

BIBLE LESSON # 14

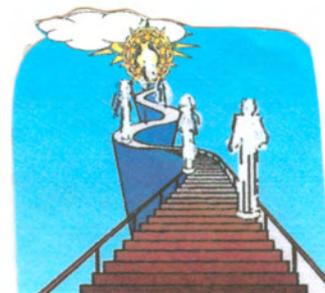
1.

Genesis 28-29

Jacob had to leave his home and family and travel far to the north to stay with his uncle Laban. Do you remember why Jacob had to leave home? His brother Esau wanted to kill him, for Jacob had received the blessings of his father that Esau thought should have been his (even though Esau had sold his birthright to Jacob for some food long ago).

Jacob no doubt was a little homesick and scared, for he had never traveled far from home before. After walking all day Jacob finally found a resting place to stop and eat some of the food his mother had packed for him. It was growing dark and there were weeds and thistles on the ground. Jacob found a bare spot and lay down with a large stone under his head for a pillow. That would be a pretty uncomfortable pillow, wouldn't it? That night Jacob had a strange dream. He dreamed that he saw a tall stairway leading into heaven. On the stairs were angels going up and down and God was standing at the top of the stairs.

Jacob heard God saying "I am the God of your fathers, Abraham and Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be as many as the dust of the ground." That would be a lot of people, wouldn't it?

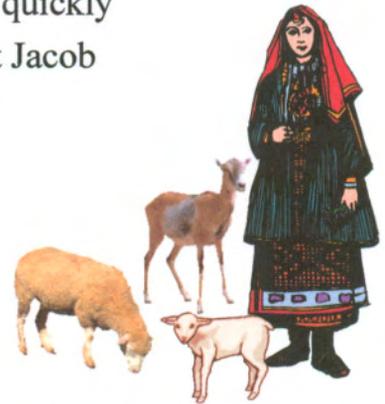


God then said, "all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you and your descendants," (Jacob's descendants were the Jewish people and today they live in that same land where Jacob was sleeping that night). Then God said, "I will be with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land." This made Jacob feel much better now. He no longer needed to be afraid or lonesome, for God would be with him and take care of him.

In those days people carried small leather bottles of oil with them for special uses, like putting on wounds or for religious purposes, like pouring on an altar when making sacrifices. The next morning when Jacob woke up, he knew this was a very special place. Jacob took his bottle of oil and setting up his rock pillow, he poured some oil over to anoint the rock and mark the place where he had the special dream. Then Jacob named the place "Bethel," which means "house of God." Jacob wanted to remember where this place was so he could set up an altar there when he returned to his home.

As Jacob packed the blankets on his donkey, he wondered how long before he would return to this spot. Jacob didn't realize it would be many years before he would ever see this place again.

After many days Jacob reached the town of Haran where his uncle lived. Jacob didn't know how to get to his uncle's home, so he stopped by a well where some shepherds were sitting near their flocks of sheep. Jacob wondered why they were sitting there instead of watering their sheep, so he went up to one shepherd boy and asked him. The boy answered, "we have to wait for all the shepherds to arrive, there's a heavy stone over the well and we can't move it until the others get here to help us." Then Jacob asked the young man if he knew a man named Laban. "Yes, I know Laban and here comes Laban's daughter, Rachel now." Jacob looked up and there was a very pretty shepherd girl leading a large flock of sheep to the well. Jacob went over to the well and with a mighty heave, he rolled the stone away from the well and he watered Rachel's sheep. Then Jacob told Rachel that he was her relative and he had come to visit his uncle Laban. Rachel was very excited and she quickly ran home to tell her father about Jacob. Laban came out to meet Jacob and told him he was welcome to come and stay with them.



That evening Laban's family all gathered around to hear the news about Jacob's parents, Isaac and Rebecca and his twin brother Esau. Rebecca was Laban's sister and they were anxious to hear how she was and what was going on with Jacob's family. Jacob met Laban's wife and his other daughter Leah as well as all of Laban's sons. That night they had a big feast to celebrate Jacob's visit.

Jacob stayed with his uncle's family and soon began to love Rachel who was not only very pretty, but also was very nice. Jacob had been with Laban's family for quite awhile when one day Laban asked Jacob if he would like to work for him, helping tend Laban's large flock of sheep and goats. "What kind of wages would you like to earn?" Laban asked Jacob. Jacob thought for a minute then said, "I don't want to earn any money from you, but I would like very much to marry your daughter, Rachel. I will work hard for you if you will let me marry Rachel." This pleased Laban as he really didn't want to have to pay Jacob any money. Laban told Jacob that if he would work for him for seven years then he could marry Rachel.

