



Read Genesis 30:14-16

This sounds like exactly the kind of stunt Jacob would pull. He has married himself! Exactly what the Mandrakes were is unclear.

What do you make of this passage?

Mirror three: Contentious Siblings, Desperate Wives.



How are you going to recognise when God is confronting you with a mirror?

Why is it that we are so slow to see our own faults and so quick to see them in others? Luke 6:41-42.

What kind of an attitude should we have toward our own failings?



Those who listen to the word but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror James 1:23

In what way is the Bible a mirror?

What do you think God is doing in this section of Jacob's life?



If the first section of Jacob's life was about election. God choosing Jacob despite his nature and before he had done either good or bad. This part of Jacob's life is about reformation. God is working in his life to change him. To make him realise he cannot live as he has lived. God is preparing him for two more encounters, the second of which will see a dramatic and genuine change in his character. But this is still in the future. Jacob does not need to change to be blessed, but he does need to change to be a blessing, and this is the promise of Abraham.



God blesses Jacob.

Read Genesis 30:25-32, &37-39

Once the 14 years of dowry work are done, Jacob makes a deal with Laban about his salary, and he works for sheep. In doing so, he becomes very wealthy. As has been noted, although Jacob bought the birthright, he never inherited a single sheep from his father. He worked for everything.



What do you make of this speckled branches thing?

This is probably just a God thing. The branches had nothing to do with it. Jacob clearly believed that they did. Even Jesus used physical things to engage faith.



Does this sort of thing still happen? I'm blessed because I....

**Did Jacob cheat Laban?
Why did God bless Jacob?**

He promised to – God is like that – Carrot & stick.
In the end Jacob's success is so great that Laban's sons accuse him of stealing their Father's wealth. Jacob feels he has no choice but to flee. This will be the second crisis in Jacob's life.

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Jacob - Part 4 - Three Mirrors



After cheating his brother out of the family blessing, Jacob had to run away from home. He stops for the night at Luz and has the first of several encounters with God, which he will have throughout his life. He sees a ladder connecting heaven and earth. God speaks to him and makes him the promises once made to Abraham. Along with this, God also promise to look after Jacob and bring him home. Jacob tries to make the same kind of deal with God that he had previously made with his brother. If God will do this, then he will accept God as his God. Jacob arrives at his mother's family in Paddan Aram, the location of the second act of his life. Laban is Rebekah's brother.



Read Genesis 29:1-20

Right from the start of this passage, we see things in Jacob's life that we have not seen before.



What do you notice?

Jacob does something for nothing. He places value on family. He falls in love. It turns out that he is a hard worker and a competent shepherd. He is also capable of making a deal that is not slanted in his favour. These things are really quite surprising. We have seen nothing like this in Jacob before.



As we have noted, Jacob is not given a dowry; he has to work in lieu of one. As far as we can tell, seven years for a wife is well above the going rate. (So why did he agree to it?)

Does Laban sound respectful to his daughters?

According to Paul Borgman (Genesis, the Story we haven't heard), Jacob faces three mirrors.



The First Mirror

Read Genesis 29:21-27

What has just happened?

The answer is that Laban has tricked Jacob by switching Leah for Rachel. But of course the much more interesting point is that Jacob has just been jacobed. Laban has done to him exactly what he did to Isaac.



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What parallels do you notice between Jacob's deception of Isaac and Laban's deception of Jacob?

What do you make of Laban's explanation? v26

Why do you think Laban did this?

What does Laban take advantage of in Jacob's situation?

Does Laban have any problem with cheating his own nephew?



If you were Jacob, how would you feel?

If you were Rachel, how would you feel?

If you were Leah, how would you feel?



Who do you think Leah and Rachel knew what was happening?

Why do you think Leah went through with this?

Why do you think Rachel went through with the deception?

What do you think of the way Laban treats his daughters?



Jacob marries Rachel a week later, but he has to work another seven years to pay off the dowry. Jacob gets done! The deceiver is deceived. The cheater gets cheated. There is some sort of poetic justice going on here. Nor is this an isolated incident. Jacob later complains to his wives that Laban has consistently cheated him.



You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. Genesis 31:6-7

Effectively, what God has done here is to confront Jacob with his own nature, his own character, his own failings. Jacob is faced with himself. It is as if God is trying to show Jacob who he is. Trying to make him change and to realise the consequences of his behaviour. Jacob gets to experience his own actions from the other side.



Why would God do this?

Is this punishment?

Do you think God still does this? Can you think of any examples?



The Bible says, *"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked." People reap what they sow.* Galatians 6:7

What does this mean when applied to Jacob?

Does this work positively too?



A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. Proverbs 11:25

This is not exactly a Christian version of Karma. The idea that you get what you give is called "contractual theology" in First Testament terms. But our God works outside of this "law" He blesses people that do not deserve it and often does not punish when we do deserve it. The whole point of the Gospel is that we do not get what we deserve. None of us deserve salvation or heaven – they are God's gifts to us.

"Blessed are those whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. Job 5:17

Mirror one: The deceiver deceived.



The Second Mirror

Why did Leah have to be married first?

Which of the two was chosen by Jacob?

So what is the second mirror?

Again, we have the same older younger issue that we found between Esau and Jacob.

What do you think Jacob is supposed to learn from this?

Did he learn?



This seems to be one of his big failings. He didn't really learn, in fact, his relationship with Leah seems to go down hill. When he has children, his favouritism for Joseph and Benjamin nearly results in his loss of both of them.



Do we ever repeat our parents' failings?

"What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: " 'The parents eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? Ezekiel 18:2

Mirror two: The younger versus the older.



The Third Mirror

Read Genesis 29:31-30:1

The way that Leah and Rachel were married to Jacob does not bode well for the future.



How do you think they felt about each other?

What was the Lord's response to Leah's unloved state?

What does this tell us about God?

This is not the first time in Genesis that God has taken the side of the neglected and oppressed. Hagar is another example. This is a God who sides with the ill-treated. The Law establishes this frequently; God cares how the disadvantaged are treated.

What implications does this have for us? James 5:4-6

Rachel, on the other hand cannot have children. This is the third generation of barrenness in the family



How did Abraham respond?

Genesis 15:4-6

How did Isaac respond?

Genesis 25:21

How did Jacob respond?

Genesis 30:1-2

What trend do you notice?



This is the classic three-generation theory. cf. Judges 2:7-10

ie the first generation has a powerful experience of God, the second generation does religion, and the third loses faith completely.

What does this tell us about the state of his spirituality?

Leah and Rachel end up competing for Jacob's affections. Leah's attempt to win her husband's love in a way that is heart wrenching



So what is the Mirror?

Jacob is the patron saint of all parents who have ever said: "When you have children, I hope you have a child that treats you just like you treat me." Just like Jacob and Esau squabbled, Jacob now has to endure two squabbling wives. Having wrestled with man, Jacob now unwillingly squabbles with women. You can feel the frustration in the passage.

What do you think he is supposed to learn?

Out of this conflict between the wives and their maids, Jacob has 12 sons. These are the basis of the 12 (13) tribes of Israel.