

# Jacob's Wives and Children

Genesis 29–35

For Ages 10–13

## Jacob Marries Leah and Rachel

When Jacob went to live with his uncle Laban, he fell in love with Rachel, Laban's younger daughter. He told Laban he would work seven years if he could marry her. Laban agreed. Jacob worked hard for those seven years, but on the wedding day, Laban tricked him. He gave Jacob Leah, his older daughter, instead. Jacob didn't know until the next morning!

Jacob was upset, but Laban told him he could marry Rachel too—if he worked another seven years. Jacob agreed. So now, Jacob had two wives: Leah and Rachel. That caused a lot of jealousy and competition between the sisters, and Jacob was caught in the middle. This situation wasn't Jacob's plan—but maybe now he started to understand how Esau felt when Jacob tricked him years earlier.

## Jacob's Children

Jacob had 12 sons and 1 daughter with four different women:

With Leah (Rachel's older sister):

- Reuben
- Simeon
- Levi
- Judah
- Issachar
- Zebulun

With Rachel (his favorite wife):

- Joseph
- Benjamin

With Rachel's servant, Bilhah:

- Dan
- Naphtali

With Leah's servant, Zilpah:

- Gad
- Asher

He also had a daughter named Dinah with Leah.

➡ These 12 sons would grow up to lead the 12 tribes of Israel—God's chosen people. Even though some of the mothers were servants, all the children were counted as full sons of Jacob. That means they were loved and included in God's promises.

### 🐑 The Flock Deal

After Joseph was born, Jacob told Laban he wanted to go home and provide for his own family. But Laban didn't want him to leave—Jacob had made Laban very rich! So Laban begged Jacob to stay and promised to pay him. Jacob reminded Laban that he had been honest, even though Laban had cheated him many times. Jacob agreed to stay another seven years, but he had a new deal:

👉 He would take care of all the spotted, speckled, and striped sheep and goats, and those animals would be his payment. But Laban was sneaky again. Instead of giving Jacob the spotted animals right away, Laban secretly gave them to his sons and sent them far away. He didn't want Jacob to get rich or run off. Still, Jacob said nothing. He didn't complain or fight. He trusted God.

### 🌈 Jacob's Dream

During mating season, Jacob had a dream from God. In the dream, he saw that the animals who mated were all spotted, speckled, or striped. Then the Angel of God spoke:

"Look up and see: all the males that are mating with the flocks are streaked, spotted, and speckled, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing." (Genesis 31:12 HCSB)

That meant God saw how Laban cheated Jacob—and God was going to bless him anyway. So Jacob used a clever trick. He made the strongest animals mate while looking at striped sticks. Somehow (we don't know the science!), the babies were spotted and striped too. God kept His promise. Jacob's flocks grew. He became very wealthy with many animals, servants, donkeys, and camels.

## Jealous Brothers

After six years, Laban's sons started to complain. They said Jacob was stealing their father's wealth, even though it was Jacob who had worked hard and been cheated again and again. But Jacob didn't argue. He trusted God to take care of him.

## Big Truths to Remember

- Sometimes life is unfair, and people treat us wrongly.
- But God sees everything, even when others don't.
- God can bless and protect us even when others try to cheat or trick us.
- There's a time to speak up, and a time to stay quiet and trust God.

## Think About It

1. Why do you think God still blessed Jacob, even though others kept cheating him?
2. How do you think Leah felt compared to Rachel?
3. Why is it important that all 12 sons were part of God's plan—even the ones born to servants?
4. Have you ever felt like someone treated you unfairly? What did you do?
5. What does this story teach you about God's faithfulness?

## Activity: Build Your Family Tree!

Jacob's family had many people in it. Make a chart or draw a family tree to show:

Jacob

- Leah (wife) → their children
- Rachel (wife) → their children
- Zilpah (Leah's servant) → their children
- Bilhah (Rachel's servant) → their children

Add names of the 12 sons and Dinah! Use colors or shapes to show which mom each child came from. You could even draw animal symbols for each tribe later (like Judah = lion 🦁, Dan = snake 🐍).

