

Genesis 29 - Jacob Arrives in Haran; Jacob's Marriage; Laban Deceives Jacob; Leah's Four Sons

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(a) Jacob's marriages (29:1-30)

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Genesis 29

(C) Jacob's lineage (Gen 29:1—30:24)

(a) Jacob's marriages (29:1-30)

(i) Jacob meets Rachel (29:1-14)

1 Then Jacob set out on his journey, and went to the land of the people of the east.

1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.

1 Jacob journeyed on and reached the territory that belonged to the people who lived in the east.

1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

2 He looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, because they watered the flocks from that well. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large.

2 He looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large.

2 As he was observing a well that had been dug out on the open range, all of a sudden he noticed three flocks of sheep lying there, because shepherds watered their flocks from that well. There was a very large stone that covered the opening of the well,

2 And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

3 When all the flocks were gathered there, they would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep. Then they would put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

3 When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

3 and when all the flocks had been gathered there, they would roll away the stone from the opening of the well, water their flocks, and then return the stone to its place covering the opening of the well.

3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

- Jacob came to Haran and his adventures with Laban begin...

4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran."

4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran."

4 Jacob asked them, "My brothers, where are you from?"

"We're from Haran," they answered.

4 And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we.

- From this, Jacob knew he had arrived in Haran (no maps or GPS at the time)

5 So he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know *him*."

5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know *him*."

5 "Do you happen to know Nahor's son Laban?" he inquired.

"We do," they replied.

5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him.

6 And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and here is his daughter Rachel coming with the sheep."

6 And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and here is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep."

6 So he asked them, "How's he doing?"

"Very well," they answered. "As a matter of fact, look over there! That's his daughter Rachel, coming here with his sheep."

6 And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

- Rachel was not yet visible

- The point was that she was among those to arrive before moving the stone covering the well

7 Then he said, "Look, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them."

7 He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them."

7 "Look!" Jacob replied. "The sun is still high. It's not yet time for the flocks to be gathered. Let's water the sheep, then let them graze."

7 And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

- Jacob is speaking as a professional shepherd...the custom was to give water to the sheep at mid-day, then let them graze

8 But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

8 But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

8 But they responded, "We can't do that until all the sheep have been gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the opening of the well. Only then can we water the flock."

8 And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

- However, the custom in Haran seemed to be different: water the flock once they all come together

9 While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

9 While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

9 While he was still talking with them, Rachel arrived with her father's sheep, since she was a shepherdess.

9 And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

10 When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of his mother's brother Laban.

10 When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

10 When Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, accompanied by Laban's sheep, Jacob approached the well, rolled the stone from the opening of the well, and then watered his mother's brother Laban's flock.

10 And 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.

- Jacob did three things once Rachel arrived: rolled away the stone, watered her flock, and kissed her (v11)

11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and raised his voice and wept.

11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept.

11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel and began to cry out loud.

11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

12 Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

12 Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

12 Jacob told Rachel that he was related to her father, since he was Rebekah's son, so she ran and told her father.

12 And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

- It had been 97 years since Rebekah left to marry Isaac

- Jacob was Laban's nephew; Rebekah was Rachel's aunt

- When Jacob watered Laban's flocks, a note of anticipation seems apparent: subsequent chapters show how Laban and his flocks prospered in Jacob's presence

— In contrast with Laban's lazy shepherds, Jacob was generous, zealous, and industrious. He had a mission, a quest.

— A burning goal implanted by previous experience drove him to succeed

13 So when Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he told Laban all these things.

13 So when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things.

13 When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran out to meet him. He embraced him, kissed him, and brought him back to his house. Then Jacob told Laban about everything that had happened.

13 And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

- Jacob relayed the complete family history over the past 97 years to Laban

14 And Laban said to him, "You certainly are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

14 Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

14 Laban responded, "You certainly are my flesh and blood!" So Jacob stayed with him for about a month.

14 And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

- Jacob became a guest in Laban's house

(ii) Jacob marries Leah (29:15-26)

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

15 Later, Laban asked Jacob, "Should you serve me for free, just because you're my nephew? Let's talk about what your wages should be."

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

16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was **Leah**, and the name of the younger was **Rachel**.

