

By Faith: When Life Doesn't Seem Fair. Genesis 29 – 31

“It’s not fair!” Have you ever said these words? Our sleeping sense of justice can be rudely awakened when we are the ones treated unfairly: Like when a bad call is made against our favourite sporting team or when someone steals the parking space for which we were patiently waiting. But, we don’t just demand fairness in regard to earthly matters. Like Abraham we can also find ourselves questioning God, asking, “*Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?*” (Genesis 18:25). Let’s keep Abraham’s question in mind as we now fast forward to the account of his grandson Jacob. After fleeing for his life from his brother Esau and then enduring 20 years of injustices from his Uncle Laban, (talk about out of the frying pan and into the fire!) Jacob finally lets fly with his fuming frustration,

"I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed." (Gen 31:38 – 42)

We can feel the heat of Jacob’s anger radiating off the page. But is Jacob’s anger over these injustices justified?

1. Compare Genesis 27:15 - 19 to 29:16 – 25. To what extent has Jacob been treated unjustly under Laban?
2. Read Genesis 29:29 – 35. How is this situation between Jacob, Leah and Rachel similar to Jacob’s earlier family situation with his parents and older brother Esau (Genesis 25:19 – 28)? (You can also compare Gen 25:29 – 33 to Gen 30:14 – 17).
3. Compare the incident involving Abraham and Hagar Genesis 16:1 – 4 with what happens between Leah and Rachel in Genesis 30:1 – 12. How are these situations similar or different?
4. Read Genesis 30:14 – 24. To what extent does God use the unhealthy competition between Rachel and Leah to give descendants to Jacob (Remember Gen 28:13 – 14)¹?
5. Can you think of a time when you felt that life was unfair? To what extent should God make sure that everyone is treated fairly?
6. Read Romans 3:21 – 27. What do these verses teach Christians about the fairness, righteousness and justice of God in regard to humanity?

¹ It’s interesting to note that Jesus Christ was born from the family line of Judah, a son of Leah rather than Rachel (Genesis 29:35)