## Genesis 32: God Changes a Heart

Jacob had a big problem. Years earlier, he had tricked his older brother Esau—twice. First, he took Esau's birthright (his rights as the oldest son). Then he stole Esau's blessing from their father. After that, Esau was so angry he wanted to kill Jacob. Jacob had run away and stayed gone for years. But now, Jacob was on his way back home. He had prayed a powerful prayer: if God brought him back safely, he would worship Him. But there was one huge problem—Esau.

When Jacob heard that Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men, he was terrified! Was Esau still mad? Was he coming to hurt Jacob and his family? Jacob sent gifts ahead, hoping Esau would forgive him. He sent servants, camels, goats, donkeys—everything he could think of to win his brother's favor. But what Jacob didn't know was that God had already done something incredible. When Esau finally saw Jacob, he didn't yell or fight. He ran to Jacob, hugged him and cried. He wasn't angry anymore. God had changed his heart.

"When your ways please the Lord, He can make even your enemies be at peace with you." — Proverbs 16:7

### **Jacob's New Name**

That night, Jacob was alone. Suddenly, a man appeared—and they wrestled until morning! The man even touched Jacob's hip and hurt it so badly it came out of joint. But Jacob still refused to give up. He said, "I won't let go unless you bless me!" The man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob. From now on, it will be Israel, because you have wrestled with God and with people, and you have won." Jacob asked the man his name, but the man didn't tell him. Still, Jacob knew something special had happened. He named the place Peniel, which means "face of God," and said, "I have seen God face to face, but I'm still alive!" — Genesis 32:30 (ICB)

## Something to Think About

Some people believe the man Jacob wrestled with was Jesus before He came to earth—the “preincarnate Christ.” The Bible doesn’t say for sure. But what we do know is this: Jacob believed he had seen God, and his life was forever changed.

✨ Reflect & Do

### Think About It:

Have you ever been scared to face someone because of something you did wrong? What can we learn from the way God worked in both Jacob and Esau’s hearts?

### Activity: Name Change Poster

1. On a piece of paper, write your name in the center.
2. Around your name, write words that describe who you are now (example: kind, curious, helpful).
3. Then, in a different color, write words of who you believe God is helping you become (example: brave, wise, honest, forgiving).
4. Title it: “Who I Am Becoming in God.”
5. Hang it somewhere to remind you that God is always working in your heart.

## Genesis 35 Summary (Ages 9–13)

God told Jacob to go back to Bethel, the special place where Jacob had first met Him years ago while running from his brother Esau. Back then, Jacob had made a promise: “If You bring me back safely, I’ll follow You.” Now, God had kept that promise. So Jacob told his family to get rid of all their false gods and clean themselves up—because he was going to worship the one true God. Jacob built an altar and gave an offering to God. Then, God appeared to Jacob again and gave him a new name: Israel, which means “one who struggles with God and wins.” God reminded Jacob that He is God Almighty, and He promised to bless Jacob’s family and make it grow into a great nation.

✨ Key Truth:

God keeps His promises—and wants us to keep ours, too.

 Activity: “Clean House – Clean Heart”

Supplies Needed:

- Paper
- Pencil or markers
- A small trash bin or box

Instructions:

1. Ask: What are some things we sometimes put before God—like bad habits, selfishness, lying, or spending too much time on things that don't help us grow?
2. Write or draw 2–3 things on slips of paper that you think get in the way of loving or obeying God.
3. Just like Jacob told his family to throw away their false gods, take those slips of paper and throw them into the trash bin.
4. Now draw or write something you want to start doing to serve God (like praying, telling the truth, helping someone, or reading the Bible).
5. Put that good thing somewhere you'll see it this week as a reminder—on your wall, fridge, or notebook.

 Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Jacob tell his family to get rid of their false gods?
2. What promise did Jacob make—and how did God answer?
3. What does it mean to you that God changed Jacob's name?
4. Is there anything in your life you need to “clean out” to make more room for God?