

Working for a Wife

MEMORY VERSE:

"Teach me thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path."

Psalm 27:11

Jacob's journey to Haran wasn't an easy one. It was across a desert and sometimes he may have felt it would have been better to face Esau's anger. Each night he would quite happily lie down to sleep even with just rocks for a pillow.

God knew that Jacob had only tricked his father because he remembered the promises God had made and cared about them more than Esau did. It would have been wise to have waited for God to look after things, however one night he dreamed he saw a long ladder going up into heaven with angels going up and down on it. He could hear God's voice promising to keep him safe and bring him back to his homeland and make him a great nation. Jacob woke up feeling very encouraged.

When he finally came near Haran, he stopped at the well outside the city to get directions. Just then a girl came to the well with her flock of sheep to get water for them. Jacob jumped up to help her roll the stone away from the well's mouth. He was so happy when he found out who she was! She was Rachel, his mother's brother's daughter. Rachel ran off to tell her family and Laban came out to meet Jacob.

Laban was happy to have Jacob stay with them and Jacob tried to show his thanks by working hard in the fields. But after a few weeks, Laban called to him. "I can't have you working for free! How shall I pay you?" Jacob had his answer all ready, for he had fallen in love with Rachel. He told Laban he would work for seven years if he could marry Rachel at the end of it.

How would you feel waiting seven years for something you wanted very much? For some of you it would be as long as you have been alive! But for Jacob the time flew by quickly until finally the seven years was up.

Laban gave a great feast. He invited all his friends and neighbours from miles around and they celebrated the wedding. But when Jacob woke up in the morning, it wasn't Rachel by his side, it was her older sister Leah! Jacob was furious and ran to find Laban and discover what was going on.

Calmly Laban explained that the custom of the country was that the younger sister could not marry while the older sister was still unmarried. He explained that he would now quite happily give him Rachel as well in return for another seven years work of course.

There was nothing Jacob could do. So he agreed, and a week later he was also married to Rachel.

Throughout the twenty years that Jacob worked for Laban, God was teaching him patience and trust in him.

Finally, Jacob decided to go home and face Esau. When they met, they forgave each

other. God also forgave Jacob for his trick, and gave him a new name - Israel, which means a prince with God.

Things to Remember

- God took care of Jacob on his long journey and showed him the way to his family.
- Jacob patiently waited and worked for what he wanted.
- God promised to make Jacob into a great nation.

Discussion

What did God promise Jacob?

How long did Jacob work for Laban?

What was God trying to teach Jacob through his experiences with Laban?

Activity Suggestions

Draw a picture of Jacob's dream. Perhaps cut some angels out of shiny paper and decorate with glitter.

God looked after Jacob and blessed him in his work as a shepherd. Maybe you could look after the birds that live around you and make a bird tree. Remember that once you begin feeding birds you should continue for the whole winter as the birds will come to depend on you.

You can use any of the following materials:

- wild birdseed mix (sunflower seeds, millet, cracked corn, etc)
- popcorn
- raisins, cranberries, chopped apple and banana
- cereal, bread crusts or toast
- cheese cubes, suet or peanut butter
- pine cones
- milk cartons or plastic pop bottles
- onion bags

Cut a hole in the side of a milk carton or pop bottle one or two inches from the bottom. Poke some drainage holes in the bottom. Make a slit near the bottom and push a popsicle stick part way through. Attach it using tape or twist ties. Put some seed in the bottom and hang it in your tree.

Fill an onion bag with chunks of suet, bread crusts or cranberries and hang it in your tree.

Attach a string to a large pinecone and then cover it with a mixture of melted suet, peanut butter and seeds.

String popcorn, cranberries, raisins, chopped apple, cheese cubes, cereal like Cheerios, etc. and wrap around a branch.