

A Parasite, or a Symbiote?

Parasite - organism that lives on or in a host organism and gets its food from or at the expense of its host

Symbiote - a cooperative relationship between two dissimilar organisms

Each character in this story demonstrates a parasitic selfishness in their relationships to others. Their lack of fulfillment in God manifests in life-sucking behavior among the family.

Leah and Rachel – A Parasitic Competition

Not acknowledging the “blessings in the desert”

Why is it a desert?

- Laban more interested in his wealth than his daughters’ happiness
- Polygamous marriage – with sisters!
- Lifelong envy and jealousy between Leah and Rachel

God’s blessing to Rachel – her husband’s love (29:30)

Rachel’s response – “give me children or I die!” (30:1)

God’s blessing to Leah – children (29:31)

Leah’s response – “[Rachel,] is it not enough for you to take away my husband?” (30:15)

Understanding the importance of children in ancient culture

The brutal nature of ancient existence

Children as an economic benefit

Children as a military necessity

What do we do with the polygamy?

The Bible often records evil actions without denouncing them. You’re supposed to figure it out.

Examples: Gen 30:1 “Rachel envied her sister.” Gen 4:23 “I have killed a man for wounding me.”

Every example of polygamy in the Bible is a disaster

Polygamy goes against God’s created plan in Genesis 2:24

A Gospel Answer – the birth of Judah

“This time I will praise the Lord” – Gen 29:35

John 4:13-14 “Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

What about Jacob?

Passive, defeated, angry

Vs. 3 – “Here is my servant Bilhah... Jacob went into her”

Vs. 9 – “When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife”

Continued poetic justice

The parasite becomes the host; Jacob is used

Jacob still hasn't learned... the one who bought his brother's birthright for a bowl of soup is sold for a basket of mandrakes!

Christ is the example of true manhood

Questions You Need to Ask Yourself

Is my heart thankful for what God has given me?

Is my life characterized by thinking of self or others?

Am I finding my “source” in sucking the life out of others, or am I finding my source in God allowing me to be a blessing to others?

How is God showing my sin to me, and how am I responding?

Questions for Personal or Group Study

1. Level with yourself: are your relationships for the benefit of others or just for you?
2. How are you connecting with God daily so that you can be a source for others?
3. What should you do if people around you are only taking and not giving to you?
4. How is Jesus a model for life-giving love?