

Lesson 3 – Rebekah, Leah, and Rachel

Introduction

The lesson this week will continue in the book of Genesis, examining the life of Rebekah who married Sarah's beloved son Isaac. You will then look at Leah and Rachel, the two women who married Rebekah's son Jacob.

One aspect of studying biblical narrative is to read the whole context of the narrative, not just looking at the event by itself, but looking at what took place before, as well as what followed. In this study of biblical women if you only read the exact verses that mention the woman's name, you will miss the circumstances of her life that contributed to her behavior and attitude. So then, please do not grow weary with the task of studying to develop the habit of **asking** God to help you every time you approach your time in the word. You will be strengthened as He instructs you, He will certainly equip you for whatever is ahead.

Do not let the repetition of some biblical narrative passages frustrate you. This repetition had a purpose, and sometimes it was simply to help the "hearer" of the word *remember* what the Holy Spirit directed the human author to record.

Please set aside time to meditate on God's word after you work on the lesson. When I take a walk or silently ride in the car God helps me understand the messages He has for me.

Day 1 – Genesis 24 - Rebekah

1. Genesis 22 introduced Rebekah and a record of her genealogy. After **praying** for God's strength, wisdom and assurance, open with these **observation questions** for today's lesson.

- Trying to understand Hebrew genealogy is seldom an easy task, so many of the names used in the ancient near east are unfamiliar to us today, and it is hard to tell which names are men's and which names are women's! Please read Genesis 11:27-29, 22:20-24, and 25:20 then draw a simple diagram of Isaac and Rebekah's "family tree."

Now as you read Genesis 24 answer these **observation questions**.

- What did Abraham plan for Isaac's marriage and what did this reveal about Abraham?
- What did Abraham's servant's prayer in Genesis 24:12 demonstrate?

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- Jot down the actions or words from Genesis 24 that would describe Rebekah and her attitude.

2. Please examine this word study for one of the **key words** in this lesson.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance, unless written in <i>italics</i>:	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
5650 Hebrew 'ebed Genesis 24:2	Servant , bondage, bondman, bond servant	Genesis 26:24

3. Look back at Genesis 15:2 to review what was shared about Abraham's servant. What did this tell you about this man and his relationship with Abraham?

4. How can you tell that Eliezer told Rebekah's family about God's covenant with Abraham?

5. In the culture of the ancient near east, a woman's brother was often the one who "arranged" her marriage. Among people of this era, a daughter was considered a man's salvation, because through her alliances, wealth could be obtained that would benefit the entire family. What was given to Rebekah and what was given to her family as part of the marriage agreement?

6. Think back to what you read in Genesis 24 and recall how Rebekah's family treated her. What does this tell you about Rebekah?

7. After the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah was agreed upon, Rebekah, her maids, Eliezer, and his men set off on the 450 mile journey to Canaan. Rebekah had consented to leave her Chaldean homeland to marry a Hebrew man who lived in the midst of the powerful Hittite nation. Imagine how she felt traveling all that distance betrothed to someone she had never met. This account of Rebekah and Isaac's marriage gives specific evidence of the differences in their culture and the culture of the 21st century.

At the time Rebekah lived, a marriage agreement was established between the families of the bride and groom, but there was no wedding ceremony following the agreement. The marriage was consummated as Isaac and Rebekah's marriage was consummated in Genesis 24:67. What does this verse tell you about Rebekah's role in Isaac's life as they began their marriage?

Please end in a time of **prayer** before the Lord God Almighty.

Day 2 – Genesis 25 and 26

1. Genesis 24 ended with Isaac taking Rebekah as his bride. Now you will study Rebekah as the mother of twin sons. Please **pray** and ask God to give you His infinite wisdom with today's lesson, trusting Him with His word. Now begin with reading Genesis 25:19-34 and completing these **observation questions**.

- What did Rebekah have in common with Sarah according to Genesis 25, and how did that situation change?
- Something very significant happened in Genesis 25:23. What did this mean to Rebekah?
- What was said about Rebekah and Isaac's twin sons in Genesis 25:25-28?
Esau: _____ Jacob: _____
- At the end of Genesis 25 you learn about Esau's willingness to sacrifice something of value. What was this, and why did he act in this way?

