

Genesis 29-30

February 20, 2011

29:1-14: Who can tell us what takes place in chapter 29 verses 1 to 14?

- Have someone tell the story. Jacob goes to a well in Haran and asks about Laban (*LAY-bun*). Rachel appears with her father's sheep. Jacob greets her (with a kiss) and tells her that he is Rachel, Laban's sister's son. Rachel tells her father and Laban runs to greet Jacob.

29:10: What is familiar about Jacob giving water to Rachel's sheep?

- Jacob serves Rachel by watering her animals. Jacob's mother, **Rebekah**, had served the servant that Abraham sent to find a wife for Jacob's father Isaac (Genesis 24:15-20).

What did Jacob's deed demonstrate about who he was?

- Jacob was a servant; he was not afraid of work. This should be a "**deal-breaker**" character quality in dating and marriage.

29:15-20: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 15 to 20?

- Have someone tell the story. Jacob goes to work for his Uncle Laban. Laban wants to pay him a wage so Jacob agrees to work for him for seven years after which he will be allowed to marry Rachel.

What do we know about Rachel at this point?

- She, too, is apparently a hard worker: she was a shepherdess (29:9). She apparently also had a great "figure" and a beautiful face.

29:16-18: When you read verses 16 to 18, what kinds of questions come to your mind? **16** Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. **17** There was no sparkle in Leah's eyes, but Rachel had a beautiful figure and a lovely face. **18** Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife." **NLT**

- How old was Jacob? How old were Leah and Rachel? Was Jacob's love for Rachel infatuation over her appearance or a love for her as a person? What kind of person was Leah?

29:21-30: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 21 to 30?

- Have someone tell the story. Jacob finishes his seven years and a wedding feast is held. Jacob's bride is brought to him in a dark tent late at night. They consummate the marriage. In the morning he realizes that he slept with Leah, not Rachel. He complains to Laban who says that it's the custom there for the oldest to marry first. He then tells Jacob that he can have Rachel for seven more years of service. A week after waking up with Leah, Jacob is given her sister Rachel in marriage. Jacob serves Laban for another seven years.

What is ironic about this unusual turn of events?

- Jacob, the deceiver, has been deceived. He deceived his father for the blessing (27:18-29). Jacob, the swindler, has been swindled. He tricked his brother Esau out of his birthright, now he has been tricked into marrying the older sister and into serving Laban for fourteen years.

What are some Biblical verses that apply to this situation?

- See **Galatians 6:7; Luke 6:38; Luke 6:31.**

What do you think of a man marrying any two women, much less two sisters?

- This was a bad idea! We will see the messiness of this in Jacob's family for years to come.

29:31-35: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 31 to 35?

- Have someone tell the story. Jacob makes it clear that he loves Rachel and not Leah. God looks with compassion on Leah and Leah gives birth to Jacob's first four sons. Leah thinks that the births will cause Jacob to love her, but they do not.

How do you feel about Leah at this point?

- We should feel sorry for Leah. We have no indication that Leah wanted to marry Jacob; she apparently entered Jacob's tent that night when told to do so by her father. Jacob being Leah's only "option", she obviously would want Jacob to love her. He apparently showed her no or little love. Rachel was the one who was loved by Jacob, but she was unable to get pregnant. Being able to bear children, Leah thought that Jacob might love her for giving him children; at this point it seems that he did not.

30:1-21: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 1 to 21?

- Have someone tell the story. Rachel complains about her barrenness and gives her maid to Jacob to bear children for her. Bilhah (*BILL-uh*) gives Jacob two sons. Leah then gives her maid to Jacob, since she herself had stopped bearing. Zilpah (*ZILL-puh*) gives Jacob two more sons. Rachel wanted some mandrakes that Leah's son Reuben brought in from the field. Leah traded them for having Jacob sleep with her that night. Leah again began to conceive and gave Jacob three more sons and a daughter.

What do we know about Rachel from this passage?

- **First**, she was a bit melodramatic (**a drama queen**): "Give me children, or else I die" (30:1).
- **Second**, she was competitive with her older sister (30:8). She might have been "fine" had her sister been barren, too. See *Ecclesiastes 4:4*.
- **Third**, Rachel "ruled the roost"; she was in charge. Jacob could only sleep with Leah if Rachel gave him permission.

What do we know about Leah at this point in the story?

- Leah is unloved and wants to be loved (30:20), but it doesn't seem that she is viciously competing with or jealous of her sister Rachel. She just keeps attempting to earn Jacob's love.

30:22-24: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 22 to 24?

- Have someone tell the story. Rachel finally bears a son (**Joseph**).

What do we learn about Rachel in verse 24?

- Rachel is not an easy person to please. She has been barren all of her life and finally gets blessed with a child. It appears that the first thing out of her mouth is "I must have another one." In **verse 1** she wanted *children*, not a child, or she wanted to die.

30:25-43: Who can tell us what takes place in verses 25 to 43?

- Have someone tell the story. Jacob wants to leave Laban to build his own flock. He cuts a deal with Laban to obtain all of the speckled, spotted, and black sheep and the speckled and spotted goats. Jacob has his sons manage his flock while he continues to shepherd Laban's flocks. When the animals drink and mate, Jacob puts "visuals" in front of them in hopes that they will bear speckled, spotted, and black offspring, which indeed is what happens. He does this with the strong animals but not with the weak. Sure enough, the strongest and the majority of the animals are born speckled, spotted, or black and therefore become a part of Jacob's flocks.

Back in [chapter 27](#) Isaac blessed Jacob. Is God blessing Jacob now?

- Yes. In [verse 27](#), Laban recognizes that God has blessed him because of Jacob. In [verse 30](#), Jacob realizes that God is blessing what he does. This unexplainable birth pattern among the animals is another sign of God's blessing.

If God was blessing Jacob, then why were his wives in such a battle with each other? Can God be blessing us if everything isn't as we hope it to be?

- God's blessing does not mean that every piece of our lives is perfect. In reality, no piece of our lives is perfect in an imperfect world. You can be blessed at work and struggle at home. You can be blessed at home and struggle at work. You can be blessed with your mate and struggle with your children. You can be blessed with your children and struggle with your mate. You can be blessed in your home but struggle with friendships. You can be blessed in friendships and struggle at home. Etc., etc.

God's blessing in our lives *does not mean* the absence of problems; it means the presence of God and His hand on particular areas of our lives.

What do we learn from [verse 35](#)? [35](#) But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in the care of his own sons, [36](#) who took them a three-days' journey from where Jacob was. [NLT](#)

- Jacob has been with Laban for a long time. It was seven years before he married the sisters. Now at least some of the sons born to Jacob are old enough to be responsible for his flocks. Jacob IS blessed, but he's had to spend a long time under Laban's "control".