

RUSSELL SANDERS

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THE LIFE OF JOSEPH – LESSON 2

BELOVED RACHEL – FAVORED SON

Jacob loved Joseph his eleventh son above all the other sons. There was a reason for this. It started with his sojourn in Chaldea when he arrived at Laban's place.

He fell "head-over-heels" in love with the younger of Laban's two daughters, Rachel. He asked for her hand in marriage. Laban agreed but only if Jacob would serve him seven years. Jacob agreed. His love was so strong that the years seemed to pass swiftly. The wedding came. The bride was heavily veiled as was the custom. The wedding rituals were performed. The final ritual was to take his new bride into the tent to consummate their union. When he lifted the veil from his newly wed wife, it was not the beautiful Rachel. It was her somewhat homely older sister, Leah. He was shocked.

When he confronted her father about the seven-year-indentured service contract for Rachel, Laban defended himself by saying it was custom that the older daughter must marry before the younger. That was true. But he said if you desire the younger, you must serve me another seven years. Laban had Jacob "over a barrel" so he agreed to it, and Rachel was given to him as a wife. Jacob then served the additional seven years. After Jacob's 14 years of servitude were finished, as now a free man, Laban hired him to stay on to tend to his cattle since God had blessed the herd with great increase by favor upon Jacob.

We do not know how many additional years beyond the initial fourteen Jacob remained, but we do know that it was long enough to bear eleven sons plus daughters. Sadly, the love of his life, Rachel, was barren. Meanwhile, the disfavored Leah bore him six sons (besides daughters). Zilpah, Leah's handmaid, and Bilhah, Rachel's handmaid bore another four sons to Jacob, but none from the beloved Rachel.

After many years, Rachel finally conceived and brought forth Joseph. It was like he was a "miracle son." With Joseph's birth, Jacob determined to take his family back home to Bethel in Canaan. He now felt fulfilled in having a son from his beloved Rachel.

Rachel had a second son, Benjamin, Jacob's twelfth son, once he was back in Canaan. However, he loved Joseph as though the boy was his first born. This brought "favoritism" into play. Jacob showed favor to Joseph above the other eleven sons. Joseph and Benjamin were close, but the ten older brothers (half-brothers) became very jealous of him because of what their father did.

In tomorrow's lesson we will see how the favoritism and jealousy was turned into outright bitterness. This shows us one of the great "traps" of parenting which is still often seen. When parents "play favorites" with their children, it causes damage which can last a lifetime. Whether you are a parent or a grandparent, do not let yourself or your grown children fall into that trap.