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- In Genesis 26:7-11 records an incident with another King Abimelech of the Philistines in Gerar. What did this incident bring to your mind from two separate chapters you studied earlier and what was behind Isaac's motivation?

2. Please examine these word studies for some **key words** in this lesson.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance, unless written in <i>italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
1471 Hebrew goy Genesis 25:23	Nations , (<i>often used as</i>) a foreign nation, hence a Gentile, heathen, people. <i>Sometimes used for the nation of Israel.</i>	Exodus 33:13
3816 Hebrew leom Genesis 25:23	Peoples , a community, nation	Genesis 27:29 (nations in <i>NASB</i>)
5647 Hebrew 'abad Genesis 25:23	Serve , enslave, keep in bondage	Genesis 27:29
3290 Hebrew ya'aqob Genesis 25:26	Jacob , heel catcher (i.e. supplanter), the Israelite patriarch	Genesis 32:28
8535 Hebrew tam Genesis 25:27	Peaceful , complete, (usually moral), pious, specifically gentle, dear, perfect, undefiled, upright, <i>quiet</i>	Used 13 times in the Old Testament. Job 1:1 (blameless in <i>NASB</i>)
1062 Hebrew bekorah Genesis 25:31	Birthright , the firstling of man or beast, abstract, primogeniture. <i>The sovereign of the family, who was the political successor.</i> ¹	Genesis 25:34, 27:36

3. The apostle Paul wrote about Rebekah's twins in Romans 9:10-13. Why did Paul make reference to this? Briefly record some of the facts to help you understand the contrast that was made.

The twins:

Esau:

Jacob:

What did Paul teach about God in the verses following Romans 9:13?

¹ George Matheson, *The Representative Women of the Bible*, New York, Hodder and Stoughton, 1907, p. 85.

A Closer Look at Isaac, Esau, and Jacob

- a. You might read Malachi 1:1-5 for additional teaching on the twin sons.
 God's judgment upon Esau: _____ Jacob: _____

b. Now please read Genesis 26:1-16. Even Abimilech knew the seriousness of Isaac's sin, for the punishment for adultery was death. God wanted to preserve marriage, and especially the line of the Messiah. What did God say to Isaac when He appeared to him in Genesis 26:24?

4. The family *birthright* was highly valued in the ancient near east, and provided a spiritual and political *blessing* to the recipient. Genesis 25 demonstrated God's sovereignty over mankind and His plan for Israel. God chose Jacob even though the established custom of birthright would have gone to Esau. God's provision for His people did not prevent Israel from having enemies.

The descendants of Ishmael are striving with Israel to this day. Esau formed the nation of Edom, south east of the Dead Sea, and remained a rival of the nation Israel for centuries. Can we really understand this?

The prophet Isaiah declared in Isaiah 55:8,9,11 that God's ways are not our ways, His thoughts are not our thoughts, and he reminded us that God's word that goes forth from God's mouth will not return to Him empty, without accomplishing what He desires.

Please read Genesis 26:34,35. What was Isaac and Rebekah's response to Esau's decision and why?

Now please turn to Hebrews 12:15-17 for a New Testament passage that provides a commentary of today's reading. What was taught about Rebekah's son Esau and why was he considered an example for the nation of Israel?

Please close in prayer **asking God** what He would have you do with the truths you studied in today's lesson.

A Closer Look at Jacob

What was Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22, and how was this different from the covenant God made with him?

