

Genesis Chapter 29
NDCBF Wednesday Bible Study
February 1, 2012

Chapter 29 Overview:

In Chapter 29 Jacob acquires two wives and begins to have children with those wives. The chapter can be divided into four sections: (1) Jacob comes to the well of Haran in verses 1-8. (2) Jacob meets Rachel and Laban in verses 9-14. (3) Jacob makes a covenant with Laban to marry Rachel and Laban's deceit in verses 15-30. And then (4) Leah's sons are recorded in verses 31-35.

¹ Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east. ² He looked, and ¹saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large. ³ When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well. ⁴ Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." ⁵ He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." ⁶ And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and here is Rachel his daughter coming with the sheep." (Genesis 29:1-6)

Jacob left home and arrived in Syria in "***the land of the people of the east.***"

He happened to arrive specifically at the place where his relatives lived.

When he arrived there were three flocks of sheep near a well waiting to be watered.

He asked the shepherds that were there at the well where he was.

They told him that he was at Haran.

He then asked if they knew Laban the son of Nahor.

Not only did they know him, they pointed out that Laban's daughter was arriving right at that moment with her sheep.

Remember the story of Isaac's servant arriving at the well when he was looking for a bride for Isaac and he met Rebekah at a well? This story is almost a parallel with that one with Jacob meeting his future wife at the well

I think it is safe to assume that God had arranged this meeting at the well also.

⁷ He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them." ⁸ But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep." ⁹ While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. ¹⁰ When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept. ¹² Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father. (Genesis 29:7-12)

Jacob urged the waiting shepherds to water their sheep.

The word translated as **cattle** {hmqm *miq- neh*} refers to livestock in general and not necessarily steers or cows as modern English might imply.

The custom evidently was to wait for all herds to arrive before the well was uncovered, so the moving herds would not foul up the well.

Once all the herds arrived and were made to lie down, then the well was uncovered.

Meanwhile, Rachel had arrived with her father's flocks.

Jacob uncovered the well for Rachel.

Rachel was the daughter of Laban, the brother of Jacob's mother Rebekah.

Jacob was Rachel's cousin.

Jacob was so excited to see his family that he kissed Rachel, shouted, and wept.

His weeping was for joy in finding his close relatives.

He informed her who he was.

She ran and told her father Laban

13 So when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things. 14 Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

Laban rejoiced upon hearing his sister's son had arrived.

As oriental custom was and still is "***he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house.***"

And Jacob stayed with Laban for a month.

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" 16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. 18 Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." 19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. (Genesis 29:15-20)

Laban sat down and discussed with Jacob about going to work for him.

He noted even though he was a brother (i.e., relative), he should **not** work for free.

Laban had two daughters which Jacob had already noticed.

The older girl, Leah, "***was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.***"

The description of Leah being "***tendered eyed***" means she was probably not physically attractive.

Her sister Rachel, on the other hand, was beautiful in appearance.

Rachel had caught Jacob's eye.

Jacob named his price – he said "***I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.***"

Laban thought that it would be better to give Rachel to Jacob than to another man, so he agreed.

Jacob worked for Laban for the next seven years. **“And they seemed unto him but a few days, for he love he had to her.”**

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.” ²² Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. ²³ Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her. ²⁴ Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. ²⁵ So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?” ²⁶ But Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.” ²⁸ Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ²⁹ Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. ³⁰ So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years. (Genesis 29:21-30)

Jacob began to reap some of what he had sown in his life.

Remember, how he had through deceptive means defrauded his brother, Esau.

Now, Laban was pulling a fast one on Jacob.

Upon fulfillment of the seven years, Jacob requested his wife as had been agreed.

Laban prepared a great wedding feast.

When night came, Laban sent Leah and not Rachel in unto Jacob.

In the darkness, Jacob did not realize who he was sleeping with. **“And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah.”**

In his frustration, he confronted Laban and demanded to know what was going on.

Laban then slyly informed him that the custom of that region was to give the firstborn daughter in marriage first.

This indeed was a custom in that area at that time.

However, Laban had certainly deceived Jacob.

He was getting some of his own medicine.

Indeed, **“whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”**

Laban told Jacob to **“fulfill her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.”**

The week referred to likely was a customary “honeymoon” period.

Laban had deceptively accomplished two objectives. First, he had secured a husband for both of his daughters, even his less desirable one Leah. Secondly, he had secured what evidently was a good employee for essentially no wages.

Laban also gave to each of his daughters a maid servant in Zilpah for Leah and Bilhah for Rachel.

Genesis 29 : 30-31 – 30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. 31 And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.

Jacob then „**married**“ Rachel.

It is no surprise, “**he loved also Rachel more than Leah.**”

He had loved Rachel for seven years, and he was not happy in having a second wife forced upon him without his consent.

³¹ Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, “Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.” ³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.” So she named him Simeon. ³⁴ She conceived again and bore a son and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore he was named Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

This name of this first born of Jacob has the sense “**see a son**” or “**behold, a son**”.

Leah knew that she was not her husband’s first choice.

She said, “**Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction, now therefore my husband will love me.**”

In naming her son Reuben, (**behold, a son**), she may have also have meant to gloat over her sister and now rival wife, Rachel.

Leah conceived again and named her next son **Simeon** which means “**heard**” or “**God heard**”.

The bitterness of her soul was still evident.

She noted that “**the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also.**”

The idea of hatred here is relative, and really it has the idea of not being loved.

Leah conceived again and bore another son whom she named **Levi**.

Levi has the sense of being “**joined**”.

Her heart is evident as she noted, “**Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons.**”

Leah then named her fourth son, **Judah** because she said, “**Now will I praise the LORD.**”

The name Judah means “**praise**” or “**praised**”.

Leah evidently became temporarily infertile.