

## Soul Sisters 2 – Rachel



Image: Marc Chagall,  
Rachel and her father, Laban

NOTE: This story is placed chronologically before Moses received the Commandments: “you shall not have other gods” and “you shall not worship images of God.”

### Genesis 31:25-35

*Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsfolk camped in the hill country of Gilead. Laban said to Jacob, ‘What have you done? You have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword. Why did you flee secretly and deceive me and not tell me? I would have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre. And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? What you have done is foolish. It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, “Take heed that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.” Even though you had to go because you longed greatly for your father’s house, why did you steal my gods?’ Jacob answered Laban, ‘Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsfolk, point out what I have that is yours, and take it.’ Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.*

*So Laban went into Jacob’s tent, and into Leah’s tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah’s tent, and entered Rachel’s. Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt all about in the tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, ‘Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me.’ So he searched, but did not find the household gods.*

Rachel is not an unknown figure in the biblical story, especially the famous love triangle between Rachel, her husband Jacob and her sister-wife Leah. But the story of Rachel taking her father Laban’s “gods” (clay figures) from her family home, and transporting them in her saddle to Jacob’s homeland, that story does not appear in the lectionary. It is a subversive story, revealing faith expressed in ways that were not quite “orthodox”. These are gods and goddesses represented as idols, spiritual items so powerful that Laban travelled over three days to get them back. How does this fit into the story of only one god, handed down from father to son over many generations? It makes you wonder what mothers were handing down to daughters, doesn’t it?

**What can we learn from our Soul Sister Rachel?** There is no shame in expressing our questions of faith, especially when we do so with courage and creativity.

**Question for Reflection:** What does Rachel teach us about the constantly evolving faith of women, even in the midst of a patriarchal society?

*Prayer: O God of all our stories, remind us to keep our ears open for the songs of faith we have never listened to before, and to learn from them. Help us to know that, beyond all names, you are one God, everlasting through all the chapters of life and history. Amen*