

Subversive Silence

Silence in the face of injustice is often portrayed as acquiesce, implicit acceptance, weakness grounded in fear. This week's scripture passages reminds us that silence can be a form of powerful resistance and subversion of imperial/patriarchal norms when the silence is grounded in the redemptive work of God's spirit.

Focus scripture: Genesis 29:15–28

The exiles in Babylon, for whom the Genesis story was first composed, would have no problem recognizing their lives in the silence of Rachel and Leah who, in today's text, are traded as a mere commodity by their father, Laban. As the full story unfolds, it becomes clear these women are only biding their time.

Rachel, Leah, and no doubt Zilpah are all astute observers of the tools employed by patriarchy and systems of domination to maintain power and control. Deception and the self-justification evidenced by Laban is made normative in systems of domination. It may have caught Jacob off guard, but it came as no surprise to the women that Laban would swap out Leah for Rachel on Rachel's wedding night, in order for Laban to gain advantage over Jacob. The women also live with the challenge of being set up as competitors in this economic system of domination over which they have little control. All of this, the Babylonian exiles would recognize and understand.

However, as the three women know and the Babylonian exiles are reminded, they still have agency and the capacity to subvert the manipulative power of imperial, patriarchal domination. They have likely heard of how Jacob's mother, Rebecca, had herself subverted patriarchal norms with her own acts of resistance. As the story unfolds, Leah and Rachel join forces in persuading Jacob to leave behind their father. For the exiles in Babylon, it comes as a strong word of hope that the God of creation and liberation is present and at work among those and through those who appear to be without a voice.

Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b is an invitation to rejoice and celebrate the subversive nature of the Holy One, who is never constrained by human systems of domination. Sing praises, says the psalmist, give thanks, as the Apostle Paul would later say, in all circumstances, because the one who subverts empires with a promise of liberation is at work.

Romans 8:26–39 offers strong words of comfort for all who suffer and who see little concrete evidence for hope. The encouragement is to never give up because even in our weakness the Holy One is there to strengthen us with a love from which we can never be separated.

Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 gives testimony to the often hidden and subtle power of the Realm of God at work in our lives and world. The parables tell that the reality of God's realm is at work now, and we are called to decide if this is the realm in which we choose to live.


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Silence in the face of injustice is sometimes the prudent and only option. Rebecca and Leah had little power or authority in a patriarchal world to overtly resist the dictates of their father Laban, no matter how unjust. Yet silence is not the same as acceptance. The sisters remain free to act when the time feels right. Their subversive silence enables Rachel and Leah to play their part in God's unfolding story of freedom, liberation, and covenant. How would the Babylonian exiles have heard this story? How might the example of these women be a guide for them in their own liberation? What keeps us from giving up in situations that seem overwhelming? How can silence reflect a deep resistance to injustice?



Focus scripture
Genesis 29:15–28

Additional scriptures
Psalm 105:1–11, 45b or
Psalm 128
Romans 8:26–39
Matthew 13:31–33,
44–52

 *Seasons of the Spirit*
is based on semi-
continuous readings of the
Revised Common Lectionary.

**You whose
voice thunders
into the silence
with the word
of creative love,
give us courage,
resilience, and
trust to know that
silence need never
be submission
or acceptance of
brokenness in
our lives and in
our world. May
our actions be
grounded in the
power of your
spirit at work,
bringing healing
into all creation.
Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Young children experience love when they receive it from a parent or other significant person in their lives. Expressions of love for children in this age group are mostly expressions of affection and warm feelings. The idea of seeing love, and then of seeing God’s love, is more difficult for young concrete learners to comprehend. Love in action makes love concrete. The more young children see, hear, feel, and experience love, the more they, too, will begin to show love.

Many children have the opportunity to move or travel from one place to another. When this happens, children need to hear and to know that they will always have someone to love and care for them. In this week’s Bible story, Jacob is visiting relatives when he meets and falls in love with Rachel. In the interests of making a complicated family story accessible for these young children, the session will focus only on the part of the story that is about Jacob’s relationship with Rachel. Pray that the children will continue to grow into the reality of God as known in loving relationships.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Genesis 29:15–28, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 45).
- ❑ Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring “Welcome Song” (on resource sheet “[Additional Songs and Poems](#),” p. 82) or “Thank God” (p. 28 in *SGF Songbook*; #18 on *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring story figures of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau (from poster [Storytelling Resources #1](#)) from last week.

