

## Metaphysical Bible: Jacob and Rachel/Rebekah

Well, I have no idea what the title of today's sermon is! I make this up as I go and it could be Tricky, it could be Jacob and Rebekah (who is his mom) or it could be Jacob and Rachel (who is the love of his life). And that doesn't even include Isaac, Esau, Laban or Leah. So we'll just jump in.

Metaphysical Bible interpretation is a foundation for how Unity reads the Bible and one place Unity teaches us to look for guidance on what happens in our lives. Charles Fillmore, Unity co-founder, was a prolific writer and wrote much about his opinion of the interpretation of names and places in bible stories. We use the Bible as a map of our spiritual evolution or development and still, we also listen for what a story is telling us in this present moment in our lives.

What do we know about Jacob? He is the father of the 12 Tribes of Israel. He had 12 sons—and one daughter. His daughter is actually named—Dinah—and there is a great fiction book, *The Red Tent*, about her life. But what about Jacob. There are stories about Jacob wrestling an angel and Jacob and a ladder into heaven. Today I want to talk about two stories that involve trickery or deception. Both of them involve Jacob but in one story he is the one tricking others and in the other story, he gets tricked. Ever notice we like one of those situations better than the other?

Isaac was the father of two sons, Esau and Jacob. Jacob was the younger son and by law in that time, the elder son inherited from the father. Rebekah is the mother of both boys and Rebekah and Jacob come up with a plan for Jacob to gain the inheritance or birthright instead of Esau. So Jacob doesn't really trick Esau so much as he appeals to his strong human tendencies. Esau is a hunter and comes in hungry and Jacob offers to sell him a pot of food for his birthright. Sort of sounds like a Snickers commercial, appealing to someone who is "hangry" and not himself. Esau happily agrees, gratified in the moment and half the deal is done. Now they have to get Isaac's blessing. So Isaac is old and doesn't see so good anymore. Esau is a burly guy, a hunter and out in the fields and pretty hairy and I guess Jacob is just pretty. Jacob, with Rebekah's help, covers himself with the hide of animals so that when Isaac reaches out to touch him and bless him with the birthright, he thinks he's touching hairy Esau. Done deal—birthright taken and blessed.

Jacob heads for the hills because remember, Esau is big and burly and might do some damage in anger. Rebekah suggests Jacob go see her brother Laban.

Anyone who has ever been deceived or tricked is initially going to react to this story as WRONG! Really, God is ok with this? This is why we have to look deeper. This is not just God and Rebekah choosing favorites, which it certainly looks like on the surface. So what does this story represent?

Isaac represents the divine sonship. You may remember (or not) from a couple weeks ago, Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah, born late in their life. Isaac means laughter and he was the joy of new life in Christ consciousness.

Rebekah is Hebrew for snare or captivating. Metaphysically, Fillmore says she represents the essence of the soul continually going back and forth and making attachments with the harmonious and beautiful.

Fillmore says that Esau and Jacob represent the animal and mental consciousness in humans. Jacob is Hebrew for “supplanter or lying in wait”. Fillmore explains in the Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, “In the line of human unfoldment, the man of nature (Esau) must be supplanted by a higher type, called Jacob, the supplanter, the mentality or understanding. When read in the light of spiritual understanding or considered as part of the history of the unfoldment of the individual soul, the incident loses its aspect of duplicity and we find that it is a description of the subtle working of the soul in spiritual evolution under the guidance of Divine Mind. The soul is progressive. We must go forward. The soul must meet and overcome its limitations. Esau did not seek development through soul culture and must be suppressed. This is the meaning of the deception by Jacob and Rebekah. The mental must gain supremacy.”

So here’s a thought at the story level—if we only judge by appearances, we lose sight of the big picture. Our first reaction to this story is to rebel and say that trickery is wrong. Then we dig a little deeper. Did Jacob trick Esau or did Esau suffer the consequences of his own limited thinking and need for immediate gratification? Then we move down deeper into the metaphysics that Fillmore lays out. Fillmore, and Unity as a philosophy, tend to be heavily biased towards intellectual prowess. Two aspects of that bias trouble me.

