

GENESIS

Lesson 13

God remembered Rachel . . .

JACOB'S CHILDREN

Genesis 29:31-30:24

Jacob sent to Haran to gain a life, but didn't pray, and didn't thank God. He had been a deceiver and he is repaid by deception. Now he has two wives and God opens the womb of Leah, the wife less loved by Jacob while Rachel was barren. Leah gives birth to Rueben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. At each birth, Leah is seeking love from her husband, but she did not receive his affection.

After the birth of Judah, Leah became barren. Rachel now gave her servant Bilhah to Jacob to bear children on her behalf. Bilhah gave birth to Dan and Naphtali. Leah now gave her servant Zilpah to Jacob to bear children for her and she gave birth to Gad and Asher.

The episode with the mandrake plant illustrates the turmoil in the family of Jacob. The mandrake bears bluish flowers in winter and a yellow berry in summer. The berries are sometimes called "Love Apples" because they are believed to aid in the conception of children.¹ Rachel asked her sister for some mandrakes, but Leah did not wish to share. They struck a bargain that allowed Rachel to have some of the mandrakes while Leah got to spend the night with Jacob. Amazingly the mandrakes did not help Rachel conceive, but Leah did.



The fact that these sisters would barter over marital rights to their husband demonstrates the disfunction that was found in the family. Multiple marriages were never God's plan, lead to pain and jealousy and they fail miserably. Leah bore two more sons: Issachar and Zebulun. Leah would also give birth to Dinah, a daughter. Rachel asks God for help and he opens her womb and she bore a son named Joseph.

¹ Smith, James E. *Old Testament Survey Series: The Pentateuch*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1992.

JACOB'S PROSPERITY

Genesis 30:25-43

1. Where did Jacob want to go after the birth of Joseph? (Genesis 30:25)
2. What was the response of Laban to the request of Jacob to depart? (Genesis 30:27-28)
3. What was Jacob's suggestion for his wages? (Genesis 30:30-33)
4. How did Laban try to take advantage of Jacob regarding the flocks? (Genesis 30:34-36)

Jacob had a plan to get striped and spotted animals from solid ones. He took fresh poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled white streaks in them and put them in front of the watering places. Since the animals bred when they came to drink the flocks produced striped, speckled, and spotted offspring. Some people think that this is a technique that truly does work to produce spotted and speckled animals while others say this is not possible. We may conclude that God is blessing Jacob with flocks regardless of how Jacob thought it might have been accomplished. Jacob left Haran with large flocks, female and male servants, camels and donkeys (Genesis 30:43).

JACOB FLEES FROM LABAN

Genesis 31:1-55

Jacob had found living under the control of his father-in-law very difficult. Laban's sons complained that Jacob had taken everything from their father to gain his wealth. Jacob also saw that Laban did not view him as favourably as in the past.



So, Jacob calls his wife to the field where they can talk in private and he discusses the plan to leave Laban with them. He relates how God had blessed them and how their father had taken advantage of them. Furthermore, God had told him that he was to go back to the land of his family. Rachel and Leah agreed saying that within their father's house they are treated as foreigners.

5. **What did Jacob take with him as he left Laban? (Genesis 31:17-18)**
6. **What did Rachel steal from her father's house? (Genesis 31:19)**
7. **How was Jacob able to get away with his family without Laban's knowledge? (Genesis 31:20)**
8. **What did God tell Laban in a dream? (Genesis 31:24)**
9. **What was Laban's complaint in Genesis 31:26-30?**

Jacob had served for 20 years for what he had gained from Laban and Laban had treated him poorly by charging him with animals killed by wild beasts and whatever was stolen. He had also changed his wages ten times to try to keep him poor. Laban still contended that all Jacob had belonged to him, but made a covenant with Jacob that allowed Jacob to go his way so long as he did not oppress his daughters or take other wives. A stone pillar was set up and neither was to pass that point as each stayed on their side of the pillar. Laban departed after kissing his grandchildren and daughters and blessing them.

JACOB ATTEMPTS TO APPEASE ESAU

Genesis 32:1-33:20

Jacob departs from Haran at age 97. After Laban departs and they continue their journey Jacob is visited by angels who are sent to encourage him. Jacob then prepares for an encounter with Esau. He sends a servant ahead to tell Esau that Jacob had accumulated much in his time with Laban. He is returning with oxen, donkeys, flocks, and servants. He sought to have a peaceful meeting with Esau. Jacob's worst fears seem to be confirmed when he learns that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men.

Jacob fearing the worst takes these steps: 1) He divides his group into two so that if attacked perhaps one would escape. 2) He prayed to God to bring him home and to keep him safe, reminding God of his promise; 3) He sent gifts of goats, sheep, camels, cattle, and donkeys ahead to Esau in groups so that he encountered one gift after another; 4) He crossed the Jabbok with his party during the night so that they might not be caught by Esau while crossing of this stream.

Jacob was left on the other side of the stream alone having taken every possible step he could to keep himself and his family safe when God came to him. This was a theophany (an appearance of God in human form); sometimes called the Angel of the Lord. Jacob wrestled with the angel all night and it appeared that both were on equal terms until daybreak. Then the angel (appearing as a man) touched the hip socket of Jacob and put it out of joint. Jacob realised this was no human and asked for a blessing. Jacob had come to understand that he needed spiritual strength that could only be provided by the Lord.

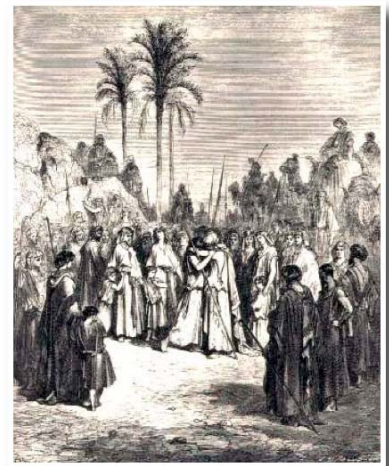
The angel asked Jacob his name. Remember that Jacob originally meant “a deceiver” or “one who supplants” though he came to be a great servant of God. Here God takes the one originally known as Jacob and tells him that he shall now be known as Israel which means “he who struggles with God.”

This encounter with the angel of the Lord shows four positive results for Jacob. 1) He receives a new name (Israel) pointing to a new spiritual character in Jacob. 2) He received a new blessing. 3) He had a new testimony, naming the place Peniel meaning “face of God.” He understood that he had come face to face with God that night. 4) He had seen God, but had been spared. He had a new walk with God.²

10. Describe the approach of Jacob towards Esau in Genesis 33:1-3.

**11. What was the reaction of Esau to meeting his brother Jacob?
(Genesis 33:4-9)**

**12. Why did Jacob decline the offer to travel with Esau to Seir?
(Genesis 33:12-14)**



13. Where did Jacob stop and settle? (Genesis 33:17)

Jacob spent as many as nine years in Succoth before heading into Canaan. In Shechem he camped and purchased a piece of land for his tent.

² Smith, James E. *Old Testament Survey Series: The Pentateuch*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1992.