This seems like a long time to work before he could get married, doesn't it? However, Jacob was so much in love with Rachel that he didn't mind the long hours, cold nights and hot days that he had to work, because he knew he would get his lovely Rachel for a bride at the end of the time.

After seven long years, Jacob was finally able to marry Rachel. Laban had planned a big wedding feast with lots of food and drink and musicians and dancing. Jacob dressed in his best clothes and his bride came to the wedding with a beautiful embroidered dress and lots of bracelets and necklaces and a heavy veil over her face. She could see out through thin slits in the fabric, but no one could see her face. This was the custom of the time and the groom couldn't really see his bride until after the wedding ceremony was all over and he took her home. The bride and groom didn't even dance together in many of the weddings of the time. She would dance with the women of the wedding party and the groom would dance with his father-in-law and the other men. Some weddings are still like this in some countries.



When Jacob and his bride went to their home, the bride took off the veil, and guess what? It wasn't Rachel...it was her sister Leah that Jacob was married to. Jacob roared in anger, and dashed off to pound on Laban's door. "What do you mean by marrying me to Leah, I want Rachel, you tricked me, I don't want Leah I want Rachel for my bride!"

Laban tried to calm Jacob down, "It's our custom to marry off the oldest daughter first. Leah is the oldest and so she will be your first bride. You can work for me for another seven years and I'll also give you Rachel for your bride."

Does this sound like a good deal to you? It didn't sound like a fair deal at all to Jacob, but he dearly loved Rachel and wanted her for his wife, so he reluctantly agreed to work for another seven long years so he could also marry Rachel. Jacob had quite a houseful by time the seven years were over. Leah had six sons and a daughter and both Leah's and Rachel's maids each had two sons but even though Jacob loved Rachel more than any of the others in his household, poor Rachel was very sad, for she didn't have any children.

Jacob and his older sons would work all day and often through the night, taking care of the flocks and herds for Laban. One day Jacob told Laban he wanted to go home now. He had been living in Haran for fourteen years and he was sure by now Esau would have forgotten about killing him. Jacob was homesick and wanted to see his mother and father and raise his family in his own land that God had promised him.

Laban didn't want to lose his good worker, so he told Jacob, "Why don't you stay with me for another six or seven years and you can build up a flock of sheep and goats for yourself. I tell you what I'll do, everytime a sheep or goat has a speckled or spotted lamb you can take that one for your own. You'll be able to go home with some flocks and herds of your own, wouldn't that be good?"

Jacob thought it over and decided it really would be nice to have some sheep and goats to set up a farm of his own when he got back to the promised land. So Jacob said he would work for Laban and he would keep all the speckled and spotted sheep and goats. Laban probably thought this was a good deal as he would still get Jacob to take care of his flocks and herds and Jacob would only get a few of the poorest kind of sheep for his wages.



Does it seem like Laban was a man who used trickery to get ahead in his dealings with people? Many people want more and more money or wealth or sheep and goats and don't care how they get wealthy. Do you think this is the kind of people God wants in his kingdom? In the book of James, he writes: "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, and by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom." Jacob tried to live right and humbly worked for Laban even though Laban tricked him several times in order to get ahead. James also says, "where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every evil practice." Laban seems to have had selfish ambition didn't he? In our next lesson we'll see whether he got ahead or behind because of it.

Your memory verse for this lesson is:

