

Leah & Rachel: Sibling Rivals

Sisters for Christ

April 17, 2013

Genesis 29:14b-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 was lovely in form, and 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 lie with 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 gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. ²⁴ And Laban gave his servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant.

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 girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. ³⁰ Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

- *Recall why Jacob had to flee to his uncle’s house (see Genesis 27). How was Laban like his sister (and his nephew)? How did God use this to try to teach Jacob a lesson?*

- *How was Leah also guilty of deception? How would you have felt, if you were Leah?*

- *Agree or disagree: Polygamy was not sinful at this time.*

Genesis 29:31-35

³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah 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."

³³ She 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.

³⁴ Again 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.

³⁵ She 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.

- *It seems that all Leah wanted was the love of her husband. Comment on her faith in the LORD through this difficult time.*

Genesis 30:1-12,17-24

^{30:1} When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

² Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?"

³ Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family."

⁴ So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, ⁵ and she became pregnant and bore him a son. ⁶ Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan.

⁷ Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali.

⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Then Leah said, "What good fortune!" So she named him Gad.

¹² Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.

¹⁷ God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Then Leah said, “God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband.” So she named him Issachar.

¹⁹ Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. ²⁰ Then Leah said, “God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun.

²¹ Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

²² Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. ²³ She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, “God has taken away my disgrace.” ²⁴ She named him Joseph, and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”

- *Identify words or phrases that show an understanding of the truth that children are a blessing that the LORD chooses to give (or withhold) according to his wisdom and grace.*

- *List reasons why children are not generally viewed as such a blessing in our society today.*

- *How can we show by our words and actions that we understand children to be a blessing from God?*

Genesis 31:17-19,32b-35

¹⁷ Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, ¹⁸ and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

¹⁹ When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father’s household gods.

³² ...Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

³³ So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah’s tent, he entered Rachel’s tent. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them inside her camel’s saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched through everything in the tent but found nothing.

³⁵ Rachel said to her father, “Don’t be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I’m having my period.” So he searched but could not find the household gods.

- *What does this account show about the condition of Rachel’s heart?*

Genesis 35:1-4

¹ Then God said to Jacob, “Go up to Bethel and settle there, and build an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you were fleeing from your brother Esau.”

² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, “Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you, and purify yourselves and change your clothes. ³ Then come, let us go up to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.” ⁴ So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods they had and the rings in their ears, and Jacob buried them under the oak at Shechem.

Genesis 35:16-19

¹⁶ Then they moved on from Bethel. While they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and had great difficulty. ¹⁷ And as she was having great difficulty in childbirth, the midwife said to her, “Don’t be afraid, for you have another son.”

¹⁸ As she breathed her last—for she was dying—she named her son Ben-Oni. But his father named him Benjamin.

¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

- *How does God use Jacob as his witness at a critical time in Rachel’s life?*