



Leah and Rachel

Unusual Women in the Bible Zoom Bible Study

June 21, 2022

Introduction

Who was Jacob?

Jacob was born to Rebekah and Isaac, along with his twin, Esau.

Genesis 25:21- 23

Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. ²²The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, "Why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the Lord.

²³The Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger."

From the time of his birth until his wrestling encounter with God, Jacob was associated with trickery and deception, and his mother was complicit in it. Though Jacob was a trickster, God did bless him throughout his life.

Genesis 28:10 – 15

Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹²He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³There above it stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

After this, Jacob made a vow that the Lord would be his God.

Genesis 29:1 – 14

Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. ²There he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. ³When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well.

⁴Jacob asked the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?" "We're from Harran," they replied. He said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" "Yes, we know him," they answered. ⁶Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?" "Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep."

⁷"Look," he said, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture."

⁸ “We can’t,” they replied, “until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep.”

⁹ While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherd. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of his uncle Laban, and Laban’s sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle’s sheep. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to weep aloud. ¹² He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father.

¹³ As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. ¹⁴ Then Laban said to him, “You are my own flesh and blood.”

Why were they gathering the sheep here at the well in the daytime? They insist they have to wait until the stone is rolled away. The shepherds would gather at the well and then the owner or hired hands would roll away the stone and allow them to water their sheep.

When Rachel arrives, Jacob rolls the stone away for her, kisses her and then weeps aloud.

Rachel takes him to meet her father, and Jacob “told him all these things” and Laban accepted him as his own flesh and blood.

Genesis 29:14 - 30

After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, ¹⁵ Laban said to him, “Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be.”

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. ¹⁸ Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

¹⁹ Laban said, “It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.” ²⁰ So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to make love to her.”

²² So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast. ²³ But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and Jacob made love to her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his servant Zilpah to his daughter as her attendant.

²⁵ When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?”

²⁶ Laban replied, “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. ²⁷ Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

²⁸ And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. ²⁹ Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. ³⁰ Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

What is your first reaction to this story?

What do you think of the comparison made between Rachel and Leah?

For sure there was a difference in the way the two of them looked and their personalities.

Do you remember how God chose Isaac's wife—Jacob's mother, Rebekah? How does that compare to how Jacob chose Rachel?

We see that deception of all kinds ran in this family—in this culture, as it does in our culture today. What is your weapon against being deceived?

Psalm 119:125: I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.

1 Kings 3:9 - 12: So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" ¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. ¹¹So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, ¹²I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

1 Corinthians 2:14: The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

Philippians 1:9 – 11: And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Genesis 29:31 – 35

When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless. ³²Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

³³She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too." So she named him Simeon.

³⁴Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." So he was named Levi.

³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

"When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive." What does that tell you about God?

There is so much blame to go around here. All have behaved selfishly, and the consequences of their sins were many, just as they are today. You can choose your sin but not its consequences. Why is that such a hard lesson for us to learn? Why does sin look so enticing, so easy, so controllable?

James 1:13 – 15

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; ¹⁴but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. ¹⁵Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

The first thought you have to sin stems from your sinful desires, but it is not sin unless you pursue it. But if you allow it to stick around, it will grow and it will start to take over your mind, and eventually lead to death.

Suppose Jacob had been contented to have Leah as his wife—only Leah. See how God's grace was extended to him through Leah:

- Leah was the mother of Judah, who was to be the heir through whom the Messiah would come.
- Leah was the mother of Levi, who provided the priestly line in later years.
- Leah had many more children than Rachel.
- Rachel died at an early age even though she was the youngest.
- Leah died later and was buried with Jacob.

Do you not find yourself cheering for Rachel and booing Leah?

We may find it heroic and brave on Jacob's part to work eight more years in order to have Rachel as his wife, too—but is that really admirable?

There is nothing wrong with being beautiful and shapely, if that is how God has made you. But he didn't make you that way so that you could use it to your advantage.

Proverbs 31:30: Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

1 Peter 3:3 – 4: Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

How much of your self-worth is based upon your outward attractiveness? Why do we allow the world to impose its worth on us?

Are you content with the way God has created you?