16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

16 Now Laban happened to have two daughters. The older one was named Leah and the younger was named Rachel.

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

- "...Leah" - "wild cow"

- "...Rachel" - "a ewe lamb"

17 And Leah's **eyes were weak**, but Rachel was beautiful in figure and appearance.

17 And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.

17 Leah looked rather plain, but Rachel was lovely in form and appearance.

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

- "...eyes were weak" - the Hebrew word implies she had poor eyesight

- Rachel was beautiful in her face and figure and "well favoured," meaning she had no physical defects or deformities

18 Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

18 Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."

18 Jacob loved Rachel, so he made this offer to Laban: "I'll serve you for seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter."

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

- Jacob did not demand Rachel's hand outright on the basis of his lineage to Abraham, because in his case, he arrived empty-handed. He had no bride price to offer, unlike the servant in Gen 24; therefore, the seven years of labor would serve as the bride price.

19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; **stay with me.**"

19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me."

19 "It's better that I give her to you than to another man," Laban replied, "so stay with me."

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

- "...stay with me" - finalized the agreement

- Jacob's plan was to work seven years to have Rachel as his wife. Those seven years of work passed quickly for Jacob because of his love for her
- Interestingly the wives of each of the first three patriarchs were beautiful: Sarah (12:11), Rebekah (24:15-16), and Rachel (29:17)

20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him like *only* a few days because of his love for her.

20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

20 Jacob served seven years for Rachel, but it seemed like only a few days because of his love for her.

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

- In those years, Jacob's love never abated; just as Christ's love for us (Eph 5:26-27)

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my time is completed, that I may have relations with her."

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her."

21 Eventually, Jacob told Laban, "Bring me my wife, now that my time of service has been completed, so I can go be with her."

21 And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

- Jacob was anxious for the wedding night

22 So Laban gathered all the people of the place and held a feast.

22 Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast.

22 So Laban gathered all the men who lived in that place and held a wedding festival.

22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast.

- The wedding festivities began with a wedding feast; this was a seven-day feast, common at that time in the Middle East; it was followed (v23) by the wedding night

23 Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and *Jacob* had relations with her.

23 Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and *Jacob* went in to her.

23 That night Laban took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob. He had marital relations with her.

23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

- Leah enter the marriage tent where the first sexual union took place

- In those days, the bride was veiled on the wedding night; this is the reason Jacob didn't recognize it was Leah

- Now the deceiver is deceived, although the motivations differ from good to bad. This is divine retribution in four ways:

- (1) Isaac's blindness equals the darkness of Jacob's wedding night, and neither could see well as a result

- (2) Jacob is deceived by being presented the older for the younger, the reversal of Isaac's presentation of Jacob for Esau

- (3) Isaac thought Jacob was Esau and Jacob thought Leah was Rachel

- (4) Jacob pretended to be his older brother, while Leah pretended to be her younger sister

24 Laban also gave his female slave **Zilpah** to his daughter Leah as a slave.

24 Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

24 Laban also gave his servant woman Zilpah to Leah to be her maidservant.

24 And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid.

- "...Zilpah" - "nearness" or "intimacy"; this was a common practice in those days

25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this *that* you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"

25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"

25 The next morning, Jacob realized that it was Leah! "What have you done to me?" he demanded of Laban. "Didn't I serve you for seven years in order to marry Rachel? Why did you deceive me?"

25 And 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?

26 But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.

26 But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.

26 But Laban responded, "It's not the practice of our place to give the younger one in marriage before the firstborn.

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

- Laban offered a technicality of local custom: "the firstborn before the younger." Those words must have pierced Jacob!

- However, his was not something Jacob was informed of in advance. After living there for seven years, Jacob would have been familiar with this custom, if there really was such; thus it may have been just a lie on Laban's part

- Nevertheless, for Jacob it was irony, since the issue of the firstborn and birthright now entered in as it did with him and Esau

- Jacob's anger was to no avail; now, as the object of trickery, he would understand how Esau felt

- In his earlier days he, the younger, had deceptively pretended before his father to be the older brother: what a man sows he will also reap (Gal 6:7)

(iii) Jacob marries Rachel (29:27-30)

27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me, for another seven years."

27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."

27 Fulfill the week for this daughter, then we'll give you the other one in exchange for serving me another seven years."

