

Year A, Week 32 (July 6, 2008)

Genesis 29: 1-6, 3-30 Jacob Goes to Laban and Gets Married

Hymn suggestions: *Father Abraham* (calmly!); or *Shout to the North and the South*

Items Needed:

- grown Jacob figure
- two shepherd figures
- sheep
- blocks to make a well
- Laban figure
- Two different-looking female figures for Rachel and Leah

Directions: set out shepherds and sheep near a rough well made from blocks.

We've been talking about how God made a promise with his people. We learned that God chose Abraham and his wife Sarah. He sent them to a new place called Canaan, and he made a promise – or a covenant – with them. He told Abraham that one day he would have as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand at the beach.

God told Abraham, “This is my covenant. I will be your God, and you will be my people.”

Even though Abraham and Sarah were old when God made these promises, they did have a boy, whom they called Isaac. Later, Isaac had twin boys, Jacob and Esau.

Even though Esau was the oldest boy, Jacob was a trickster. First he tricked his brother into trading his birthright – the special privileges of an oldest son – for a bowl of stew. Then he tricked his father Isaac into giving Jacob the special blessing that was supposed to go to Esau.

In today's story, Jacob (*show Jacob figure*) has just had a dream in which God has told him once again that God will keep his covenant with his people. He told Jacob that he would be with him wherever he goes and that he will bring him back to his father's land.

Jacob's mother Rebekah was the one who told him to run away to escape his brother Esau. She told him to go stay with her brother Laban. In today's story, Jacob does go to Laban. (*Place Jacob figure near shepherds and well.*)

He walked back to the land that Abraham had left so long ago and noticed lots of flocks of sheep, well cared for. He saw some shepherds and learned that his uncle Laban lived nearby.

As they talked, a beautiful girl walked to the well. (*Add Rachel figure.*) It was Laban's daughter Rachel, leading Laban's sheep. Jacob rolled the lid off the well and watered Rachel's sheep. Then he kissed her! And he told her that he was her cousin, Rebekah's son.

She ran and told her father about Jacob. (*Take Rachel figure away.*) Laban ran to the well to meet Jacob. (*Add Laban figure to well.*) Laban hugged and kissed his nephew and invited him home.

Jacob lived with Laban a month and worked for him, so Laban said, “If you’re working for me, I should pay you something. How would you like to be rewarded for your work?”

Jacob was in love with Rachel – she was beautiful, much more lovely than her older sister Leah. So Jacob told his uncle, “I’ll work for you for seven years if you will let me marry Rachel.”

Laban agreed and Jacob worked seven years. But those years flew by because he was so in love with Rachel.

They had a big wedding with much celebration, but when Jacob woke up the morning after the wedding, he realized he had not married Rachel, but her older sister Leah! (*Add Leah figure.*)

He said to his uncle, “What have you done to me? We agreed that I would marry Rachel!” (*Show Laban.*)

Laban said, “Around here, the younger daughter cannot get married before the older one does. But if you’ll wait a week, we’ll have another wedding, and you can take Rachel as your second wife. And then you can work for me for another seven years.” This is what Jacob did.

Questions without Response:

- I wonder ... if that trickster Jacob deserved to be tricked for a change?
- I wonder ...if being tricked taught Jacob a lesson?
- I wonder ... if all these years later, Esau is still mad at Jacob? (Note: actually, he’s not, and later they are reunited.)