

### Jacob Worked Seven More Years for Rachel

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the consequences of deception. Jacob had deceived his father and his brother. He learned that sin has consequences when he was deceived by Laban. In our topic today, we see what Laban told him to do in order to marry Rachel.

We saw in our last topic that Jacob asked Laban three questions after he was deceived. Those questions, and the answer that Laban gave, are given in Genesis 29:25-27, where we read, “So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?’ And Laban said, ‘It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.’” We see that Laban gave Jacob the answer to his questions and then told him what he had to do in order to marry Rachel.

Laban told Jacob that it was not done in their country to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn daughter was married. However, Laban went on to tell Jacob how he could also get Rachel as a wife. First, Jacob had to show Leah the honor and respect that she deserved. Laban said that Jacob could show this honor to Leah by celebrating the week of feasting that was a part of the marriage. In this way, everyone who was at the wedding celebration would have the opportunity to see that Jacob was going to show honor and respect to Leah in their marriage. Then, Laban told Jacob what he had to do in order to be able to marry Rachel, once the celebration for the marriage with Leah was complete. Laban told Jacob that he would allow Jacob to marry Rachel once Leah had been honored, as long as Jacob was willing to serve him for an additional seven years for Rachel. This meant that Jacob would have to work for Laban for a total of fourteen years in order to marry Rachel. However, Laban did say that he would give Rachel to Jacob in marriage as long as he promised that he would work another seven years for her.

Once Jacob heard what Laban required, he agreed to do what Laban had said. Genesis 29:28-30 says, “Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.” Jacob learned that deception has severe consequences when Laban used deception to deceive him. We see that Jacob fulfilled the week of celebration of the wedding of Leah. This was probably not easy for Jacob. It was Rachel that he loved, not Leah. However, he realized that the only way Laban was going to allow him to marry Rachel was to honor Leah by this week-long celebration. Jacob did what Laban required and outwardly showed this honor to Leah.

We see that Jacob also had to promise to work seven additional years in order to receive Rachel as his wife. Laban saw that Jacob had obeyed his words during that week of celebration for Leah. Jacob had also received the promise of Laban that he would receive Rachel as his wife if

he agreed to work seven additional years for her. As a result, once Jacob had shown honor to Leah by that week of celebration, then they could begin to plan the wedding of Jacob to Rachel. This time, Laban did keep his part of the agreement and gave Jacob his daughter Rachel to be his wife also. We will see that marriage to more than one wife, especially when they were sisters, would also have severe consequences and cause competition that would affect the entire family for many years. The first principle taught to Adam and Eve, before sin came into the world, is given in Genesis 2:24, where we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” We will see, in this and future topics, that disobedience to the one flesh principle affected both sisters. We also see that when Laban allowed Jacob to marry Rachel, he gave Bilhah to Rachel to serve as her maid.

The order of these verses shows us that Jacob was allowed to marry Rachel before he worked the second seven years for her. Once Rachel became the wife of Jacob, we see that Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. This was the first consequence of being married to two sisters at the same time. In fact, Genesis 29:31 says, “When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel *was* barren.” Then, Genesis 37:4-5 says, “But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more.” In these two verses, we see that the same word is translated “hated”. It even affected the way that they spoke to their brother. Six of these brothers were sons of Leah and Joseph was the son of Rachel. Here, we see the continuing effects of this lack of love to the next generation.

We also see that after the marriage to Rachel, Jacob served Laban for seven more years. Jacob had promised to serve Laban for the additional seven years before Laban let Jacob marry Rachel. Jacob kept his part of the bargain, even though Laban had deceived him. We go on to read, in Genesis 29:31-35, “When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel *was* barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, ‘The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.’ Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.’ And she called his name Simeon. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, ‘Now I will praise the LORD.’ Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.” Here, we see that the Lord chose to work in the life of Leah, because He saw that she was unloved.

We see that the Lord opened the womb of Leah when He saw that she was unloved. In contrast, Rachel did not become pregnant. In fact, we see that the names of the first four sons of Leah were given to them to express how Leah felt because she was unloved. Leah named her first son Reuben. “Reuben” means *behold a son*. One thing that was very important to the women of that day was the fact that they gave birth to one of more sons. Leah then explained why she gave this name to her first son. She said that the Lord had looked on her affliction. The word translated “affliction” means *the pain resulting from affliction*. Leah experienced great inner pain as she saw that her husband did not love her. She thought that in giving her husband his first son, her husband would certainly begin to love her. However, that was not what happened. The way that Jacob favored Rachel over Leah was so obvious that she still felt hated or unloved.

Leah became pregnant a second time and gave birth to another son. This time she said, “Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.” This statement made it very clear that she did not feel loved by Jacob. She said that she realized that the Lord knew she was unloved. In her prayer to the Lord, she had told the Lord that she was unloved, and the Lord heard her. As a result, Leah named her second son “Simeon”, which means *hearing or heard*. This name made it clear that she did not feel that Jacob had changed his attitude toward her. The fact that we saw earlier in this topic that Joseph became the favored son shows that Jacob never did accept Leah and Rachel as equal. Only after the death of Rachel did Jacob finally give Leah her rights as the first wife. In Genesis 49:31, Jacob, when preparing for his own death and burial, said, “There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.” Rachel had been buried in Bethlehem when she died in childbirth. Genesis 35:19-20 says, “So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that *is*, Bethlehem). And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which *is* the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.”

Meanwhile, Leah continued to hope that she would become loved and be fully recognized as the first wife. She gave birth to a third son and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” As a result, Leah called his name “Levi”, which means *attachment*, as she thought that by giving Jacob three sons, he would begin to feel a real attachment to her. Here, we see the sad consequences of the fact that Jacob was married to two sisters. Leah still felt like she was unloved and wanted to see Jacob become attached to her.

Leah gave birth to a fourth son. She gave the fourth son the name of “Judah”, which means *praised*. We see that even though Leah was not the favorite wife, she was growing in her understanding of God. Leah said, “Now I will praise the LORD.” Leah may have still wanted to be fully accepted by Jacob but she realized that regardless of what happened, she could give praise to the Lord. James 1:3-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Leah endured many years of trials because of the fact that Jacob loved Rachel and did not show that same love and respect for her. In fact, she probably went through many more years after the birth of Judah and probably did not receive the love that she desired until after the death of Rachel. Again, this shows us some of the consequences when a person feels unloved. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how Leah felt because of the fact that Jacob did not show her love and respect by his actions toward her. Today, many women feel that same lack of love and respect by their husbands. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the consequences of this sin.