- ❑ Bring resource sheet “[Jacob Meets Rachel](#).”
- ❑ Bring song “God’s Love” (on resource sheet “[Additional Songs and Poems](#),” p. 82).

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Activity sheet:** copies of resource sheet “[Jacob’s Journey](#)”
- ❑ **Celebration snack:** round rice cakes, peanut butter or cream cheese, (decorative foods: banana slices, raisins, licorice strings), plastic knives, plates
- ❑ **Response centre:** variety of arts and craft materials

Check for allergies to ingredients used in the snack.

Bless

- ❑ Bring “Blessing Song” (on resource sheet “[Additional Songs and Poems](#),” p. 82) or “A Little Peace Song” (p. 5 in *SGF Songbook*; #1 on *SGF Music CD*).

For groups consisting mostly of three-year-olds, supplemental resources can be downloaded from the Library at www.seasonsonline.ca.



Subversive Silence

Scripture

Genesis 29:15–28

FOCUS To hear a story about Jacob's love for Rachel

Gather

Welcome each child, saying "Hello, (*child's name*), we're happy you're here." Invite them to share experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space. Light the candle, saying, "This candle reminds us of God's love which is all around us."

Pray Thank you, God,
for the stories in the Bible,
that help us learn about your love.
Thank you that we can be
with our friends here today. Amen.

Sing "Welcome Song" (p. 82) or "Thank God" (p. 28 in *SGF Songbook*, #18 on *SGF Music CD*).

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Hi (*names each child*). Guess what? I'm going on a trip tomorrow.

Leader: That sounds like fun, Priscilla. Are you going very far away?

Priscilla: Yes, I am. And I was scared at first, because I'm going to visit an aunt. And I've never met her! But I'm not scared now, because I know my mother will be with me too.

Leader: That's very comforting. Children, have you ever travelled far away? (*Encourage responses.*) Our story from the Bible today is about someone who travelled a long way from home. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla.*)

- ☐ **Travels** Talk with the children about times when they have travelled to another place. Who went with them? What was exciting? What was scary? Emphasize that the people who look after them will always make sure they are cared for and loved no matter where they go. Explain that the Bible story today is about someone who travelled a long way from home.

Engage

Before the story

Invite children to look at the figures of Rebekah, Isaac, Esau, and Jacob from the poster [*Storytelling Resources #1*](#), and remind them of the stories of Rebekah leaving home to marry Isaac; and of their twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Recall that one day Jacob tricked his brother, which made Esau so mad that Jacob had to run away. (*Use the*

figure of Jacob and the new figure of Rachel to tell this week's story.) This week we have another story about Jacob, and about someone he met beside a well. Invite children to help you make an outline of a well on the floor with masking tape. Mention that a well is a deep hole that is made in the ground to get water.

The Bible story

Gather beside the “well” and invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Genesis. Use the resource sheet “[Jacob Meets Rachel](#),” and the figures of Jacob and Rachel to tell the story based on **Genesis 29:15–28**.

After the story

Invite a child to place the figures of Jacob and Rachel on the worship table, along with the figures of the rest of Jacob’s family.

Sing “[God’s Love](#)” (p. 82).

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Activity sheet** As he travelled to his uncle’s place, Jacob knew that God cared for him and loved him. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Jacob’s Journey](#)” and encourage children to guide their fingers along the path before drawing the way Jacob must go and decorating the rest of the page.



- ❑ **Celebration snack** Invite children to make a “happy face” snack to express how we feel when we know that God’s love is always with us. Help them

Check for allergies to ingredients used in the snack.

to wash their hands thoroughly. Demonstrate how to assemble a face using the food ingredients, then help children make their own. Enjoy the snack together!

- ❑ **Response centre** Encourage children to choose from the variety of art and craft materials available to create their own response to the story. Ask, “What would you like to make that would remind you of the story of Jacob and Rachel?” Before they begin, take a look at all the materials together and ask the children for ideas of how those things might be used.

Bless

Gather in the worship space. Light the candle again and remind children that God loves them very much.

