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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Greater Refuge Memorial Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**“JACOB’S FAMILY TREE”**

**Genesis 29:1-35**

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***Genesis 29:1 "Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east."***

***Genesis 29:2 "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."***

***Genesis 29:3 "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."***

***Genesis 29:4 "And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence [be] ye? And they said, Of Haran [are] we."***

***Genesis 29:5 "And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know [him]."***

***Genesis 29:6 "And he said unto them, [Is] he well? And they said, [He is] well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep."***

***Genesis 29:7 "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]."***

***Genesis 29:8 "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."***

Jacob, now with a fresh vision of God, resumed his journey toward his clan, looking for a bride. In this dry barren land, the gathering place was at the well of water. The well was a valuable commodity. The sheep would die without the water. They were careful to put the stone back to keep filth from filtering into the well. Jacob had found the right place and his mother's people, as well. God had truly been with him. Through providential circumstances, he met Rachel, a woman of Laban’s household, part of his extended family. This was Jacob's first glimpse of Rachel. Rachel herded the family's sheep. It seems at a certain time of day, they rolled back the stone and everyone watered their stock at that time. This seemed to be about noontime when she came, and watering time, was usually much later in the day. The scene is similar to that of Isaac and Rebekah’s meeting: Rachel, like Rebekah, proved her industrious character by leading her sheep even while the other shepherds were lazily lounging about.

***Genesis 29:9 "And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them."***

***Genesis 29:10 "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."***

***Genesis 29:11 "And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept."***

***Genesis 29:12 "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."***

Jacob, upon seeing Rachel, showed his own industrious spirit. He suddenly became the gentleman of the hour rolled back the stone and watered the sheep for Rachel. He even kissed her. He was so happy, that he wept. The stones covering wells in those days were intentionally large, meant to be moved by several men. But Jacob, smitten with love upon seeing the beautiful Rachel shifted the thing over all on his own. Rachel, too, seemed immediately taken with Jacob, because she ran not a common action back then and told her father. The statement “her father’s brother” did not mean that Jacob was Laban's brother, it meant, near kinsman. He was actually Laban's nephew. This was the only account of any contact between Rebekah and her family, since she left since she left to marry Isaac. The excitement had to be great.

***Genesis 29:13 "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."***

***Genesis 29:14 "And Laban said to him, Surely thou [art] my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month."***

***Genesis 29:15 "And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou [art] my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what [shall] thy wages [be]?"***

***Genesis 29:16 "And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder [was] Leah, and the name of the younger [was] Rachel."***

***Genesis 29:17 "Leah [was] tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured."***

***Genesis 29:18 "And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter."***

***Genesis 29:19 "And Laban said, [It is] better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me."***

***Genesis 29:20 "And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him [but] a few days, for the love he had to her."***

What follows the meeting between Jacob and Rachel is testimony both to Jacob’s devotion and Laban’s deceit. Laban rushed to Jacob, hugged him and kissed him, and took him to his house, acknowledging him as my own flesh and blood. There was a great deal of catching up to do. Laban was excited to hear from his sister. He was anxious to meet her son. On the surface, Laban seemed to treat Jacob like close family. From this Scripture, above, it seems Jacob had been working and helping Laban, his uncle. Laban realized he cannot work forever without wages, and asked Jacob what he would work for. When Jacob requested to marry his beloved daughter, Laban deceived him. "Leah" means weary. "Rachel" mean ewe, a female sheep. Jacob had found what he wanted. This beautiful girl had won his heart. Laban did not want Jacob to leave. He said he preferred for her to marry Jacob over any other man. It was, also, the custom for the father to choose the groom for his daughter. It also is a custom of the groom to pay the father. Still penniless at this point, Jacob agreed to work for seven years to afford a dowry for Laban’s younger daughter Rachel. "Seven" means spiritually complete. Laban agreed, and the years flew by for Jacob, because of his love for her.

***Genesis 29:21 "And Jacob said unto Laban, Give [me] my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her."***

***Genesis 29:22 "And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast."***

***Genesis 29:23 "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."***

***Genesis 29:24 "And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid [for] an handmaid."***

***Genesis 29:25 "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?"***

Jacob's love for Rachel is great. He fulfilled his agreement with Laban. Now, he wanted his wife. Seven years is a long time to wait for someone you love. On the honeymoon, however, Jacob experienced the shock of his life. Laban had taken his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and he slept with her. You see, Leah was wearing a veil, and it was dark in the tent. Much drinking at these weddings left them not fully aware of their behavior. It was easy to have been given the wrong girl. Jacob’s surprise at seeing Leah’s face in dawn’s light is captured in what has to be the most profound understatement in the Bible: When morning came, there was Leah! Leah, indeed! Jacob, the trickster, had been tricked himself. He was unaware of the change of girls. Jacob slept with Leah. The servant girl, Zilpah, was given to Leah for a wedding present. Understandably upset by the trick, Jacob confronted Laban. Jacob felt, rightfully so, as if he had been wronged.

