



LEAH: A WOMAN UNLOVED RACHEL: A WOMAN LOVED

INTRODUCTION

When Princess Diana of England was asked the reason for the breakdown of her marriage to Prince Charles, she was quoted as saying: "There were three of us in this marriage, so it was a bit crowded." God's design for marriage has been established in the book of Genesis 2:20-25, one man joined to one woman for life. Within this study, we shall see the pain and sorrow of a marriage removed from God's plan, one in which there was more than one woman. Rachel was deeply and passionately loved. Leah, was unloved.

Perhaps you will relate to Leah, like her, you have had to come to terms with the painful and bitter truth; that you are unloved. Or possibly, you are like Rachel, loved, yet extremely empty inside. In either case, this situation brought extreme heartache and rivalry between the women.

Nevertheless, God, who is all seeing, intervened and became the source of wisdom and comfort to both women. God worked out His eternal purposes through them.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. (Genesis 28:15)

Names Given to the Women in this Story

- Leah *And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah . . . Leah was tender eyed. (Genesis 29:16,17).*
Leah means - weary in Hebrew and comes from the root word Laah which means - to tire, to be or make disgusted, faint, grieve, loath.
- Rachel *. . . the name of the younger was Rachel. . . but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. (Genesis 29:16b,17).*
Rachel in Hebrew is from the root word Rawkale which means - to journey; an ewe, the lead female sheep, good traveler.
- Zilpah *And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid (Genesis 29:24).*
The Hebrew word means - fragrant dropping as myrrh. One of Jacob's concubines.
- Bilhah *And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid (Genesis 29:29).*
In the Hebrew it means - timid. One of Jacob's concubines.

SECTION I - Love at First Sight

READ Genesis 28:1-15 and Genesis 29:1-20.

1. As Isaac¹ blessed his son Jacob, what was the charge given to Jacob (Genesis 28:1, 2)? _____

_____ 2

In similar manner, Isaac followed the example of his father, Abraham (Genesis 24:1-4). Isaac also charged Jacob not to take a wife from the Canaanites. Later on in Deuteronomy 7:1-4, God explained how these marriages would turn His people from following after Him.

2. What blessing did Isaac give to his son (Genesis 28:3, 4)? _____

3. How did Jacob respond to Isaac's charge (vv. 5-7)? _____

4. On his journey to Haran, God spoke to Jacob in a dream. SUMMARIZE God's personal promises to him (vv. 10-15)? _____

¹ Isaac: Abraham and Sarah's son of promise (Genesis 17:19-21).

² Padan Aram: the region in North Mesopotamia surrounding the city of Haran.

Jacob built an altar to God and called the place Bethel.³ He then continued on his journey and met people from the East. In the conversation, he discovered they were from Haran. They were acquainted with Laban, and pointed out his daughter Rachel as she approached the well with her sheep.

5. What did Jacob do when he saw Rachel (Genesis 29:10, 11)? _____

6. After Jacob introduced himself to Rachel, how did she respond (v. 12)? _____

7. DESCRIBE Laban's joy when he heard about Jacob (vv. 13-15). _____

8. How were Laban's daughters described (vv. 16, 17)?

Leah _____

Rachel _____

9. What did Jacob request and why (v. 18)? _____

10. How did Laban consider Jacob's request (v. 19)? _____

11. WRITE the phrase that describes Jacob's seven years of service, what was the reason (v. 20)?

PERSONAL

Jacob had a passionate love for Rachel. How did Jesus demonstrate His unconditional love for you (Romans 5:6-8)?

³ Bethel - Hebrew *Beyth-El* house of God: a place in Palestine.

SECTION 2 - Love's Disappointment

READ Genesis 29:21-35.

1. What did Jacob eagerly request of Laban after his seven years of service (v. 21)? _____

2. How did Laban deceive Jacob (vv. 22-25)? _____

PERSONAL

Leah probably felt she was a disappointment to Jacob. Have you ever felt as though you were a disappointment to someone you love? READ Psalms 139. WRITE out the verse that ministered to you the most.

3. What was Jacob required to do to obtain his beloved bride (Genesis 29:26-28)? _____

4

4. When Rachel and Leah were married, Laban gave them handmaidens. What were their names (vv. 24, 29)? _____

5. What were Jacob's feelings towards his two wives (vv. 30, 31a)? _____

5

6. What did the Lord see concerning Leah, and how did He show favor towards her (v. 31a)? _____

⁴ fulfill her week: to complete the wedding feast that lasted one week.