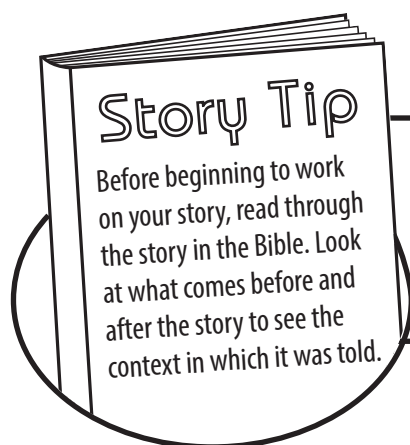
Pray Thank you, God,
for your BIG (*stretch arms wide*) love.
Thank you that you are
always with us, and that
you bless us with your love. Amen.

Sing the “[Blessing Song](#)” (p. 82) or the song, “A Little Peace Song” (p. 5 in *SGF Songbook*, #1 on *SGF Music CD*).

Send each child out with the words, “(Child’s name), God loves you and cares for you.”

Reflect

In what ways do you demonstrate to the children your love and care for them? Are there new ways that you can encourage them to love and care for each other?



Jacob Meets Rachel

(based on Genesis 29)

(Have figures of Jacob and Rachel nearby.)

Jacob was walking again. *(Show Jacob.)* Over the hills Jacob walked. Around the mountains Jacob walked. Through the rivers Jacob walked. Jacob felt happy as he walked because he knew deep down inside that God cared for him and loved him. Now Jacob was looking for his Uncle Laban's place.

"I wonder how far I still have to go?" wondered Jacob. Finally Jacob saw some shepherds near a well. "Perhaps they will know where my uncle lives," Jacob thought.

"Shalom," said Jacob to the shepherds. "Do you know where my Uncle Laban lives?"

"Shalom, my friend. Yes, we know your Uncle Laban," said the shepherds. "His daughter, Rachel, will be coming soon to get some water for their sheep."

Jacob sat down and waited. Soon Rachel appeared. *(Show Rachel.)* She led her sheep to the well. Her sheep were very thirsty. But she couldn't move the big flat stone that covered the well. The stone was so heavy that it usually took several people to move it.

"Please, let me help you," said Jacob. Jacob felt very strong. He pushed the stone. But the stone did not move. He pushed harder and harder. The stone still didn't move. He pushed as hard as he could. Finally the stone did move. The stone fell off the top of the well. Jacob gave a drink of water to all of Rachel's sheep.

"Thank you," said Rachel. "I haven't seen you before. Who are you?"

"Oh, Rachel, don't you know who I am? I am Jacob, your cousin. Jacob kissed her and hugged her, and he cried. Jacob was so glad to see her.

Rachel was delighted to see Jacob. She ran at once to tell her father the news.

