

**Episode:** Genesis & Job Series No. 10

**Narrator:** Rachel

**Primary Scriptures:** Genesis 28-34

**Story Summary:** Jacob acquires two wives; Jacob has twelve sons; Jacob and Esau meet again

**Location:** Paddan Aram, Canaan

**Time:** Jacob's birth is probably 2050 - 1900 BC

**Suggested Memory Scriptures:** Genesis 28:14-15; 30:27; 31:32; 32:28; 34:30

The setting: Jacob will inherit the majority of his father's fabulous wealth. He is a mama's boy who has to leave town because of his threatening twin brother and is instructed to go back to the area of his family's origin to marry a relative of his Uncle Laban. Jacob may or may not be aware that Laban knows Jacob is wealthy and cannot wait to take advantage of him... which will be ironic because Laban is even more tricky than Jacob. Unless God steps in, the situation promises to be treacherous for Jacob.

God looks out for Jacob from the beginning. As Jacob travels back to his family's land of origin, God reiterates that his promises to Abraham will come true through Jacob. Jacob agrees to accept God as his own god and sets up a pillar at Bethel as a sign.

When Jacob arrives at Paddan Aram, he immediately meets his cousin Rachel and falls in love with her. Her father, Laban, enters the situation and the chaos begins. After a month, Laban and Jacob agree that Jacob will work for Laban for seven years and receive Rachel as his wife, purposely agreeing to bypass Rachel's older sister, Leah.

After seven years, Laban tricks Jacob into marrying Leah. Jacob had to succumb and agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. During that seven years, Jacob had eleven sons and at least one daughter through his two wives and their two handmaidens. Just as Jacob had been a favorite, and his father had been a favorite, Rachel was the favorite. So, her son, Joseph, was a favorite, too.

A few years after the second seven years, Jacob determined to take his family and his considerable possessions back to his home in Canaan. As usual the situation entails deceit and trickery. One part of the story deserves special attention. As they sneaked away, Rachel stole her "family's gods."<sup>1</sup> As the story unfolds, it is clear that the family's gods were very important. Apparently, Jacob agreed that these gods had power, even though he personally had accepted God as his god. As a point of interest, this is the first time that "gods" are mentioned in the Bible. However, Joshua indicates that Abraham's family worshiped gods before moving from Ur.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 31:19

<sup>2</sup> Joshua 24:2

### Discussion Questions:

1. There is no record that Isaac ever met Laban. What do you think Abraham's servant told Isaac about Laban? What do you think Isaac told Jacob about Laban?
  2. What can you infer from Genesis 29:31?
  3. Genesis 31:19 is the first time that "gods" are mentioned in the Bible. Read Joshua 24:2. What can you infer about the lands where Abraham came from? In Genesis 35:4, Jacob and his family bury their gods. Do you think this ended their attraction to other gods?
  4. Genesis 34:31 shows the sons of Jacob acting to avenge their sister. Did they do this to protect her honor or the honor of their clan? In modern times, how do people protect their honor?
2. In this case, God controlled the ability for Leah to conceive. You do not have to infer that he kept Rachel childless, or that he always controls everybody's ability to have children.

### Application Questions:

1. Esau was angry with his parents for favoring his brother, Jacob. To spite them, he married some Ishmaelite women. Have you ever made bad choices out of jealousy or spite? What is the meaning of the old saying, "He would cut off his nose to spite his face"?
2. Genesis 28:22 shows Jacob promising to give God a tenth under certain conditions. Knowing Jacob to be a trickster, how do you suspect he might have tried to get around this promise? Do you ever try to maneuver your way around your promises to God?
3. Genesis 29:30 shows that Jacob plays favorites among his wives, just as his parents had played favorites with their children. Is your family history one of playing favorites or not? How has that affected your family dynamics?
4. Genesis 32:28 shows God changing the name of Jacob because he successfully contended with God. Based on your faithfulness, how would God change your name?

### Application Questions for Teens:

1. Genesis 28:20-22 shows Jacob accepting God as his god...conditionally. Do you ever place conditions before you decide to trust God or accept him as your God?
2. Genesis 31:1 shows that Laban and his sons did not trust Jacob. Have you found that people who are not trustworthy are often the first ones not to trust others?
3. Genesis 31:32 shows how important false gods were to Jacob and Laban. What kind of false gods are important to you and your friends? How powerful are these gods? (i.e. phones, video games, popularity, etc.)
4. Genesis 34:13 shows Jacob's sons acting deceitfully. Do you think they learned that from their parents? Have you found yourself following in your footsteps?