

**The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.
The Tree of Life for week ending 07/21/02.**

“A great sign appeared in heaven...”

Part 4

A Profile of Jacob

Beware of the con-artists. Gen 29.

We have been noting Rev 12:1, *And a great sign appeared in heaven a woman [the woman is Israel] clothed with the sun [a reference to Jacob according to Gen 37:9-10], and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars.*

The moon, as we have seen, is a reference to the wives of Jacob and his mistresses who reflect him as the moon reflects the sun. The stars are the twelve tribes of Israel as we will note.

Gen 35:22-26, *And it came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob--the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun; the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin; and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali; and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher. These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram.*

Four woman brought forth the 12 tribes of Israel, two wives and two concubines.

Heb 11:21, we read in the corrected translation, *By means of doctrine resident in the soul Jacob,*

The Greek word for Jacob is *Iakob* which comes from the Hebrew word *Jaaqobh* which means heel-catcher, sup planter, one who overthrows by force, treachery or deception. His name was certainly prophetic, he was an opportunist and a con-artist. The interesting principle that we have been noting is that when the Lord first appeared to Moses, in Exo 3:6 He said, *“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*

In fact, this phrase is used throughout the word of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ quoted this passage in Mat 22:32, *“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”*

Why?

Because Satan hates when God can take a person like Jacob or Paul or you or me and yet with all of our weaknesses use us to glorify Him in the angelic conflict. Remember that in the angelic conflict, Satan tries to convince people that God is unfair, unjust and a God who is not merciful or gracious. Satan hates when the grace of God is glorified because it reveals the love and the mercy of God and how God is not unfair and unjust and how He would do everything for those whom He has created. In this dispensation of grace, the church-age, God demonstrates the fallacy of the satanic lie through people who receive abundant grace.

It's also important to understand why God calls the nation of Israel Jacob. Every time Israel went into apostasy God would remind them of His grace, mercy and justice. Jacob had a lot of faults and failures and he utilized everything to his own advantage. We noted in Gen 25, he used his brother's hunger to purchase the birthright. The birthright included a double portion of blessing from the family, Deu 21:17, the rulership of the entire family, Gen 27:29, as well as the title to the family blessing from God, Gen 27:4, 28-29. However, remember, even if you are a believer and a child of God you still reap what you sow. The natural law is what goes around comes around.

So, it's time for Jacob to get a taste of his own medicine so let's look at the passage that describes this.

After Jacob tried to obtain Esau's birthright for just one bowl of lentil soup, his twin brother Esau vowed to kill him, (Gen 27:41-44). So Jacob ran away to Haran to his uncle Laban.

And therefore, we read in Gen 29:1-2, ***Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east. And he looked, and saw 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.***

In the East, the wells are still covered with large boulders to prevent the water from becoming polluted.

Gen 29:3-6, ***When all the flocks were gathered there, they [more than one of them] would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and [then they would] put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well. And Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." And he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and behold, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep."***

These men would gather together at this well and wait for Rachel to come with the sheep. And why not because of what the Holy Spirit says about her in verse 17, she had a fantastic body, symmetry and she was also beautiful. As soon as he found out that Rachel had a beautiful face and body and that she was coming, he immediately thought that this could be the one. So he did what any normal man would do, he tried to get the others out of the vicinity so that he could be alone with her.

Jacob is a very deceitful person even when he's not trying to be. He doesn't care about the sheep, he cares about the woman who is coming with the sheep.

Gen 29:7-10, ***And 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." But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they [all of the men] roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep." While he was still speaking with them Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came about, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went up, and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.***

Gen 29:11, ***Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept.***

So, he figured he had come to the right place and that she was the one who would be given to him in marriage.

Gen 29:12, ***And 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.***

She took off, and that was pretty smart, she not only had a gorgeous figure and a beautiful face, but like many beautiful women, she was also **smart**, so she left the flock behind for Jacob to take care of!

Gen 29:13-14, ***So it came about, when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he [Jacob] related to Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.***

During this month Jacob worked with the flocks, and why not, remember verse 9, ***Rachel was a shepherdess.***

So, in verse 14, Laban offers him a job. Laban realized that Jacob would eventually come into a substantial inheritance and he also had observed by this time Jacob's obvious love for his daughter Rachel, so uncle Laban had a plan.

