traditionally would go on for a week (vs. 27).
- Vss. 23-30: At evening Laban gives Leah, not Rachel, to Jacob. The darkness, Rachel's clothes, and likely a veil stop him from seeing Leah's real identity. At morning Jacob realizes he's slept with Leah! His indignation at being deceived (vs. 25) drips with irony since he's been a skilled deceiver himself. Leah receives Zilpah, Laban's servant girl, as a gift, a customary action. After a week of wedding celebration, Laban gives Jacob Rachel, who also receives Bilhah as her maidservant. Their relationship is consummated, but Jacob agrees to pay for it with another seven years of work.
- Note the similarities between Jacob's deception earlier and Laban's deception here:
  - Jacob was determined to get the birthright and blessing; Laban was determined to marry off his older daughter first.
  - Jacob took advantage of his father's blindness; Laban took advantage of darkness.
  - Jacob wore Esau's clothes; Leah may have worn Rachel's clothes.

### 3. ALL OF JACOB'S SONS (29:31-30:24)

- We're given a look into Jacob's family with Leah's attempt to win his love by giving him children and Rachel's agonizing infertility. Vs. 30 set the table for this scenario with the words, "and he (Jacob) loved Rachel more than Leah."
- 29:31-35: Note that Leah is the mother of Jacob's first four sons, among them Levi, the first of what would be the priestly tribe, and Judah, the ancestor of David and Judah.
- 30:1-2: Jacob's words here may show that he is learning something about God's control.
- 30:5-13: Sons 5-8 come to Jacob via the two maidservants/concubines/surrogate moms, Bilhah and Zilpah.
- 30:13-16: The mandrake plant was seen to have fertility powers. Its roots have a human form.
- 30:17-21: Sons 9 and 10 come to Jacob through Leah as well as a daughter Dinah. Half of Jacob's 12 sons are born to Leah.
- 30:22-24: At last Rachel's prayers are answered (vs. 22, "God remembered Rachel") as she gives birth to Jacob's sons 11 and 12, Joseph and Benjamin (35:18).



Leah's Sons	Sons By Bilhah	Sons by Zilpah	Rachel's Sons
<b>Rueben 29:32</b> <i>The Lord has seen my misery.</i>	<b>Dan 30:6</b> <i>God has vindicated me</i>	<b>Gad 30:11</b> <i>What good fortune!</i>	<b>Joseph 30:24</b> <i>God has taken away my disgrace</i>
<b>Simeon 29:33</b> <i>The Lord heard that I am not loved</i>	<b>Naphtali 30:8</b> <i>I have won the struggle with my sister</i>	<b>Asher 30:13</b> <i>How happy I am!</i>	<b>Benjamin 35:18</b> <i>Son of honor or good fortune</i>
<b>Levi 29:34</b> <i>At last my husband will become attached to me</i>			
<b>Judah 29:34</b> <i>This time I will praise the Lord</i>			
<b>Issachar 30:18</b> <i>God has rewarded me</i>			
<b>Zebulun 30:19</b> <i>God has presented me with a precious gift</i>			

### 4. YET ANOTHER TRICK ON A TRICKSTER (30:25-43)

Laban buys into Jacob's proposal that Jacob take the speckled and spotted sheep from Laban's herd, assuming the impact will be small. By God's blessing (despite the superstition of the dark and white branches at mating time) Jacob's flocks flourish. The weak animals are sent off to Laban without breeding them before the branches. Jacob's prosperity will lead to his heading home to Canaan.

#### BE GINNINGS

1. God may bring us to experience from the other end the very wrong we have worked on another.
2. Love will pay a high price to be fulfilled.
3. With perseverance God grows us despite major setbacks.
4. We need to accept ourselves and focus on what we have, not on what we do not have.
5. God's people need to discern and celebrate God's will, not yielding to superstition.