

Week of Sunday July 26, 2020  
Bible Study for Seventh Sunday after Pentecost  
Genesis 29:15-28

The reading appointed for Sunday in the semi-continuous series of the lectionary are a few short verses from a much greater story of part of Jacob's life. You will recall that Jacob deceived his brother Esau in very significant and life-changing ways. Because of this and assisted by his mother, Rebekah, he is fleeing his brother's wrath – he is running away back to the home of his grandfather's people, purportedly to find a wife. So, I would urge you to sit back and read the larger narrative that follows last week's reading of Jacob's Dream. Read Genesis 29-31 to get a sense of the whole story of this part of Jacob's life. I might suggest that you read this in one sitting and it may be easier for you to read this in one of the paraphrases, such as The Message (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+29+-+31&version=MSG>) or The Living Bible <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+29+-+31&version=TLB>.

It is difficult to summarize the many events in this three chapters of Scripture. Let me try in abbreviated form. (read down the first column and then go to the second.)

After the dream, Jacob comes to a well.	Score: Leah = 6; her handmaid = 2; Rachel's handmaid = 2; Rachel = 0
Jacob sees Rachel and is smitten.	Jacob deals with Laban again that he may go back to his home. What is a fitting reward for years of labor? They come up with a way of dividing the flocks
Jacob meets Rachel's father (his uncle, Laban)	Jacob remembers his trickster ways and arranges for rapid proliferation of the share of the flock that was to be his – every speckled and spotted animal
Laban and Jacob strike a deal – 7 years labor for Rachel to be his wife	Laban tried to trick him by cherry-picking the flock and then fleeing
At the end of 7 years, Jacob asks for Rachel and there is a great feast for the wedding.	Jacob's trick was better than Laban's
Jacob is tricked! Laban brings Leah instead.	Laban's sons are angry
They strike another deal – 7 more years for Rachel	Jacob convinces Leah and Rachel to leave their father and go with him. They flee.
Jacob's household was Leah, Rachel, and their handmaids, Zilpah and Bilhah.	Laban chases after them, catches up and there is a confrontation. Laban accuses Jacob of stealing household "gods" – likely small idols. Searched but couldn't find them (Rachel was hiding them)
The childbearing begins with Leah having 4	Jacob speaks his mind. Laban wants a truce.
Rachel was barren and envious; blames Jacob. Tells him to go into her handmaid, Bilhah.	They built a rock pile as sign of their agreement. "God watch each of us to be sure we keep the truce."
Bilhah has 2.	They ate a meal, spent the night at this place and Laban left the next day to go back home.
Confusing story about a deal for some mandrakes and Jacob is with Leah again	
She has 2 more.	[Coming next week on the "Saga of Jacob" – Jacob is pursued by his brother Esau from whom he has been fleeing for decades.]

Oh my goodness! This tends to read like a modern day soap opera, doesn't it? And there is even more melodrama ahead. What do you make of this? What questions do you have about it? Are there parts of this about which you are skeptical? It is likely that the events we read about in Genesis were assembled into a book during or shortly after the Babylonian Exile. How might that have contributed to this narrative?

Who in this story do you most identify with? And who do you least identify with? "Say some more about that."

What do you think our forebears in faith want us to take away from this dramatic narrative? Is there something that speaks to you as you read it?

The story of Jacob is filled with deception and tricks and wrestlings and rivalry. (And next week we will read of yet another wrestling on Jacob's part – this time with God.) List them. Then review the list. Rather ironic, isn't it? What do you make of this?

Let us pray: *Heavenly Father, as we hear the story of Jacob we are amazed at its intricacies, its Tomfoolery, and it seems preposterous to us. Lord, help us to find our place in this story and help us to find your words of promise and covenant to each one. Give us clarity of thinking and sensitivity of heart as we meditate on these stories of the Ancients. Thank you for their witness. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*

# Abraham's Family Tree