⁵ hated - Hebrew *sane* to hate: enemy, foe, utterly odious. NKJV renders it unloved.

7. Although Rachel was greatly loved by Jacob, what caused her extreme heartache (v. 31b)?

8. Because the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He blessed her with four sons. Leah thought that by God blessing her with children, Jacob's feelings towards her would change. Although her husband still rejected her, Leah continued to give honor to God, recognizing His blessings in her unfortunate circumstance. This helped keep her from turning her sorrows into self pity and depression. READ her declarations to the Lord as He blesses her with sons. UNDERLINE the phrases that declare her faith in God (Genesis 29:32-35).

Reuben . . . *Surely, the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.*

Simeon . . . *Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, He hath therefore given me this son also.*

Levi . . . *Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons.*

Judah . . . *Now will I praise the LORD*

PERSONAL

Leah turned her sorrow into praise. What do the following Scriptures say will happen when we cry out to the Lord in our distress and sorrow?

Psalm 18:6 _____

Psalm 138:3 _____

When you were named and/or were naming your child, did you consider the meaning of the name? WRITE the reason you were given your name and/or the reason for giving a special name to your child.

SECTION 3 - Love's Heartache and Rivalry

READ Genesis 30:1-24.

1. As God was blessing Leah with children, what sin arose in Rachel's heart and why (v. 1)?

Who did she blame for her barrenness? _____

2. According to Jacob, who kept Rachel from bearing children (v. 2)? _____

3. In her self-will to have children, what did Rachel suggest to Jacob (v. 3)? _____

PERSONAL

Rachel devised a plan that would give her a child, rather than trusting in the Lord. What causes a person to walk according to his own plan rather than trusting God?

Is there an area in your life that seems hopeless? Are you devising your own plan rather than trusting God? READ the following Scriptures: Proverbs 3:5-7, Proverbs 16:9, and Proverbs 19:21. What is God's counsel, what will He do?

4. Bilhah gave birth to two sons. What names did Rachel give them? How do they describe the rivalry between her and Leah (Genesis 30:5-8)?

5. When Leah stopped conceiving, what did she then do (v. 9)? _____

6. What names did Leah give to the sons born to her maid, Zilpah? What are the meanings of their names (vv. 10-13)?

According to custom, when Bilhah and Zilpah were given to Jacob as wives to bare children, the laying of the newborn child on Rachel or Leah's knees was a public acknowledgement that the children belonged to them.

LOOK DEEPER

REREAD Genesis 29:32-35 and Genesis 30:10-13. What difference do you see in the names Leah chose for her sons and the names she gave to Zilpah's sons?

How did the rivalry between the sisters affect them? _____

7. What did Reuben find in the fields? What did he do with his find (Genesis 30:14)? _____

6

Who demanded them of him? _____

8. WRITE how Leah voices her extreme heartache concerning Jacob in her reply to Rachel (v. 15).

How did Rachel control this situation? _____

9. However, what did God do for Leah (v. 17)? _____

10. Give the names of Leah's last two sons and the meaning of them (vv. 18-20). _____

7

How many sons did God give to Leah? _____

⁶ mandrakes: a small orange-colored berry-like fruit with a pungent aroma. In ancient times, it was believed to induce fertility.

⁷ hire - Hebrew *sakar* payment: wages, reward.

11. Leah continued to conceive by Jacob. How did God bless her (v. 21)? _____⁸

12. What special miracle did God do for Rachel in answer to her prayers (v. 22)? _____

13. The years Rachel waited to conceive her own child seemed to strengthen her faith. She had to learn that her manipulative plans would not move the hand of God before His time. What two statements did she make to prove this point when she named her son (vv. 23, 24)?

_____⁹

PERSONAL

The rivalry that existed between Leah and Rachel no doubt had an effect on the children. Scripture reveals that Jacob greatly aggravated the situation by showing favoritism and love towards Joseph, Rachel's son (Genesis 37:1-4). If you are a mother or a close relative of children, how can you avoid sibling rivalry among them?

SECTION 4 - Love's Protection

READ Genesis 31:14-35, 35:1-4

After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob asked Laban to send him away to his own place. Laban wanted Jacob to stay longer; he realized since Jacob had been with him, God had blessed him. Laban again asked Jacob to name his wages, in reply, Jacob confirmed that God had blessed Laban since his coming, but he now needed to provide for his own growing family. Knowing he would eventually leave, Jacob requested to keep all the spotted and speckled livestock, to which Laban agreed. As God increased Jacob's wealth, Laban's attitude changed unfavorably towards him. At that time, the Lord called Jacob to return to Bethel. God said . . . *now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.* Then Jacob sent for Leah and Rachel and explained to them why he had to leave (Genesis 30:25-31:13).

