

## USE WITH SESSION 6 BIBLE EXPERIENCE 'LEVEL 3 SWITCH ON'

### **Genesis 29:31 – 30:24: Old Testament surrogate mothers**

Infertility (not being able to have children) isn't a new problem; it's always been around and can cause a great deal of upset. Today, there are many possible solutions that couples can try if they are unable to have a baby naturally. Some countries allow a couple to have a child that is genetically their own by using a surrogate mother. Doctors take some of the father's sperm and use it to fertilise an egg from the mother. They then place the embryo into another woman's womb. When this woman gives birth, the baby is given to its genetic parents. In Bible times, it was common for a couple who couldn't have children to have a baby using a surrogate mother. The woman who was unable to become pregnant would get her husband to have sex with her servant so that the servant could have a baby on her behalf. The child would be genetically the father's but not the mother's, but as soon as the baby was born it would be taken away from the servant and given to the couple.

Nowhere in the Bible do we read of God approving of this method, and the story of Ishmael (Genesis 16) reveals that it can cause problems. In this case, surrogacy was unnecessary; it just revealed Abraham's lack of faith in God and him taking the situation into his own hands.

### **Genesis 30:25 – 31:24: Clever breeding – superstition, God or years of experience?**

Jacob had worked for Laban for many years, but it appears that Laban was neither a great boss nor a great father-in-law. Jacob wanted to move away with his family, but he didn't have any possessions and he knew he needed wealth in order to settle down. In this passage we read about some clever breeding which certainly benefitted Jacob!

For centuries, people thought that what animals were looking at while they were mating affected the colour of their offspring. Modern science has proved that this is nothing more than superstition. Jacob was an experienced shepherd, so it's unlikely that he would have been taken in by a superstition. Therefore, perhaps there was both faith and science behind what he was doing? Firstly, it is evident that he trusted God to provide for him, and he knew that this deal would allow God to work and give the animals to whomever he wanted – Jacob or Laban – and it appears that God was very keen to bless Jacob in this way.