"Peacemakers who plant in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

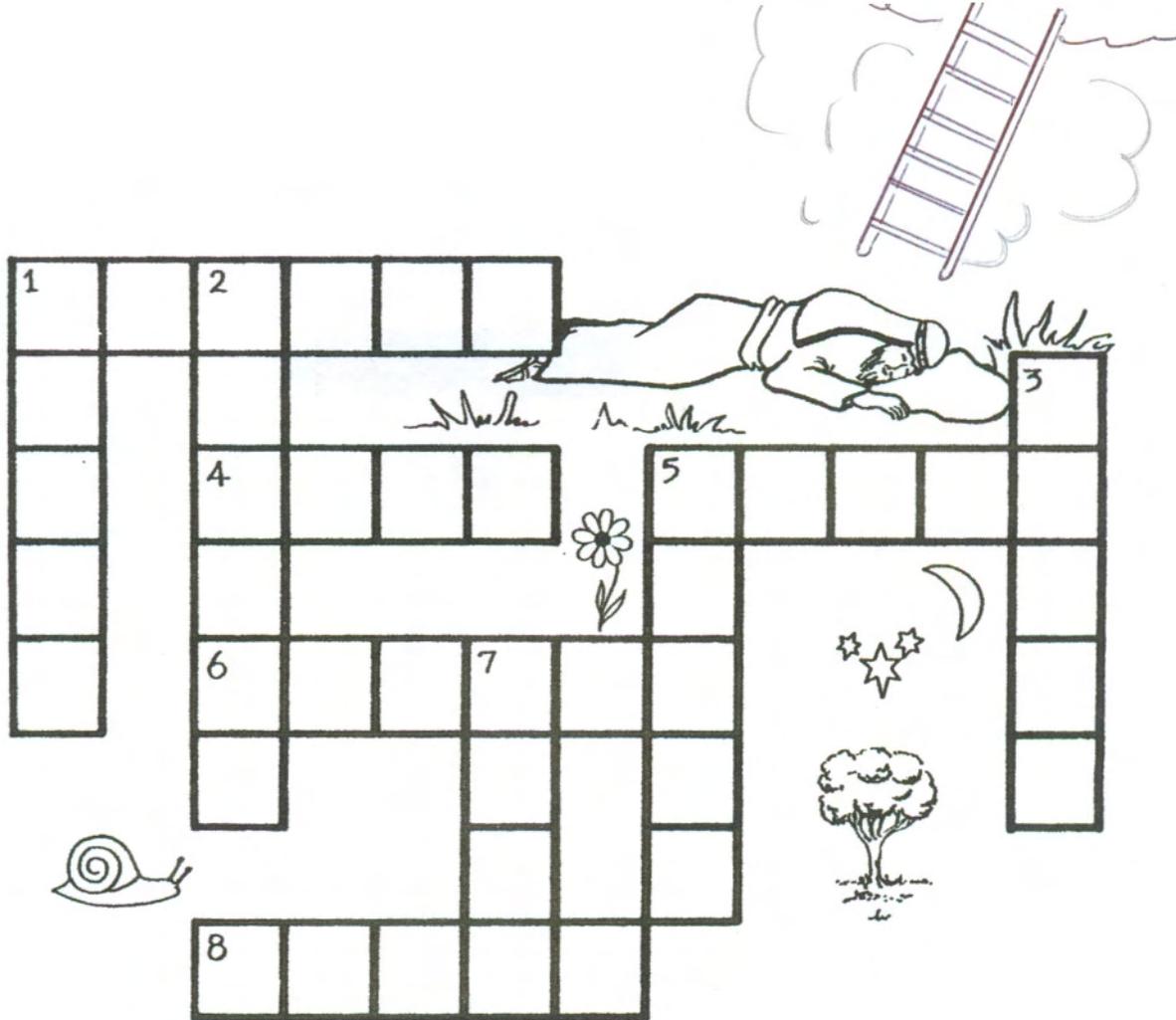
James 3:18 When you have learned it, put an X in the golden box.



Jacob tried to live in peace with Laban and his family and in our next lesson we'll see if he harvested something good because of the way he lived and followed God's ways.

Question Page

1. Why did Jacob leave his home and travel to Haran?
2. What did Jacob use for a pillow when he stopped for the night?
3. What did Jacob do with his pillow the next morning?
4. What did Jacob dream about?
5. What did God promise Jacob in the dream? (a) a place in heaven (b) the land where he was sleeping (c) Much wealth and sheep and goats
6. Can you remember anything else God promised Jacob?
7. Where did Jacob stop when he got close to Haran?
8. Why didn't the shepherds water their sheep at the well?
9. How did Jacob manage to water Rachel's sheep?
10. How many daughters did Laban have? What were their names?
11. Why didn't Jacob know which bride he was marrying?
12. Was it right for Laban to trick Jacob?
13. How long did Jacob have to work in order to marry Rachel?
(a) 7 years (b) 10 years (c) 14 years (d) 20 years
14. Was Laban glad to have Jacob leave and go home? Why?
15. How does a person show if he is wise and understanding? (fill in the blanks)
By leading a G _____ L _____ and by D _____ D _____ of Humility (James 2:13)



Read Genesis 28:10-17 to work out these clues for the crossword.

Leaving Beer-Sheba, Jacob went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and decided to spend the **(5 across)** there because the sun had set. He placed his head on a **(3 down)** and went to sleep. He dreamed that a **(6 across)** was set on earth and it reached up to **(1 across)**; and **(2 down)** of God were ascending and descending on it. Above it was the Lord who said, "I am the Lord; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Your descendants shall be like the **(7 down)** of the earth, and shall spread about the West, East, **(5 down)** and **(8 across)**." Jacob awoke and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it. This is none other than the **(1 down)** of God, and this is the **(4 across)** of heaven."

Connect the dots to see something that Jacob did.



Decorate the beautiful bridal gown for Jacob's bride. Use some bright colors and give her some jewels and fancy decorations for her dress and veil and draw some hands and dancing feet for her.

What bride did Jacob marry - Leah or Rachel? Which did he want to marry?

Did he ever marry the one he wanted?

