

## Jacob 5 - Leah's Story

Jacob is now at the point in his life where he is going to move forward fulfilling God's plan for him. This doesn't mean that he had necessarily sought out the will of the Lord or that he was in tune with Him as a true believer. We need to remember that he began this part of his sojourn on a conditional basis. He said, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; **then** shall the LORD be my God." (Gen 28:20,21) He is moving forward in that this is a major step in his life. He is moving on from all that is familiar to him, which is best done if accompanied by the Lord. At least Jacob has assurance from God, even though there is not enough indication of how much confidence he has in the Lord.

As we examine Jacob as he meets up with Laban, we might first notice that Jacob has met his match in being outwitted by his kinsman. This will be interesting to consider later on with his other dealings with Laban, but for now, it is good to look at one of the side lessons that show up from one of the details that might slip past our notice. Today, we are going to take a little detour from looking at Jacob and instead look at someone his life touched.

### 1. No man lives unto himself

Rom 14:7,13 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

13Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

When we look at Gen 29, the story of Jacob's love for Rachel and willingness to work for Laban for 14 years to be able to marry her is obvious. Everybody loves a good love story and this one stands out in the text today. However, the idea that no man lives or dies to himself points out

that what goes on in our life can have a collateral effect on others. As we consider Jacob and Rachel's love story, we want to think about the effect this has on Leah. I am only going to refer to the highlights of the story to serve as the background for Leah's story.

Gen 29:1-30 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

As he went on his journey, Jacob came upon the well where Laban had his flocks watered. Rachel, Laban's daughter was approaching with her flocks, but no one was making a move to uncover the well for watering the flocks until all the flocks arrived. When she got there Jacob was impressed, to say the least.

9And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.  
10And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.  
11And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

Rachel was evidently impressed, also, because she ran to her father to tell him about Jacob. Jacob stayed with Laban for about a month after which Laban suggested that Jacob might be taking advantage of him. He doesn't say this outright, but is very clever in the way he words it.

15And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou *art* my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what *shall* thy wages *be*?

The implication is, "Should you work for me for nought," not as though you have been working for me before, but if you are going to stay on, it is going to be

as an employee (hint, hint, hint).

16And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

17Leah *was* tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.

18And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

19And Laban said, *It is* better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

20And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her.

This is so romantic. Jacob is willing to work seven years for Laban for the right to be able to marry Rachel. However, in the middle of this, Leah is introduced, but not so favorably. She is called "tender eyed." There is some speculation about what this means whether she had poor eyesight or was not easy to look at. Either way, we know that it was *not beautiful* and *well favoured*.

At the time appointed, Jacob was to finally get to marry Rachel, but her father tricked Jacob. Laban wanted to marry off his first daughter so when it came time for Jacob to go in to Rachel, Laban sent Leah to him.

25And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah: and he said to Laban, What *is* this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

26And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

Jacob got to have Rachel, but not without serving seven more years. Next, Moses specifically says

30And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

If you focus only on the story of Jacob loving Rachel, you would miss what might be the even greater lesson of how Leah spiritually responded to this situation. We like to see how everyone lived happily ever after, but people actually identify with Leah more than they do with Rachel. No matter how gifted someone else seems to you, when asked how many people ever struggle with insecurity, everyone raises their hand. We might see people on the outside and how they seem so blessed with talent and grace, but in reality, all of us know ourselves deep down. Everyone has feelings of inadequacy to overcome. We could major on how when you trust God everything is going to be good and all the traffic lights are going to change to green as you approach them, you will have God's blessings flowing into your life like Jacob and Rachel if you just hang in there. There are sometimes when God blesses us like that, but everyone needs to learn from the side story of Leah. There is a blessing in being number 2.

## 2. Finding God

Sometimes when you are reading through the Scriptures you come across lists of names. Many times, we just read through them without thinking about them. Other times, the names are very significant and carry a lesson all in themselves. This is the case here.

Gen 29:31 And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren.

Always remember that, in the Bible, the word *hate* does not always mean wanting to punish or get even with someone. It does not mean that they want to be malicious towards someone. These often *accompany* hatred, but to hate

carries more of the idea that someone is *rejected*. Jacob favored Rachel over Leah. From vs. 31, we see that God obviously wanted to bless Leah through that which was so very significant in that culture: He gave her children. Being childless was such a shame in that time. Rachel, as favored as she was, was barren. Leah's spiritual story is told through her children. Specifically, it is told in the names of her children. God blessed Leah and instead of her becoming collateral damage in this marriage, she won a collateral victory.

