

### Laban Tricks Jacob into Marriage with Leah

#### Genesis 29:15-30

Genesis 29:15-30 - *"Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?"* <sup>16</sup> Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

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

<sup>19</sup> And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me." <sup>20</sup> So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

<sup>21</sup> Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." <sup>22</sup> And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. <sup>23</sup> Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. <sup>24</sup> And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. <sup>25</sup> So it came to pass 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 you? Why then have you deceived me?"

<sup>26</sup> And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. <sup>27</sup> Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years." <sup>28</sup> Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. <sup>29</sup> And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. <sup>30</sup> Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years."

#### Background Notes

At first it seemed that everything was going well for Jacob in Padam Aram. He was welcomed into Laban's household, and he worked around the farm for his room and board: *"And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month.*" But after a month, Laban said to Jacob, *"Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?"* (v15). That would be the Bedouin way of saying, "OK, I want you to stay because you are helping out, and I can use a good man around here, but let's come up with a work contract."

Jacob saw this as an opportunity to bargain for Rachel to become his wife. He had fallen in head over heels in love with Rachel, but he had no dowry to give Laban for her. So he agreed to work for seven years for Rachel. "It's a deal," said Laban. *"So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her"* (v20). As far as Jacob was concerned, he had gotten a terrific deal!

But Rachel had an older sister, Leah, and she was not as beautiful as Rachel. *“Leah’s eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance” (v17).* The Hebrew word used here to describe Leah’s eyes can mean that Leah was slightly cross-eyed, or that her eyes lacked luster. They were not like the sparkling eyes of Rachel.

After Jacob had served his seven years, he reminded Laban that he had fulfilled his contract. *“Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.’”* But the crafty Laban came up with a plan to substitute Leah for Rachel. Because Leah was the older sister, in that culture she should be married first (v26).

How was Laban able to pull this deception off? I think we’ll have to wait until we get to heaven and look at the historical DVDs! Was Jacob deceived because the women were veiled on their wedding day, and Leah didn’t take the veil off until it was dark in the bridal tent? Or maybe Laban had Jacob drink a lot of wine at the wedding feast!

But how did Laban force his daughters to go along with his plan? It seems that Leah may have been willing, but what about Rachel? In any case, when Jacob woke up the next morning, guess what? Surprise! His bride was Leah! *“So it came to pass 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 you? Why then have you deceived me?’”(v25).*

Why did God allow something like this to take place? Answer: God was letting Jacob learn some lessons the hard way. It was a class in the “School of Hard Knocks” in Jacob’s life. This was a course that Jacob had to take in the School of God. We, too, must take courses in the School of God.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. The “School of God” has a required course in “How to Respect the Rights of Others.”

Jacob had never passed this course. When he was younger, Jacob manipulated Esau into selling him his birthright. When he was older, Jacob didn’t respect either his brother or his father when he participated in the plot to gain the patriarchal blessing. Even though God’s will was accomplished through all these events, this in no way condoned Jacob’s wrongdoing. Jacob had not respected the rights of others, and once again, here in Genesis 29, Jacob did not respect the rights of others. After seven years of living in that culture, Jacob certainly would have known that it would be a slap in the face for Leah if Rachel were to be married first. Jacob should have been willing to wait. True love can always wait. But not Jacob! He had served his time, he wanted Rachel, and he wanted her now. Jacob couldn’t have cared less about Leah’s rights.

Jacob had to learn a hard lesson. God allowed Laban to trick him, and he was forced to take the course “How to Respect the Rights of Others 101.” But Jacob passed the course this time. Although he complained to Laban, he stayed married

to Leah. It seems that he didn't blame Leah for her part in the scheme, and he was willing to work another seven years for Rachel.

After a week with Leah, Jacob was also given Rachel as his wife - but he was required to work and serve Laban another seven years, which he did. I think Jacob finally realized that he had been wrong in not respecting the rights of others, and I think he passed the course at this point.

Do you respect the rights of others, or do you just care about yourself and your rights? What about in casual conversation, for example? Do you listen to others and earn the right to be heard, or do you just selfishly do all the talking – and talking only about yourself? Well, don't be surprised if you have to go to God's school. The "School of God" has a **required** course in "How to Respect the Rights of Others."

## **2. The "School of God" has a required course in "How Not to Deceive Others."**

Jacob had deceived his father by pretending to be his brother Esau. He had worn Esau's clothes and put goatskins on his arms so he would smell and feel like Esau to Isaac, who was almost blind. Now the tables were turned! The deceiver was deceived! Jacob had deceived his father; now his father-in-law deceived him. Jacob had pretended to be his brother Esau: now Leah pretended to be her sister Rachel. Jacob even put on Esau's clothes to deceive his father Isaac; now, most likely, Leah put on Rachel's wedding garments to deceive Jacob.

The "chickens had come home to roost" in Jacob's life! Proverbs 13:15 says, "*The way of the transgressor is hard.*" And Galatians 6:7 says: "*Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*" Jacob had to learn a very hard lesson.

The school of God has a required course in "How Not to Deceive Others." Are you deceiving anyone right now? Are you wearing a mask at your church - pretending to be someone you are not? Are you deceiving your employer? Husbands and wives, are you being honest with each other? Teens, are you deceiving your parents in some way? If you are involved in deception, don't be surprised if God puts you into His school! The School of God has a **required** course in "How Not to Deceive Others."

## **Practical Application**

### **The people around you may be "God's mirror" and "God's sandpaper."**

Do you think it was by chance that Jacob was brought into relationship with Laban? Of course not! Laban was just as cunning and crafty and deceitful as Jacob was. Every time Jacob looked at Laban, he was forced to see himself - in

God's mirror! For twenty years Jacob was forced to look at Laban. Laban was God's mirror, and Jacob was forced to see himself as he really was.

Laban was not only God's mirror – he was God's sandpaper as well. You don't smooth rough lumber with oil, but with sandpaper. Laban was God's sandpaper for Jacob. After 20 years of treatment with God's "mirror" and God's "sandpaper," Jacob matured considerably as a believer.

Look around you. The people around you may be God's mirror and God's sandpaper in your life! Maybe you have a problem submitting to authority. You always want to take charge and push your weight around. Perhaps you find it impossible to submit even to **God's** authority figures in the home or in the church. Well, guess what? Don't be surprised if you find yourself in situations where the people you have to work with turn out to be just like you. They don't want to submit to your authority even when you are in a position of authority. And don't be surprised if you get a tyrant as a boss at work!

That's the way the "School of God" works. God's mirrors and God's sandpaper are in the people with whom you have to live and work. And believe me, God's system works very well in getting rid of the rough areas in our lives! I once had a boss who was definitely God's sandpaper in my life, and he knocked off a few rough edges in my life!

Do you have any blind spots or rough edges? God has His mirrors to demonstrate your character, and His sandpaper to smooth out the rough edges in your character. The people around you may be God's mirror, showing you who you really are. And the people you have to rub up against every day are very likely God's sandpaper, sanding away the rough places in your life.

The people around you may be "God's mirror" and "God's sandpaper"!