27 Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

- "Fulfil her week" - this phrase refers to Leah; it means the marriage week for Leah, because the wedding feast lasted for seven days (Judges 14:12, 14;17)

- Once Jacob fulfilled Leah's marriage week, Laban promised to give Rachel to him in marriage, meaning Jacob will marry Rachel one week later (not seven years later)

- But there is a condition: Jacob had to agree to work for Laban another seven years, meaning he had a second bride price to pay.

28 Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.

28 Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.

28 So Jacob completed another seven years' work, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife.

28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

- Under the Mosaic Law, it was forbidden to marry sisters (Lev 18:18); however, this is before the Mosaic Law was given

29 Laban also gave his female slave **Bilhah** to his daughter Rachel as her slave.

29 Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.

29 Laban also gave his woman servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maidservant.

29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid.

- "...Bilhah" - "terror"

- Jacob's joyful prospect of marrying Rachel turned, by Laban's deception, into a nightmare

- In Laban, Jacob met his match and also his means of discipline

- Jacob had deceived his own brother and father, and now was deceived by his mother's brother!

- 20 years of drudgery, affliction, and deception lay ahead. Through Laban he received his own medicine of duplicity.

- But Jacob's tenacity shows that he counted these as minor setbacks

- God took him, developed his character, turned the fruits of his deception into blessing, and built the promised seed, the nation of Israel.

30 So *Jacob* had relations with Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

30 So *Jacob* went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

30 Jacob also married Rachel, since he loved her. He served Laban another full seven years' work for Rachel.

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

- So Jacob married Rachel seven days after marrying Leah, then had to work for Laban another seven years to pay the bride price

(b) Jacob's children (29:31—30:24)

(i) Through Leah (29:31-35)

31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was unable to have children.

31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

31 Later, the LORD noticed that Leah was being neglected, so he made her fertile, while Rachel remained childless.

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

- "...hated" [KJV] - this is a good example showing that "love" and "hate" do not always refer to the emotions, but are used in reference to choice

— Rachel was Jacob's choice, not Leah, so Leah was "hated" [KJV] in the sense of not being chosen or favored

32 Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and named him **Reuben**, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."

32 Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."

32 Leah conceived, bore a son, and named him Reuben, because she was saying, "The LORD had looked on my torture, so now my husband will love me."

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.

- "...Reuben" - "See ye a son"

— Leah named her firstborn Reuben (*re'uben*), indicating that the Lord had seen her misery (*ra'ah be'onyi*)

— Another wordplay joins it: Now at last my husband will become attached to (*ye'ehabani*) me. Leah's hope was that because of the birth of Reuben, Jacob would begin to favor her over Rachel

— This naming showed her hope but also her consolation and faith

— Jacob never saw her affliction, but God did

33 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also." So she named him **Simeon**.

33 Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also." So she named him Simeon.

33 Later, she conceived again, bore a son, and declared, "Because the LORD heard that I'm neglected, he gave me this one, too." So she named him Simeon.

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's hope to be favored after the birth of Reuben didn't materialize

- "...Simeon" - "hearing"; he was so named because the Lord heard (*sama'*) that Leah was not loved
— "God heard" was her testimony in faith to His provision (Cf. "Ishmael," which means "God hears," 16:15)

34 And she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named **Levi**.

34 She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi.

34 Later, she conceived again and said, "This time my husband will become attached to me, now that I've borne him three sons." So he named him Levi.

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.

- "...Levi" - "joined"; Leah hoped that her husband would become attached (*yillaweh*) to her, but it was not to be

35 And she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him **Judah**. Then she stopped having children.

35 And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

35 Then she conceived yet again, bore a son, and said, "This time I'll praise the LORD." So she named him Judah.

Then she stopped bearing children.

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.

- "...Judah" - "praise"; Judah was the consolation for the unloved wife; she would be satisfied to praise (*'odeh*) the Lord, for Judah means "let Him be praised"

— For Leah, God is to be praised; for Jacob, Judah is to be praised (49:8)

— Leah exhibited genuine faith during her great affliction

- Leah only stopped bearing children for a period of time. It may mean that Jacob stopped having sex with her, until she "bought" him with her son's mandrakes.

In the naming of the first three sons, Leah named them with a basic hope that Jacob would learn to love her or at least treat her equally. That never happened. By the time she came to her fourth son, she focused on God and not on Jacob, realizing that although not loved by Jacob, she was loved by God. The two key institutions of Israel, priesthood (Levi) and royalty (Judah), came from an unplanned and unwanted marriage.