Naming children in the Bible is so significant. Today, people give names for some strange reasons. Sometimes they pick a name because the letters sound interesting. Sometimes, they hear everyone else using a name and think it is cool. Olivia has finally toppled Emily and Emma, and Liam has displaced Jacob and Michael. Biblical names most often given to commemorate events or significant moments. When you look at the naming of all the sons of Jacob you can see a commentary on the family of Jacob. However, we are going to look only at the first four children born to Leah because they form a progression describing her spiritual journey as she overcomes being the hated wife. This is what I mean by Leah's story finding God.

- Reuben

Gen 29:32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

Leah knew that Jacob's affections were not set on her, but in being the first to bear a child, there was the hope that his heart would change toward her. *Reuben* means, *Look! A son!* That would be like a nurse hearing the exclamation when a child is born and too quickly writing down what popped out of the doctor's mouth and a child having the name *Itsaboy* for the rest of his life. By naming her son Reuben, Leah was

making a statement. Where child bearing was so important, now her husband would certainly love her now. She had born him not only the first child, but it was boy, besides. What is revealed here is how much she finds her worth in what her husband thought of her. She found her sense of value from the culture around her. She was also disappointed because this did not change Jacob toward her.

- Simeon

Gen 29:33 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I *was* hated, he hath therefore given me this *son* also: and she called his name Simeon.

Leah was still holding on to hope with the birth of her next son. This time she named him Simeon which means *to hear, to listen attentively*. She recognized that God was standing beside her and gave Him credit for answering her prayers. However, she is still dependent on Jacob for her sense of significance. She saw the blessing of the birth of Simeon as a possible answer to the problem of Jacob rejecting her.

- Levi

Gen 29:34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.

That it was significant enough to mention that this is now her third son, all the while Rachel has been barren, is a reminder of how important it was for a woman to bear children. Levi means *tied together, intertwined*. The hope that Jacob will *now* be joined to her still demonstrates that she sees her worth as dependent on him.

- Judah

Now we come to Leah's fourth child. If there was anyone who had any expectation to finally arrive, it has to be Leah. A rewarding relationship with Jacob had been continually out of reach. It is not as though there was *no* relationship let alone an *abusive* relationship. Leah could tell that she was just not finding from Jacob the kind of consideration that would make her fulfilled as a woman. She then gave birth to Judah, which means *celebrated*.

Gen 29:35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

One of the things that is outstanding here is due to silence. There is no reference to Jacob nor his acceptance of her. She says *now* I will praise the Lord. Keep in mind that is not as though she hadn't been giving God the glory before this. What she is suggesting here is that she is no longer seeking any praise from her husband, but *now* she is focused on God *alone*. She has moved from her own concerns and turned her attention to God. In that moment she arrived at a very important realization. Joy comes *only* from knowing God. It can be *accompanied* by blessings in the world, but it is not dependent *on* them.

In fact, an overemphasis on blessings in the world can be dangerous. Jesus pointed out –

Mark 10:24 ...Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!

In Jesus' time, people thought that riches were a kind of proof that you were favored by God. It was possible for someone to assume that they were right with God if they had amassed substantial wealth while they were actually lost and on their way to Hell.

Paul writing to the Thessalonians about true joy expressed it this way:

1Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice

evermore.

17 Pray without ceasing.

18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

When we can thank God for absolutely everything we will be able to rejoice like Leah did. This brings us to Leah's reward.

### 3. Leah's reward

- God Himself

The word *portion* is used in the Old Testament generally to speak of what some was allotted. However, it is used with reference to praise for God almost exclusively in the book of praises, the Psalms.

Ps 16:5 The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

Ps 73:26 My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Ps 119:57 *Thou art* my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

Ps 142:5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living.

Leah had come to the understanding that all you need is God. This is the same way that it is with salvation. The only thing we need is Jesus Christ. It is not Jesus plus works, plus talent, plus popularity, plus worldly approval, plus philosophy, it is Jesus plus nothing. God is our portion. Having God as our portion by itself should be enough, but there were other blessings that came to Leah.

- The blessing of motherhood

Leah was blessed with two more



children later which meant that she had not only blessed Jacob the most but that she herself was blessed the most. Leah bore seven of Jacob's 13 children. Having children was not just something that was there for the father, but for the mother also.