Gen 29:15, ***Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative [Oh God, right there an alarm should have gone off], "Because you are my relative should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"***

Uncle Laban recognized there would be many advantages to having Jacob as a son-in-law. After all, he knew that his sister Rebekah who married Isaac was very wealthy and it would only be a matter of time before Jacob received all that wealth! Therefore, he wanted to bind Jacob to him in some way but, in a rather crafty manner, let Jacob name the terms, anticipating that because of Jacob's desire for Rachel, he would get a better bargain this way.

Gen 29:16-17, *Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.*

Rachel was much more beautiful than Leah.

Gen 29:18, *Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."*

Seven years of free service by a man who was an exceptional worker was surely a fine deal for Laban, especially in view of the fact that he would have been happy to have Jacob marry into the family regardless.

Gen 29:19-21, *And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her."*

Jacob made a mistake when he said this, he should have said "Give me Rachel." Jacob finally had to ask for her because Laban would have never brought it up. Laban devised a scheme, resolving to substitute Leah for Rachel on the wedding night. He figured because Jacob loved Rachel so much that he could extract another seven-year period of free service from Jacob, as well as solve the problem of getting a husband for Leah at the same time. He also knew that if Jacob refused that he could easily find a husband for Rachel!

Gen 29:22, *And Laban gathered all the men of the place, and made a feast.*

At the proper time, when the wedding formalities had been observed, Laban presented his daughter to Jacob as his wife. Now comes the time when the deceiver is deceived. The clash of these two deceivers and their struggle for supremacy is one of the greatest battles in the book of Genesis.

Laban's first chance to really practice his treachery takes place on the wedding night! Laban invited "*all the men of the place*" to the marriage banquet so that when the prank played on Jacob becomes known to all, it will not be easy for Jacob to cast off Leah. Laban will have disposed advantageously of a daughter who perhaps none would have desired.

Gen 29:23, *Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her.*

There are some interesting correlations here, when Jacob deceived his father Isaac, he pretended to be the elder when he was the younger.

Now, he thinks he's getting the younger when in fact he is getting the elder!

Gen 29:24-25, *Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. 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?"*

Isn't that interesting?

"It's alright that I deceive my father but how could someone deceive me"?

The tables are turned now and Jacob says in effect, "it's an awful thing to deceive someone."

It is time for Jacob to get a taste of his own medicine so let's look at the passage which describes this.

Gen 29:25, *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?"*

Remember in Gen 27 how Jacob had deceived his father Isaac?

Now, in Gen 29:25, Jacob, who liked to deceive others but didn't like to be deceived by others said, *Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"*

Jacob now feels and knows what it's like to have deceit practiced on him concerning something that is extremely important and precious.

What goes around comes around.

Gen 29:26, ***But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born."***

Uncle Laban conveniently forgot to tell Jacob about the fine print in the contract. Notice how smooth Laban was, he certainly should have explained this to Jacob at the time of his proposal, but he kept it to himself, not wanting to lose the opportunity to have Jacob work for him and to get him into the family.

Gen 29:27, ***"Complete the week of this one [the seven day marriage celebration], and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."***

So there is the principle of divine retribution. First of all, let me remind you about the principle of rebound, 1Jo 1:9, ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***

There never was a believer who named a known sin to God privately, without any system of human works, or human power, or gimmicks, who was not immediately forgiven. No matter how great the sin or sins, God is faithful, God is just, and God is dependable.

The alternative to rebound of course is suffering for divine discipline, Heb 12:6. However, there are many things that happen to a believer who refuses to rebound that has nothing to do with God getting them back or making them pay. The point is that there are a lot of things which happen to believers that come from their own negative decisions and not from God.

This is why Job 4:8 says ***According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity And those who sow trouble harvest it.***

That is not divine discipline. It may be divine retribution but divine retribution comes from the law of volitional responsibility or reaping what we sow, Gal 6:7.

Laban's treatment of Jacob we see the deceiver deceived. This principle that whatsoever a man soweth *that shall* he also reap is written across the pages of the word of God.

This is not paying for your sins, this is reaping what you sow because you have refused to rebound. This is the principle of what goes around comes around.

Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, gave orders that every son of the Hebrews should be *drowned*, Exo 1:22.

Therefore, he reaped what he sowed because in Exo 12:29, his firstborn son died and in Exo 14:28, he was drowned in the Red Sea.

In Num 16:2-3, Korah, the drummer boy in Israel, caused a gap, a division or a crack in the congregation of Israel, and so God made a gap in the earth to swallow him and his followers, Num 16:30.

A man called Adoni-bezek who was responsible for seventy kings having their thumbs and their big toes cut off, Judges chapter one.

Saul of Tarsus stood by and consented to the stoning of Stephen, in Act 7:58 ***And when they had driven him [Stephen] out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.***

And later we read that at Lystra the Jews stoned Paul in Act 14:19, ***But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.***

A most striking example of what men term "poetic justice" is the case of Jacob himself. First, he deceived his father and was, in turn, deceived by his father-in-law. Jacob's little game of deceiving someone caught up with him. Jacob faked that he was the elder when, in fact, he was the younger, and deceived his father Isaac.

Therefore, the divine retribution was that on his wedding night instead of receiving the younger daughter he

received the elder for his wife. In fact, in deceiving Jacob by giving him the older daughter Leah, Laban also tricked his younger daughter Rachel who was expecting to be married to Jacob, therefore, later we find Rachel tricking Laban in Gen 31:35.

What goes around comes around.

Jacob's favorite son was Joseph and all the other sons were jealous of him.

Therefore, they wanted to get rid of him and faked his death and deceived their father Jacob.

Jacob's sons deceived him by dipping the coat of Joseph in the blood of "goats" and making him believe an evil beast had devoured him!

Jacob deceived Isaac in regard to his *favorite son* Esau, and so was Jacob deceived in regard to his *favorite son*, Joseph.

When a person continues to make negative decisions and they even hurt others, Gal 6:7, ***Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.***

There are natural laws that God has provided which take care of all the injustices in life. And they will all be taken care of in God's timing. If there is rebound, there can be recovery, if not, it will catch up with you, it's just a matter of time.

We will summarize the remainder of this chapter and the next two in order to understand what kind of life Jacob had and why Satan hates when God can take a man like Jacob and make something great out of him. Rachel was affected by this deception in one way or another, whether she had been commanded by her father to go along with this deception or whether she had to be forced to do it, we simply do not know. And by the way, it could not have been easy for Leah, either. Though she wanted a husband, and harbored a secret love for Jacob, Leah knew that Jacob really loved Rachel.

Jacob must have been angry and bitter, both with Leah and Laban. However, he must also have recognized the similarity between this situation and the deception he had played on his father Isaac and his brother Esau.

At the first opportunity, he confronted Laban with a demand for an explanation. And Laban responded with his rehearsed answer that the older sister must always be the first to wed.

And then he proposed his new bargain. If Jacob would fulfill Leah's wedding week, Laban would then give him Rachel also, providing Jacob serve Uncle Laban another seven years.

Laban really reveals how wicked and rotten he really is.

If Jacob had just rebounded from his deception over his father and stayed in the promise land none of this would have happened.

So in Gen 29:28-30, ***And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.***

Uncle Laban never cheated Jacob again, although he tried. And not only did Jacob take uncle Laban's two daughters but he took the best part of uncle Laban's cattle.

Uncle Laban made a great mistake when he started cheating his talented nephew because his talented nephew then had no qualms about taking uncle Laban to the cleaners. He took his daughters and the balance of his wealth.

All of us at some time or another are going to bump into a Jacob or Laban in this life. This world is filled with Laban's and reversionistic Jacob's. They are generally people with pleasing personalities.

Being people smart is no defense against the con-artists's of this life. Neither of course is spiritual maturity for David was one of the greatest believers of all time and in the state of spiritual maturity he was conned by certain individuals as well.

It is certainly a true factor of life and it is probably good for anyone in life to be taken in at sometime by a Laban because there are so many things to learn.

For example, not to react, not to be bitter, vindictive, implacable or full of vengeance. Sometimes greatness in business or in a profession or in the spiritual life or even in social life are measured in terms of Laban testing. All of us at sometime will fail because it's inevitable that the very thing that makes us strong, honor and integrity, also makes us vulnerable and even sometimes weak.