The first is this is duality thinking. We are either mental or animal consciousness and the truth is we are both. Remember we are all the characters in the story, including Isaac, or Christ consciousness.

For me, Christ consciousness is one of oneness and balance. So while we need to be aware of how our lizard brain or very basic animal instincts show up, we can create a balance. Second, I wonder where our reliance on intellect leaves individuals with cognitive and developmental challenges. Oddly, in my work with developmentally challenged adults, many of them seem to have a more ready access to intuitive knowing, unfettered by over-thinking and intellectual reasoning. Part of what I uncover in my Radical Wholeness work is how much we just don't talk about in our Unity teachings. Often our children have the perfect spiritual answer to questions I pose. Maybe not because they have intellectually formulated an answer but because they don't have so much clutter in their minds and they can access the intuitive knowing that is innate in all of us. So I bring that up as a caution before we dismiss Esau as a dumb clod, incapable of coming to that Christ consciousness without whatever Fillmore means by "soul culture". Because there is another story about Esau forgiving Jacob and when they come together, Esau has done well and brings as much to the meeting as Jacob.

So let's talk about Trick #2. Jacob goes to his uncle Laban's place. He settles in to work for his uncle and Jacob falls in love with Rachel, Laban's daughter. Well, Rachel is Laban's younger daughter, because Leah is the older daughter. Jacob only likes Rachel. Now technically, my genetics background is concerned because frankly, they are both his first cousins, but we have to ignore stuff like that in the bible. Fillmore says Laban means pure and noble and that metaphysically, "taking a wife from his daughters points the way to a unification with the love principle in its higher aspects." What could go wrong?

So Jacob asks for Rachel to be his wife and agrees to work for 7 Laban for 7 years. Genesis says, "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her." Comes the big wedding day and Jacob is happy. Until the sun rises and the veil is removed and howdy dowdy, it's Leah. Now I am guessing that look on Jacob's face would not make for great wedding pictures but maybe some interesting Instagram posts. So Jacob says, "Hey what's the deal! I worked my 7 years." Guess what Laban says? "This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." Dang, that elder first deal again! This time, Jacob is the one getting fooled and I don't think he liked it very well. And he was not subtle about not liking Leah.

*When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.*

Metaphysically Leah represents the human soul and Rachel represents the feminine, receptive soul which is fruitful only on the higher, spiritual plane of ideas.

Remember the first trick represented a necessary order of spiritual evolution. And it doesn't look fair on the surface but it is orderly in the big picture. Same lesson with trick #2. Jacob liked the first trick better but it's the same big picture. Jacob had to learn to love with his humanity before he was ready to love on a higher, spiritual level. So long as he hated Leah, he could not have a full and fruitful relationship with Rachel. Eventually Jacob makes peace with Leah and he and Rachel have a son Joseph and a second son Benjamin. Between both wives AND their handmaidens, Jacob ends up with 12 sons. I guess with all those sons he can sleep during the day. I don't know. But it is through Jacob, not Isaac, that the promise to Abraham to populate the nations is made manifest.

I am confident that all of us have been through situations that didn't seem fair. We have all felt deceived. We have all felt passed over or left out or unloved. We are all the characters in the story and so we are Jacob AND Esau, Leah AND Rachel. We've all heard the phrase, "The Lord works in mysterious ways." That doesn't ever appear in the Bible. We made that up to explain all the times we can't see the big picture. It is Jacob's son, Joseph, who says "Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good," after his brothers sold him into slavery and he ends up saving the family from famine. The big picture contains a lot of details that may never be fully revealed to our human understanding's satisfaction. Why do people suffer and why do people doing good die and people doing evil survive? That's a big picture view I don't have. But I am learning to have faith that there **is** a bigger picture than what I can see and all the calculations that go on in my intellect. Faith that for all the things that seem unfair in any given present moment, there is quite possibly a moment in the future when I can see around that corner to the good unfolding out of this moment. Later I see my own soul unfoldment and the role events played in developing me into a fuller version of my best self; a more balanced version of humanity and divinity; intellect and intuition. I am more and more willing to be in the mystery of love without judging and comparing. If life gets tricky, learn to trust the process.

Next week we end the series with the idea of Conversion and Ruth and Naomi.