

On the Beginning

31. Jacob's Family

NOTE ESPECIALLY GENESIS 29 and 30

God was at work in Jacob's life, just as He is in the life of every Christian (Philippians 1:6). What the Lord did for (and to) him in the household of his uncle Laban at Haran amounted to subjecting him to his "own medicine." Jacob the supplanter was a deceiver and a trickster, but Laban was a master trickster! Earlier in Genesis we learned about Laban and Jacob's "family tree." Nahor was Abraham's brother (Genesis 11:27-29), and Bethuel was Nahor's son (Genesis 22:20-23). Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel (Genesis 24:15, 23-24) and her brother was Laban (Genesis 24:29). Rebekah married Isaac, Abraham's son (Genesis 24:67), and Jacob was their son. So Jacob was sent to find a wife among his kinfolk (Genesis 28:1-2).

1. Jacob's Wives.

Jacob's arrival in "*the land of the people of the east*" was a happy event for all. He helped the women water the flocks by removing the heavy stone from the mouth of the well (Genesis 29:1-10). He also met the beautiful daughter of Laban at the same time, whom he greeted with a familial kiss on the cheek (vs. 9-12). Laban had two daughters: Leah (who was "*tender eyed*") and Rachel (who was "*beautiful*"). Genesis 29: 13-28 tells the story of how Laban tricked Jacob to marry both of them even though Rachel was his real choice. The trickster was tricked, and God was using the situation to deal with Jacob's character weakness.

2. Jacob's Children.

Jacob's two wives and their handmaids gave him twelve sons and a daughter. Let's notice seven things about the birth of these children:

- A. God cared about Leah's plight, and gave her the first children. She was a victim of polygamy, not favored by her husband.

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

God sees, and God cares.

- B. God was honored and recognized by the names of Leah's first four sons (vs. 32-35). We must recognize the hand of the Lord in our lives.
- C. Only God can give children, physical or spiritual (Genesis 30:1-2).
- D. The children of the handmaids were named to show the strife between the wives of Jacob (Genesis 30: 3-13). Compare the names of Leah's first four sons with the

names of the first four sons of the handmaids. See the descent from the worship of God to human rivalry. We ought to live on the highest level.

- E. The taking of handmaids for offspring was a heathen custom adopted by Jacob through the mistaken action of his grandfather. Remember Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael? There is danger in following the wrong deeds of our family.
- F. Leah's next children are recorded as coming in answer to prayer (vs. 14-21). She also bare Jacob's daughter, Dinah. Remember that God answers prayer.
- G. God doesn't forget us. The birth of Rachel's first son is prefaced this way:
"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb." (vs. 22)

Patience is important in the Christian life, because God often calls on us to wait.

3. Jacob's **Wages**.

The first pay Jacob got from Laban for working with his flocks was his wives (Genesis 29: 15-28). In time, he wanted to leave his uncle's employ, but Laban waited to negotiate (See Genesis 30: 25-28). When you read the arrangement that was made (vs. 29-43), you can see how the Lord blessed Jacob in spite of Laban's unsavory ways. Gradually, Jacob was learning a lesson that would finally be learned in Chapter 32. One can either live by *guile* or by *God*! Read John 1:47 and find "*an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.*" Find in Genesis 32:28 the change in Jacob's name that meant a change in his life. From a supplanter who lived by guile he became one who prevails with God. Scheming to get your way will bring bad results eventually. Looking to God to bless you brings good things without bad. (Proverbs 10:22).