**Lesson #17**

**Genesis 29 & 30**

1. What is meant by “the land of the people of the east?”

This is the area of Mesopotamia or more specifically the area of Haran.

2. What did Jacob find as he entered this land?

Jacob found:

1. A well with a large stone over it in a field.
2. Three flocks of sheep lying by the well.
3. Shepherds waiting for another flock so that they could all be watered at once.

3. Who was Jacob looking for? What problem does this pose for us? (24:15, 50) How can we reconcile this? (22:20-23)

Jacob was looking for Laban the son Nahor. The problem is Laban was the son of Bethuel. However, Bethuel was the son of Nahor. Nahor was the grandfather of Laban. The lineage is the same and to call someone the son of anyone in the lineage is appropriate. Consider all those who are called a son of Abraham or David.

4. Why did Jacob tell the shepherds to water their flocks and then pasture them?

When he heard that Rachel was bringing Laban’s flock he wanted to hasten the other shepherds on their way so that he could speak with Rachel.

5. Rachel’s arrival at the well is very similar to another account in the Bible. Who else met in this way? (Gen. 24:10-20) What is the significance of this?

Abraham’s servant met Rebekah at a well, possibly the same one. God had obviously been the One who orchestrated that meeting and blessed it. Sometimes God doesn’t work in mysterious ways. God is a God of order and follows the same order. It is a sign of God’s hand in this meeting.

6. How did Jacob respond to Rachel’s arrival? What do we learn about him?

Jacob went and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well. Jacob was obviously quite strong for his age (approx. 77). He then watered Rachel’s flock.

7. How did Jacob introduce himself to Rachel?

Jacob kissed her. This was the kiss of a family member. He then identified himself as a kinsman of her father, the son of Rebekah. Rebekah was her aunt.

8. How did Rachel react to this introduction? How do we know she saw this as an important event?

Rachel immediately ran to tell her father. The fact that she left her flock indicates that it was very important.

9. How did Laban greet Jacob?

Laban ran to meet him, embraced him, kissed him and invited Jacob to his house.

10. Jacob stayed with Laban a month. What did he do during this time? What did Laban do after this month? Why?

Jacob worked for Laban as if he was his son. Tradition in that region was to care for a person for 3 days. On the fourth day he was asked to state his intentions. If he wished to stay, a plan was agreed to. Laban waited till a month was up before he talked with Jacob about such a plan. We see Laban’s heart here. He was more than willing to take advantage of free labor.

11. What did Jacob propose to do in response to Laban’s question of “what shall your wages be?”

Jacob proposed to work for Laban for seven years in exchange for the right to marry Rachel.

12. How is Rachel described? Leah? Is there any significance in these descriptions?

Rachel is described as being beautiful. This is very similar to the descriptions of both Sarah and Rachel. Leah is the older daughter with “weak eyes.” This probably means they were pale in color; probably, a bluish gray.

13. Challenge Question: What do the names Rachel and Leah mean?

Rachel means “Ewe lamb” and Leah means “Wild Cow.”

14. “Jacob loved Rachel.” How does Genesis emphasize that love?

Jacob worked for seven years and seemed to him as a few days.

15. Laban gathered all the people of that area and had a feast. Why?

This was both a celebration and a testimony or witness to the sealing of the marriage covenant.

16. So, what does the name Jacob mean?

Jacob means deceiver.

17. How had Jacob lived up to his name?

Jacob had deceived Isaac into giving him the birthright and blessing.

18. What deception does Jacob fall victim to? How could this have occurred?

Laban gave Leah to Jacob instead of Rachel. This is not too hard to explain:

1. It was customary for the bride to wear a veil.
2. It was dark and there were no lights like we have today.
3. A feast would have involved drinking and Jacob may have not been too sharp.

19. How did Laban explain this? Note the irony.

Laban blamed it on the custom of the firstborn. It is ironic that Jacob deceived to get the birthright and is now deceived so that a birthright is properly passed down.

20. What did Laban propose? Why?

Laban proposed that:

1. Jacob complete the week long wedding ceremony
2. Jacob agree to work for seven more years
3. Jacob could have Rachel after the week

Laban’s proposal was of great benefit to him because:

1. It gave Leah a high chance of conception
2. It gave him a great worker and prosperity for another seven years
3. It assured that both of his daughters would be married to a good man.

21. What was the first result of this agreement? (vs. 30)

Rachel was loved more than Leah. The stage is set for a struggle.

22. What follows this arrangement is a challenge to any soap opera. Rachel was loved more. Leah was hated. In these times the most cherished gift a wife could give her husband was a son. Why was Leah first to give this to Jacob?

God saw Leah’s plight and caused her to conceive and give Jacob a son.

23. Each son of Jacob is given a name that is a play on a Hebrew word. Identify the sons of Jacob by their mothers. What is the meaning of each name? Two of these names have significance in the future. Why? Or How?