- Family honor

When it came to her death, *she* was buried in the family cemetery with Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and *not* Rachel. In fact, Jacob requested specifically to be buried with her.

Gen 49:29-31 And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite,

30In the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace.

31There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.

- Blessed among women

Mary was called blessed among women for getting to bear the Christ. Of course there were many women across many generations that were part of the lineage of Christ, but there were a few whose situations were especially noteworthy in that line. Leah was part of a company of women who might have been thought of as less than but had the distinction of being in the line of Jesus Christ: Rahab the harlot, Ruth the Moabitess, and Bathsheba the adulteress. Leah was not only the mother of Judah, the kingly tribe from which Jesus would come. She was also the mother of Levi who would provide the priesthood.

- A new perspective

Leah gained a new perspective. This should be a chief blessing. Leah was in a position to live and work for herself as a child of God should. This does not mean that she took off as an independent person. She *stayed* there with Jacob as an independent person. She carried out her responsibilities with a new perspective.

Col 3:23-24 And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;  
24Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Phil 4:12-13 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.  
13I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Some might make the mistake and use the idea of independence from man as an excuse to be rebellious and self-centered, to ignore responsibilities and do what they want. Whether you are in a situation where you are more or less self-directing, your heart is directed towards carrying your responsibilities as serving God. We are not just free to do what we want, but what is responsible before the Lord.

- A testimony of our reward

Leah's story is here to bless us today. Her journey is our journey also. When we can come to the point where we discover that all that we need we find in Jesus, then we are ready for whatever comes. We say whatever because we look beyond this life for our sense of value, significance and reward. We are valuable because Jesus died for us. Our significance derives from our service to God.

3John 1:5-8 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest

to the brethren, and to strangers;  
6Which have borne witness of  
thy charity before the church:  
whom if thou bring forward on  
their journey after a godly sort,  
thou shalt do well:

7Because that for his name's sake  
they went forth, taking nothing of  
the Gentiles.

8We therefore ought to receive  
such, that we might be  
fellowhelpers to the truth.

Our reward is greater than this life. As we begin to view life from God's perspective, we realize that there is far more than our immediate and even our not so immediate worlds. Death takes on a new perspective of opening up an infinite world. The moment of death is like passing through the birth pangs and being born into glory. We have a piece of that now with the guarantee of the Holy Spirit of the coming glory.

Eph 1:4-14 According as he hath  
chosen us in him before the  
foundation of the world, that we  
should be holy and without  
blame before him in love:

5Having predestinated us unto  
the adoption of children by Jesus  
Christ to himself [**the  
resurrection body**], according to  
the good pleasure of his will,

6To the praise of the glory of his  
grace, wherein he hath made us  
accepted in the beloved.

7In whom we have redemption  
through his blood, the  
forgiveness of sins, according to  
the riches of his grace;

... 11In whom also we have  
obtained an inheritance, being  
predestinated according to the  
purpose of him who worketh all  
things after the counsel of his  
own will:

...13In whom ye also *trusted*, after  
that ye heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of your salvation: in  
whom also after that ye believed,  
ye were sealed with that holy  
Spirit of promise,

14Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Rom 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

1Pet 1:3-5 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

As suffering goes in this life, we adjust our perspective and remind ourselves that we are strangers to this world just passing through. However, I regularly deal with people who have suffered about the worst thing to go through, the loss of a loved one. It is about at the absolute worst when it involves the loss of a child. The only way to be able to fit the worst losses into our lives is to remember that the kingdom of God is far larger than all this life can throw at us which keeps us moving and serving our Lord. This is the gist of what Paul spoke of to the Hebrews:

Heb 11:32-40 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:

33Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

34Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword,

out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

35Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection:

36And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment:

37They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

38(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth.

39And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

40God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Has Jesus been enough for you? Have you been chasing other things to find satisfaction and acceptance? Does your sense of importance depend on what others think of you? Are you afraid to speak up for God because of what others might think of you? We need to trust in Christ not only to save us, but to serve Him no matter what the world may think.

1. No man lives unto himself Rom 14:7,13, Gen 29:1-30
2. Finding God Gen 29:31-35, Mark 10:24, 1Thess 5:16-18
3. Leah's reward Ps 16:5, 73:26, 119:57, 142:5, Gen 49:29-31, Col 3:23-24, Phil 4:12-13, 3John 1:5-8, Eph 1:4-14, Rom 8:18, 1Pet 1:3-5, Heb 11:32-40