

GENESIS

Lesson 46 w/ Answers

Jacob Takes a Wife...or Two

⁴⁶ Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living." ²⁸ So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him. Then he commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman. ² Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. ³ May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. ⁴ May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now reside as a foreigner, the land God gave to Abraham." ⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Genesis 27:46-28:5 [NIV]

In this lesson, we examine the circumstances around Jacob's search for a wife. Following his mother and father's instructions, Jacob heads to Paddan Aram to his uncle Laban's house—aware that he is carrying the "blessings given to Abraham." As Jacob travels, he arrives at Bethel and spends the night there. When he falls asleep, he has a now-famous dream of a ladder between heaven and earth, with God at the top and angels coming and going on the ladder. As he sleeps, God provides him assurance of His promises to him.

¹³ ... "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. ¹⁴ Your 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. ¹⁵ I 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."

Genesis 28:13b-15 [NIV]

Jacob's dream gives him confidence that God will be faithful in fulfilling His promises.

²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear ²¹ so that I return safely to my father's household, then the Lord will be my God ²² and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

Genesis 28:20-22 [NIV]

Notice here as well that he, like his grandfather Abraham, spoke of giving "a tenth" of his possessions. This practice is referred to as tithing, and it was being practiced long before God provided the law to the Exodus Jews. Just as in Jacob and Abraham's time, it is one way that we today can worship and honor God as our protector and provider.

Jacob completes his trip to Paddan Aram and upon arriving, he sees Rachel and falls in love. Rachel takes him to meet her father, Laban (Jacob's uncle), and a happy family reunion occurs. Laban knew of his sister's twins and was happy that Jacob was now there at his home visiting with them. Read Genesis 29:1-14.

In Genesis 29:14, we learn that Jacob had already stayed a month with Laban and was now working for him.

Read Genesis 27:41-45 and respond to the following question:

1. Why does Jacob stay at Laban's and work for him rather than simply taking a wife and heading back to Hebron?
 - a. ANSWER: These verses remind us that there were two reasons that Jacob traveled to Laban's: the first reason was to find a wife, and the second reason was to follow his mother's instructions that he stay with Laban until Esau cooled down and no longer wanted to kill him. She told Jacob that she would send word for him to come back home once she knew it was safe.

Jacob and Laban agree that Jacob will work for Laban for seven years, tending his sheep, in exchange for the hand of Rachel in marriage. Jacob is about to come face-to-face with the trait of deception that runs deep in the family. Jacob loved Rachel so much that he was willing to work for her and wait seven years to marry her. Unfortunately, at the end of the seven years, his uncle pulled a fast one on him, and on Jacob's wedding night, Laban substitutes his older daughter Leah so that Jacob must marry her. Laban wanted to make sure that his oldest daughter, who wasn't as attractive as Rachel, was married first. Jacob could not believe what his uncle Laban had done, but he was so in love with Rachel that he agreed to work another seven years—if Laban allowed him to also marry Rachel one week after he consummated his marriage with Leah. Clearly, we see a love story almost beyond comprehension. In the end, Jacob will work fourteen years caring for Laban's sheep in exchange for being able to marry Rachel. (Genesis 29:15-30)

At the conclusion of the story of Jacob finding a wife at his uncle's, we see that he now doesn't have one wife—he has two. But that's only the beginning. Ultimately, Jacob will find himself to be the father of many children (twelve sons and one daughter) from two wives and two servants—Rachel's servant Bilhah and Leah's servant Zilpah. As we move through the story of Jacob's children, we need a scorecard to keep track of who bore which child to Jacob. More importantly, we see the challenges of having multiple wives and two servants who you bear your children. Jealousy breaks out, as each wife wants Jacob's full attention, as well as competition between Leah and Rachel to bear even more children.

As mentioned above, in the end, Jacob has twelve sons and one daughter (Dinah) through two wives and two servants (Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah). The children are born in the following order: Rueben, Simeon, Levi and Judah with Leah; Dan and Naphtali, with Zilpah; Gad and Asher, and again with Leah, Issachar and Zebulun, and later a daughter, Dinah. To Rachel, only Joseph was born during the time that they lived in Paddan Aram at Laban's. Later, Rachel would die giving birth to the twelfth of Jacob's sons, Benjamin. (See Genesis 29:31-35, 30:1-24, and 35:16-20.)

In our next lesson, we follow Jacob, as he pulls up stakes and heads back to Bethel with a very large family, servants, and livestock. God has richly blessed him!

In Christ,

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