

A Good Shepherd
Sacred Story

Jacob and Rachel

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2nd Edition
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JACOB AND RACHEL. ... MATERIALS

- medium wicker basket to hold:
 - wooden figure of Jacob
 - wooden figure of Rachel
 - wooden figure of Leah
 - wooden figure of Laban
 - wooden onlooker figure



Jacob



Rachel



Leah



Laban



Onlooker

JACOB AND RACHEL. ... GENESIS 29:1-30

ACTIONS

After speaking, stand and get the story from the shelf. Return to the circle and sit down, placing the basket next to you.

During the few seconds of silence, gently stroke one or more of the wooden figures to center yourself and the children.

Place the Jacob figure on the left side of the storytelling area and then move it to the center.

Place the onlooker near Jacob, on the left side.

Place the Laban figure to the right side of the storytelling area.

Place the Rachel figure close to the Jacob figure, on the right.

Move the Rachel figure to the right next to Laban.

Move Laban near Jacob, then move both men back to the left of Rachel.

Touch the Laban figure as you speak.

Place the Leah figure next to Rachel, on the right.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you make silence with me so I can find all the words to this story of God's people?

Jacob left the place called Bethel and kept going to a land that was in the east.

When he arrived there he saw some people who were watering their flocks of sheep by the well.

As he talked with the people he found that they knew his Uncle Laban.

Later that day, Rachel, one of Laban's daughters came to the well.

When she found out who he was she ran home to tell her father.

Laban then invited Jacob to stay with them.

After Jacob had lived there a month, Laban said to him, "It's not right that you should work for me for nothing. How much should I pay you?"

Jacob had gotten to know Rachel and her sister, Leah, very well in that month.

Touch the Rachel figure and move her slightly apart from the group; away from you.

Touch the Jacob figure as you speak:.

Move Jacob a little to the left of Laban and Leah.

Bring the Jacob figure back next to Laban and Leah.

First touch Rachel, but then move Leah near to Jacob on his left.

Turn Jacob to face Laban.

Turn Laban to face Jacob.

Touch the Rachel figure as you speak.

Move Jacob to stand next to Rachel.

Smile slightly as you touch the Laban figure.

He loved Rachel the most, partly because she was very beautiful.

So he told Laban, "I will work for you for seven years if you will then give me Rachel for my wife."

Laban agreed and Jacob worked for seven years - though to him they went very fast.

When his seven years were finished there was a wedding.

But Laban tricked Jacob and gave him his daughter Leah, instead of Rachel.

Jacob was very angry the next morning when he found out that he'd been tricked.

Laban told him that it wasn't right, in his country, to have the younger daughter marry before the older daughter.

But he told Jacob that if he would work another seven years then he could also have Rachel as his wife.

So Rachel became Jacob's wife, too. He loved her more than Leah.

And Jacob worked another seven years for Laban.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how Leah felt when Jacob wanted Rachel and not her?

I wonder how Leah felt when her father used her to trick Jacob?

I wonder which sister was smarter, Leah or Rachel?

I wonder if Rachel was angry at her father or Leah?

I wonder if someone has made you angry when they tricked you?

Carefully place all the wooden figures back into the basket.

Watch carefully how I put these figures away so you will know how to handle them if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

After speaking, stand and carry the basket back to its shelf. After placing the basket on the shelf return to the circle and sit down.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will be able to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Dismiss the children ONLY after everyone has had an opportunity to choose their work.

I wonder what you will make your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each of us will do.

JACOB AND RACHEL. ... TEACHER HELPS

The trickster is tricked! The reader can't help but smile at the one who so artfully tricked both his brother and his father being tricked by his Uncle Laban. Even Yahweh's chosen can make mistakes and be shown a fool. Later, the tricking will come full circle, but for now we have to chuckle with Laban at the trick he has pulled on Jacob.

The sadness of the story centers on the women. The story leads us to believe that one woman is more acceptable than the other because she is prettier than her sister. The story also tells us the women were willing to be used by their father as part of the trick. Although we must accept these standards and mores, which were prevalent during this historical time period and are typical of the literature of the Old Testament, we need not encourage these same standards and mores in our children today. We need to give boys and girls in our classes an understanding that a girl's self esteem and worth need not be tied to society's judgment of her appearance. If the story is told carefully we can perhaps help the children see that it is when Jacob seeks only the woman whose appearance is pleasing that he gets what he doesn't want. Jacob is tricked by his own greed.

The wondering questions begin by exploring the feelings of Rachel and Leah. We have no clue as to how they related to each other prior to this event, but we may wonder about their feelings toward each other after it happened. We next wonder about who was smarter, Rachel or Leah? The question is posed to help all who hear the story wonder about something besides how the two sisters looked. In Hebrew, even the names are indicative of looks. Leah means "cow", while Rachel means "ewe". (The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible, edited by Charles Laymon, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987, p.22) Next, we wonder how Rachel felt about Laban, and the fact that she, too was used by him. The last question is an attempt to bring the story close to home by talking about someone making each of us angry by tricking us or using us. Children will often share about friends or siblings who tried to put the blame on them. The older children will often share about friends talking behind their backs or making them look bad.

There are two important messages. The first is about Jacob, who was finally given a dose of his own medicine by Laban. The second, is about Jacob's vulnerability. Even though he was willing to hurt both father and brother with his lies, he loved Rachel enough to work fourteen years for her. Seeking to faithfully raise our children means to carry the message of this story, but to couch it in the wonderment of a new way to think about what is really important in relationships.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Think about a time when you tricked someone. How did you feel about what you had done?

Imagine that you are Leah. You've been used by your father as part of a trick. How would you feel about your dad? How would you feel about Jacob and your sister?

Leah wasn't the one Jacob wanted. Think of a time when you know you were not the first choice a friend or sibling made. Think of being the last one picked for a team or the 3rd or 4th person called to go on an outing. How did you feel?

In this story God blessed Leah with many children, but it appeared for a while that Rachel would have none. Was the trick on Jacob in any way Rachel's fault? Why would she not have been blessed? Does it mean that God loves us less when God gives other people things we would like to have?