2. Please examine these word studies for some **key words** in this lesson.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance, unless written in <i>italics</i> :	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
7045 Hebrew qelalah Genesis 27:12	Curse , vilification, accurse, accursed, cursing, <i>a reviling, a reproach. The opposite of blessing.</i>	Deuteronomy 30:1
1293 Hebrew berakah Genesis 27:35	Blessing , benediction, by implication prosperity, a liberal blessing. <i>The one who received the blessing took on the role of the "priest" in the family.</i> ²	Genesis 33:11 (present in <i>NIV</i>)
779 Hebrew arar Genesis 27:29 (The same word was used twice.)	Curse , to execrate, bitterly curse. <i>There are six words that mean "to curse," this has the meaning of binding with a "spell," and hemming in with obstacles.</i> ³	Genesis 3:14,17
1697 Hebrew dabar Genesis 27:34	Word , a matter (as spoken of), or a thing; chronicle, commandment, tiding.	Exodus 20:1

3. Jacob's comment to his mother in Genesis 27:12 showed his concern that he would be cursed rather than blessed by his father. Read again Genesis 25:23 to see Rebekah's motivation behind her plan. The truth is that the account in Genesis 27 showed that every member of Isaac's family sinned against God. Briefly describe each member's disobedience.
 Isaac's sin: Rebekah's sin: Esau's sin: Jacob's sin:

4. One aspect of the Hebrew culture that is critical to understanding Rebekah's life is the importance associated with giving one's word. The Hebrew word for *word (dabar)* was very important. When someone made a promise, or gave their *word* concerning something, it was a concrete declaration that could not be taken away or undone, and was taken seriously by everyone who was involved. The Old Testament prophets introduced God's proclamations with "the word of the Lord came to..." The Ten Commandments are actually ten declarations, ten statements, and in fact, ten *words* (the plural form of *dabar*). Read Genesis 27:33,34 and meditate on what took place in this incident.

² Matheson, *Ibid.*, p. 85.

³ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, Chattanooga, AMG Publishers, 1990, p. 1713.

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2. Please examine these word studies for some **key words** in this lesson.

Strong's # and Transliteration:	Definition from Strong's Concordance, unless written in <i>italics</i>:	Use of the word in other Scriptures:
1736 Hebrew duwday Genesis 30:14-16	Mandrakes , boiler or basket, also an aphrodisiac. <i>A poisonous herb, used in ancient times as medicine, also an aid to conceiving a child.</i> ⁴	This word is used once in the Old Testament: Song of Solomon 7:13
3478 Hebrew yisra'el Genesis 32:28	Israel , he will rule as God, a symbolic name for Jacob, also of Jacob's posterity	Genesis 33:20 Genesis 35:10

3. A custom in Mesopotamia made provision for an heir coming through a woman's servant. When the baby was being born, the servant was to sit upon the lap of her mistress, who would sit upon a birthing stool. Read Genesis 30:2-5 to see how Rachel's plan made mention of this ancient near east custom.

A Closer Look at Jacob

a. Briefly summarize Jacob's plan for success, according to Genesis 30:25-40?

b. What was recorded in Genesis 30:41-43, that showed the results of Jacob's plan?

c. Why did Jacob plan to leave Laban's home land and move back to Canaan according to Genesis 31:1-3?

⁴ *World Book Dictionary*, Chicago, World Book, Inc., 1985, p. 1264.

4. Now please read Genesis 31:30-35 to see the reference to household idols. This type of idol was kept by families who believed that the idols offered protection and the idols were worshipped at a family altar. For those who believed in Almighty God, owning household idols was considered to be idolatry, as it was religious “polygamy.” What does this incident in Genesis 30 tell you about Jacob’s family?

5. What was the agreement between Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31:43-55 and how did this affect Leah and Rachel?

6. Next week’s lesson will finish the study of Leah and Rachel, as well as move ahead to other women to complete the book of Genesis. I know this lesson has asked you to read a great deal of Scripture, but the lesson for this week is drawing to a close!

Please take the time to read Genesis 32 and 33, and jot down notes about the evidence shown here as to the power and faithfulness of God. Look also at what you learn about Jacob as well as what these chapters reveal about Jacob’s wives, Leah and Rachel.

God:

Jacob:

Leah and Rachel:

Proverbs 31:30 says, “Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that fears the Lord, she shall be praised.” To say someone “fears the Lord” in the Hebrew culture was a euphemism, or “a saying” that meant someone “kept God’s law” and followed after God’s righteousness.

Can you think of a hymn or chorus that you might sing as a tribute to God, acknowledging Him for the power He gives His children to follow Him and be obedient to His will.