***Genesis 29:26 "And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn."***

Apparently aware of some of Jacob’s history with Esau, Laban replied that it was not the custom to give the younger daughter in marriage before the firstborn. The statement was intentionally chosen to remind Jacob of his own trickster past. Laban had tricked his nephew under the very same scenario that Jacob had manipulated his older brother Esau. The younger and the older had been swapped, except this time Jacob was on the short end of the trick. He was experiencing what the apostle Paul calls the law of sowing and reaping. A person reaps what he sows; or, as we would say it, what goes around comes around. Our actions, righteous or unrighteous, will always bear fruit in keeping with the roots. In that country the younger could not marry, until the older had married. This was the custom of the land. This, too, was the custom of the land. Seven days the groom would take the bride away and return after seven days. (Many thinks this is symbolic of the seven years the Christians will be with Christ in heaven, before he comes back to set up His reign on the earth for 1000 years). Now, Jacob had two wives. He had to work seven more years, but he now had his beloved Rachel with him.

***Genesis 29:27 "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years."***

***Genesis 29:28 "And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also."***

***Genesis 29:29 "And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid."***

Jacob, realizing that he had no basis for “righteous” anger, accepted the marriage to Leah. But he was still in love with Rachel, so he agreed to marry her too for the dowry of another seven years of labor. One wonders whether these “flew by” as quickly as the first seven!

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***Genesis 29:30 "And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years."***

Difficulties caused by Laban’s actions continued as Jacob’s family began to grow. Leah and Rachel, competing for Jacob’s affection, began a race to produce children. Their sons would ultimately become the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, but that complex family tree was born out of conflict. The conflict began because Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. These women were from a family of some affluence, and both girls had a maid for a wedding gift. Rachel was his choice from the beginning. Leah was his wife, but not by choice. It was circumstances beyond his control that made her his wife.

***Genesis 29:31 "And when the LORD saw that Leah [was] hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel [was] barren."***

***Genesis 29:32 "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."***

***Genesis 29:33 "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."***

***Genesis 29:34 "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."***

***Genesis 29:35 "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."***

It seems Leah, as well as Rachel, loved Jacob. God, recognizing that Leah was unloved opened her womb before Rachel’s. When Leah had this child, she thought the child would pull Jacob closer to her than Rachel. Leah believed if she had children for Jacob, that he would love her more than Rachel. Jacob fulfilled all the husbandly duties, or else she would not have had children. He didn't hate her; he just loved Rachel more. As we have said already, it was a curse not to have a child in those days. God had pitied her and blessed her with a child. The names of Leah’s sons reflected her marital situation. The first she named Reuben. "Reuben" means, behold a son, which sounds like “has seen my affliction” in the Hebrew language in which Genesis was written. Even in the loveless ﻿relationship with her husband, she expressed faith in God, believing that he knew the reality of her circumstances. When she conceived again, she named the second son Simeon. Simeon" means hearing” which sounds like “has heard". Leah knew that God had loved her even though Jacob had not. With the third son, "Levi" means joining whose name sounds like “attached to” in Hebrew, Leah hoped that Jacob would develop an attachment to her. But he wouldn’t, so with son number four, Judah, which sounds like “praise,” Leah turned her full attention to God, saying, this time I will praise the Lord. Her marital circumstance had not changed, but she chose to praise God despite her challenges. These sons were four of the twelve who would be fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. "Judah" means God be praised. The Hebrew of Judah is Yehudah. We will see these sons turn against the children of Rachel. Remember, these are the beginning of tribes by these names.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What did Jacob see in the land of the east?

2. What covered the well?
3. Where was the gathering place?
4. What did Jacob call these strangers?

5. What place were these men from?

6. Who did Jacob ask these men at the well about?

7. What was Laban's daughter's name?

8. What was she doing?

9. Why could they not water the sheep?

10. What did Jacob do to help?

11. How did he greet Rachel?

12. What did Rachel do when Jacob told her who he was?

13. What did Laban do when he heard his relative was there?

14. How long had Jacob been with them, before he had an agreement for wages?
15. What were the names of Laban's daughters?
16. How was the older described?
17. How was the younger described?
18. What was the deal that Jacob made?
19. What happened after Jacob fulfilled his end of the bargain?
20. Who was Jacob's first wife?
21. What was her maid's name?
22. What do many people think the seven-day honeymoon is symbolic of?

23. How long will Jesus reign on this earth?
24. What blessings did Leah get from God?
25. Name her four sons.
26. What do the names mean?
27. These four sons are part of a larger group? What is it named?