

Rachel and Leah Prayer Material

Excerpted from Genesis 29-31

[Jacob] came to the land of the Kedemites. Looking about, he saw a well in the open country, with three flocks of sheep huddled near it, for flocks were watered from that well. Jacob said to [the shepherds], “My brothers, where are you from?” “We are from Haran,” they replied. Then he asked them, “Do you know Laban, son of Nahor?” “We do,” they answered. He inquired further, “Is he well?” “He is,” they answered; “and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep.” Then he said: “There is still much daylight left; it is hardly the time to bring the ...

Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s relative, Rebekah’s son. So she ran to tell her father. When Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister’s son, he ran to meet him. After embracing and kissing him, he brought him to his house. Jacob then repeated to Laban all these things, and Laban said to him, “You are indeed my bone and my flesh.”

After Jacob had stayed with him a full month, Laban said to him: “Should you serve me for nothing just because you are a relative of mine? Tell me what your wages should be.” Now Laban had two daughters; the older was called Leah, the younger Rachel. Leah had dull eyes, but Rachel was shapely and beautiful. Because Jacob loved Rachel, he answered, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” Laban replied, “It is better to give her to you than to another man. Stay with me.” So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, yet they seemed to him like a few days because of his love for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, that I may consummate my marriage with her, for my term is now completed.” So Laban invited all the local inhabitants and gave a banquet. At nightfall he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he consummated the marriage with her. Laban assigned his maidservant Zilpah to his daughter Leah as her maidservant. In the morning, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban: “How could you do this to me! Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why did you deceive me?” Laban replied, “It is not the custom in our country to give the younger daughter before the firstborn. Finish the bridal week for this one, and then the other will also be given to you in return for another seven years of service with me.”

Jacob did so. He finished the bridal week for the one, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. Laban assigned his maidservant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. Jacob then consummated his marriage with Rachel also, and he loved her more than Leah. Thus he served Laban another seven years.

When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he made her fruitful, while Rachel was barren. Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben; for she said, “It means, ‘The Lord saw my misery; surely now my husband will love me.’” She

conceived again and bore a son, and said, "It means, 'The Lord heard that I was unloved,' and therefore he has given me this one also"; so she named him Simeon. Again she conceived and bore a son, and she said, "Now at last my husband will become attached to me, since I have now borne him three sons"; that is why she named him Levi. Once more she conceived and bore a son, and she said, "This time I will give thanks to the Lord"; therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing children.

When Rachel saw that she had not borne children to Jacob, she became envious of her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children or I shall die!" Jacob became angry with Rachel and said, "Can I take the place of God, who has denied you the fruit of the womb? She replied, "Here is my maidservant Bilhah. Have intercourse with her, and let her give birth on my knees, so that I too may have children through her." So she gave him her maidservant Bilhah as wife, and Jacob had intercourse with her. When Bilhah conceived and bore a son for Jacob, Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; indeed he has heeded my plea and given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. Rachel's maidservant Bilhah conceived again and bore a second son for Jacob, and Rachel said, "I have wrestled strenuously with my sister, and I have prevailed." So she named him Naphtali.

When Leah saw that she had ceased to bear children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as wife. So Leah's maidservant Zilpah bore a son for Jacob. Leah then said, "What good luck!" So she named him Gad. Then Leah's maidservant Zilpah bore a second son to Jacob; and Leah said, "What good fortune, because women will call me fortunate!" So she named him Asher.

One day, during the wheat harvest, Reuben went out and came upon some mandrakes in the field, which he brought home to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." Leah replied, "Was it not enough for you to take away my husband, that you must now take my son's mandrakes too?" Rachel answered, "In that case Jacob may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes." That evening, when Jacob came in from the field, Leah went out to meet him. She said, "You must have intercourse with me, because I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So that night he lay with her, and God listened to Leah; she conceived and bore a fifth son to Jacob. Leah then said, "God has given me my wages for giving my maidservant to my husband"; so she named him Issachar. Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob; and Leah said, "God has brought me a precious gift. This time my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons"; so she named him Zebulun. Afterwards she gave birth to a daughter, and she named her Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel. God listened to her and made her fruitful. She conceived and bore a son, and she said, "God has removed my disgrace." She named him Joseph, saying, "May the Lord add another son for me!"

After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban: “Allow me to go to my own region and land. Give me my wives and my children for whom I served you and let me go, for you know the service that I rendered you.” Laban answered him: “If you will please! I have learned through divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you.” He continued, “State the wages I owe you, and I will pay them.” Jacob replied: “... Let me go through your whole flock today and remove from it every dark animal among the lambs and every spotted or speckled one among the goats. These will be my wages. In the future, whenever you check on my wages, my honesty will testify for me: any animal that is not speckled or spotted among the goats, or dark among the lambs, got into my possession by theft!” Laban said, “Very well. Let it be as you say.” ...

Jacob heard that Laban’s sons were saying, “Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father, and he has produced all this wealth from our father’s property.” Jacob perceived, too, that Laban’s attitude toward him was not what it had previously been. Then the Lord said to Jacob: Return to the land of your ancestors, where you were born, and I will be with you.

So Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where his flock was. ... Jacob proceeded to put his children and wives on camels, and he drove off all his livestock and all the property he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

Now Laban was away shearing his sheep, and Rachel had stolen her father’s household images. Jacob had hoodwinked Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was going to flee. Thus he fled with all that he had. Once he was across the Euphrates, he headed for the hill country of Gilead. On the third day, word came to Laban that Jacob had fled. Taking his kinsmen with him, he pursued him for seven days until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. ...

Laban said to Jacob, ... Granted that you had to leave because you were longing for your father’s house, why did you steal my gods?” Jacob replied to Laban, “I was frightened at the thought that you might take your daughters away from me by force. As for your gods, the one you find them with shall not remain alive! If, with our kinsmen looking on, you identify anything here as belonging to you, take it.” Jacob had no idea that Rachel had stolen the household images.

Laban then went in and searched Jacob’s tent and Leah’s tent, as well as the tents of the two maidservants; but he did not find them. Leaving Leah’s tent, he went into Rachel’s. Meanwhile Rachel had taken the household images, put them inside the camel’s saddlebag, and seated herself upon them. When Laban had rummaged through her whole tent without finding them, she said to her father, “Do not let my lord be angry that I cannot rise in your presence; I am having my period.” So, despite his search, he did not find the household images.

Some Questions for Reflection

Spend some time this week praying with this passage. You may want to take portions of it each day in your prayer. Give God a chance to convey what he wants you to understand from this story. Here are some questions you might find helpful as you sit with story.

What questions come to mind as you pray with this story of Rachel and Leah?

Are there qualities you see in Rachel that you admire? That you find problematic?

Are there qualities you see in Leah that you admire? That you find problematic?

The Bible is silent about Rachel regarding the wedding night deception? How do you think she felt? How can her silence be explained?

Can you think of examples from history or your personal life where someone had to make a choice between silence or speaking, passive or active behavior, complicit or disruptive actions (or inactions)?

Discontentment is insidious, trapping us into thinking what was enough is no longer enough. What do you long for that you don't have?

How can you tell if your longing has turned from good desire into harmful discontent?