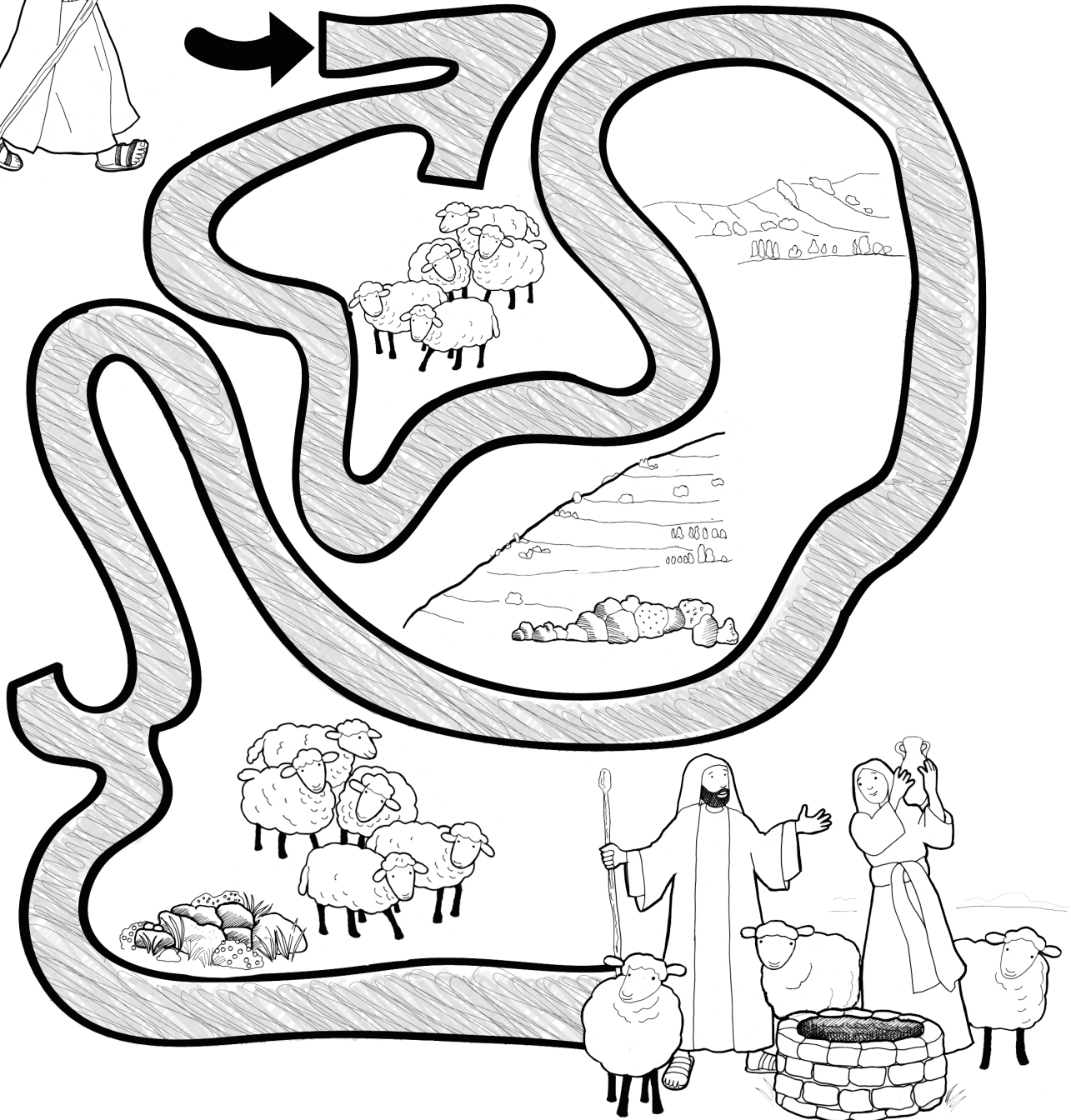
Her father, Laban, too, was happy to see Jacob. "Jacob, you are welcome in my house," Uncle Laban said. "You must come and stay with us."

And that's how Jacob met Rachel. And one day, a long time after, Jacob married Rachel.



Jacob's Journey

Jacob walked over the hills, around the mountains, and through the rivers. Jacob felt happy as he walked because Jacob knew deep down inside that God cared for him and loved him. Help Jacob find his way to the well where he met Rachel. Draw a large stone on top of the well after Jacob gives a drink of water to all of Rachel's sheep.



ADDITIONAL SONGS AND POEMS

WELCOME SONG

(tune: "London Bridge")

Gather round with us today,
to sing and pray, to learn and play.
Gather round with us today,
God loves us in every way.

BLESSING SONG

(tune: "London Bridge")

God is with us as we go,
as we go, home today.
God is with us as we go.
God loves us in every way.

GOD'S LOVE

(tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

God's love for me goes on and on,
on and on, on and on.
God's love for me goes on and on,
everywhere I go.
(Repeat song using the words "you" and
"us" instead of "me.")

I CAN SING AND PRAY

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I can sing and pray and grow.
I can draw and laugh and throw.
I can push and pull and lift.
I can choose to share my gifts.
I can sing and pray and grow,
all because God loves me so.

I'M LOVED

(tune: "Head and Shoulders")

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes, knees and toes.
Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
all of me is loved!
(Other verses: Wiggly fingers, wiggly
toes... Eyes and ears, and mouth and
nose... Neck and elbows, hips and
feet...)

LISTEN, LISTEN

(tune: "London Bridge")

Listen, listen, God loves us,
God loves us, God loves us.
Listen, listen, God loves us,
God helps us to be friends.

SLEEP LITTLE BABY

(August 23)

Sleep little baby (close eyes and lay
head on folded hands),
safe in my arms (hug arms around
self).
I'll hug and rock you (cradle arms and
rock back and forth),
and keep you from harm (pretend to
hug a baby).
Hush little baby (put finger to mouth
and say "Shhh"),
don't start to cry (wave finger back
and forth and shake head),
I'll hug and rock you (cradle arms and
rock back and forth),
'cause I love you, that's why! (Fold
arms over heart.)