1. Why were Leah and Rachel more than willing to leave their father's home (Genesis 31:14-16)?

⁸ Dinah - Hebrew *Diy nah* justice: one who judges.

⁹ reproach - Hebrew *cher pah* disgrace: rebuke; shame or a cause of shame, a stigma, thought to be a sign of divine disfavor.

What wise counsel did Leah and Rachel give to Jacob? _____

2. As they departed, what did Rachel secretly steal (vv. 17-19)? _____¹⁰

3. When the news came to Laban that Jacob had left with his entire family and all their possessions, what did he do (vv. 20-23)?

4. How did God exhort Laban (v. 24)? _____

5. How did Laban disobey God (vv. 25-30)? _____

6. As Laban deceived Jacob, how did Rachel deceive her father (vv. 31-35)? _____

As Jacob and his family journeyed home to Bethel, he met his brother Esau, who had earlier determined to kill Jacob (Genesis 27:30-46). Esau had with him four hundred men, but God protected Jacob and his family. The brothers embraced one another and wept (Genesis 33:1-15).

The family also pitched a tent near Shechem during their journey and experienced great anguish as the Prince of Shechem raped Dinah, Jacob's only daughter. In revenge, this incident led to a great slaughter of all the males of Shechem. After the situation, God again directed Jacob to continue on to Bethel. (Genesis 34-35:1).

7. What instructions did God give to Jacob (Genesis 35:1)? _____

¹⁰ images - Hebrew *teraphiym* a healer: a family idol; the possession of which implied family leadership and assured the owner of the idol the right to the family property.

8. Before Jacob left for Bethel¹¹, what important commands did he give to his family (Genesis 35:2, 3)?

9. What did all of Jacob's family give to him (Genesis 35:4)?

10. How did God protect Jacob and his family once again (v. 5)?

LOOK DEEPER

Why is Bethel an important place to Jacob (vv. 6-15)? See also Genesis 12:7, 8; 13:3, 4; 28:10-22.

SECTION 5 - Love's Fulfillment

READ Genesis 35:16-20 and Genesis 49:29-33.

1. After staying at Bethel for a time, they continued their journey and were close to Ephrath¹². Rachel conceived once more. What happened to Rachel there (Genesis 35:16)?

2. What words of comfort did the midwife give Rachel (v. 17)?

¹¹ Bethel - Hebrew *ba yith* house of God; town about 10 miles north of Jerusalem

¹² Ephrath - Hebrew fruitfulness; Bethlehem.

3. As Rachel was dying, what name did she give the newborn son (v. 18)? _____ 13
- What did Jacob change his son's name to? _____ 14
4. Where was Rachel buried (v. 19)? _____
5. What did Jacob place on Rachel's grave (v. 20)? _____

LOOK DEEPER

How did Jacob bless each one of his sons (Genesis 49:1-28)? _____

6. In what place did Jacob charge his sons to bury him (Genesis 49:29-33)? _____
- _____
- _____

Who else did Jacob have buried in this honorable place? _____

¹³ Ben-Oni: Hebrew *Ben-Owniy* son of my sorrow: the original name that Rachel gave to Benjamin.
¹⁴ Benjamin - Hebrew *Binyamin* son of (the) right hand: youngest son of Jacob.

In spite of their quarreling, Leah and Rachel were given the honor of building the house of Israel. God used their children to form the twelve tribes of Israel (Ruth 4:11).

PERSONAL

Regardless of your times of unfaithfulness and rebellion against God, how has He blessed you and brought His will to pass in your life?

MEMORY VERSE

(Genesis 28:15).

We learn from the story of Leah and Rachel of God's great love for us all. Even though both women faced difficult circumstances in their marriages to Jacob, God did not forget them. He was faithful in drawing them close to Himself. God used imperfect people to accomplish and complete His eternal plan. Through Jacob and Laban's trickery, Leah's broken heart, Rachel's barrenness and scheming, and even through the sibling rivalry of Jacob's sons, God brought forth His blessing through the tribe of Judah: His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Their lives teach us that only through Him do we find true fulfillment in the everyday situations of our lives.

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