Leah

1. Reuben – “see” – “see I have a son”
2. Simeon – “hear” – “hear the good news, a second son”
3. Levi – “attach” – attached to Jacob/The Levites would be attached to God.
4. Judah – “Praise” – Praise to the Lord – Judah was the lineage of Christ through whom all will praise God.
5. Issachar – “wage” – he was born as a result of Rachel buying mandrakes from Leah.
6. Zebulun – “honor” – Jacob would honor Leah for her six sons.

Bilhah

1. Dan – “judged” – Gad had judged and given Rachel a son

through Bilhah.

1. Naphtali – “wrestle” -Poor Naphtali, he is named in memory of

the struggle between Rachel & Leah.

Zilpah

1. Gad – “good fortune” – Rachel had children through Bilhah and

Was catching up to Leah. Gad is good

fortune for Leah, she begins to rebuild her

lead.

1. Asher – “happy” - Leah is happy that she has built such a large lead.

Rachel

A) Joseph – “May He add” -In essence, “May God add to me more sons.” Finally, Rachel has a son and may start to have more. Sadly, she has one more and died in the process of childbirth.

**Historical Custom Note #1**

**The mention of the mandrake in verses 14-15 gives us some insight into the customs of the time.**

**Mandrakes:**

**1) Were viewed in the ancient world as “love apples.” They were**

**seen as an aphrodisiac.**

**2) Were used to make perfume by grinding their roots. This too**

**was seen as an aphrodisiac.**

**3) Their aroma was associated with making love.**

**Song of Solomon 7:13**

**Ruben, who was probably about 5 years old went out into the wheat field and found the mandrakes which would have had a small orange colored fruit. He gave them to his mother Leah. Rachel couldn’t stand the idea of Leah beginning to bear more children she negotiates to get the mandrakes. Ironically, Leah is the one who gets pregnant.**

**Note #2**

**Verse 3 of chapter 30 literally reads, “And she will bear a child on my knees that I also may have children by her.” This matches the custom of the time that a surrogate would give birth to a child while actually sitting on the knees of the wife. This symbolized the wife providing a child for her husband.**

24. What did Jacob want to do once Joseph was born? Why? (Note: There are two answers to this question. Look at 30:25 and 31:1-2 for clues.)

30:25 tells us that Jacob wanted to go back to his country and home. This was the land promised to him.

While he was with Laban, Laban had probably adopted him as a son. Only his daughters were mentioned. When we read 31:1-2 we see that Laban had sons and no longer looked at Jacob with favor as before. Jacob realized there was no birthright for him.

25. What is divination? What does the Bible say about divination? (Deuteronomy 19:9-12)

Divination is any occult practice that is used to get knowledge or information. Divination is an abomination before the Lord.

26. What had Laban learned through divination?

Laban had learned that he had been blessed by the LORD because of Jacob.

27. Look carefully at what Laban had learned. What do we learn about Laban and his beliefs?

Laban uses the term LORD/Yahweh. He knew the great I AM and yet he embraced the practices of the region.

28. “Name your wages and I will give it.” What is meant by this statement? (Be careful! The simple answer does not actually reveal the intent of the question. Consider what Jacob said in verse 28.)

Jacob had served 14 years for the right to have Leah and Rachel as wives. He fulfilled this and asked for what was due to him. When Laban makes this statement, it is an attempt to keep Jacob in his employ.

29. What was Jacob’s concern? (Vs. 30 & 31:1-2

Jacob knew that he needed to provide for his family. There was no inheritance for him with Laban.

30. “What shall I give you?” What is meant by this question?

It is an offer by Laban to give something to Jacob that he will work for over a period of time, just like he worked for Leah and Rachel.

31. How did Jacob respond to this? What did Jacob propose?

Jacob did not want to be given anything because this would have tied him to staying with Laban. Instead he offers to continue to care for Laban’s flock with his wage being all the spotted, speckled or black lambs or goats.

32. How did Laban respond to Jacob’s offer? Why?

Laban agreed and then took all of the blemished animals and gave them to his sons. Laban wanted Jacob to stay so he was going to make Jacob start to earn his wages from day one. Jacob had specifically asked that he be allowed to go through the flocks that day to take the blemished animals.

33. Verses 37-43 describe Jacobs ranching and breeding practices. What is the purpose of the striped poles? We do not know for sure. Some contend it was a superstitious practice. Others claim they were simply markers of his flock that separated them from Laban’s. What evidence is there that would support this latter explanation? (Clue: Look at what else is said about Jacob’s breeding practices.)

Jacob encouraged the breeding of the stronger goats and sheep. He understood basic genetics. Stronger begets stronger. Therefore, he probably understood striped, speckled and black produce striped, speckled and black. By removing the pure white he removes the purebreds that could ruin his gene pool. Yet those that are white, if they are not purebred could produce blemished offspring, these Jacob would remove.

34. What was the result of Jacob’s practices?

Jacob prospered and became rich.