

JACOB AND RACHEL

Introduction: Then the following lines are read without music:

"And Esau said in his heart: 'Let the days of mourning for my father be at hand, for I will slay my brother Jacob.' And Jacob fled into the field of Aram."

Jacob's Flight: Low, hot dunes stretching in the distance; sky and space; a lonely palm. The sun sets, the dunes and hills take on bluish and purple hues and colors. A figure is seen in the distance, in flight. It is Jacob running for his life from the pursuing Esau, not knowing where to go. Always on the lookout, he retraces his steps, starts again, his ear sometimes to the ground. He looks in the sand for water. It is the dance of a wanderer in search of a resting place. - Night falls, the deep blue sky is studded with stars. Jackals are heard in the distance. Jacob takes a stone as a pillow and stretches out under the sky at the foot of a hill. (A hill in the center of the stage remains throughout the performance.) He dreams...

Jacob's Dream From far away a sound slowly growing until the voice of God is heard which then slowly diminishes. The mountain erupts, angels descend and ascend. Jacob's ladder appears. Angels continue up and down on it in an effortless procession. Jacob rises as if in a dream, the angels lift and carry him as if he were a child. He is growing and becoming as one of them as the Promise Theme is heard. Gradually they lower him back into his place and disappear. The ladder then disappears also. Daylight begins. Jacob stirs from his sleep; he rises, reverently addresses the hill. He suddenly hears a shepherd's flute playing lazily and lightly.

At the Well: Three shepherds dance in lazy sprawl around the well. They notice Jacob and eye him

expectantly. He approaches and greets them ceremoniously. They answer. He tries to lift the stone off the well, in vain, while the shepherds try to help. One of them calls their attention to Rachel. Rachel comes from behind the hill, mounts it, runs to and fro, urging the sheep, appearing and disappearing again. (Theme of the Promise). She descends, they face one another. Jacob turns and with a mighty lift, opens the well. People and sheep rush to the water. Jacob embraces Rachel; they dance the dance of recognition. The shepherds may improvise an accompaniment. Then Rachel takes Jacob's hand and swiftly, like gazelles, they run and disappear.

(A low wall is moved in)

Laban's Household

The Agreement At first a slow beehive, then when Laban enters, a real beehive of industry: Slaves at work in the courtyard, carrying sacks, preparing food, cleaning, shining copperbowls, etc. Laban enters dominating, crafty, slaves hurry away, tempo of work increases immediately.

Rachel runs in, followed by Jacob. Leah appears. Rachel tells Laban and Leah that a relative has arrived; greetings, bows and embraces are exchanged; a dance between the four relations. Then water is brought, hands and feet are ceremoniously washed. Jacob, to please Laban, helps the slaves in their work.

The Contract. (Spoken) "Laban said unto Jacob 'Thou art my brother, tell me what shall thy wages be?' And Jacob answered, 'Seven years will I work for thee for Rachel, thy youngest daughter.'" Jacob goes and Laban and Leah slowly tour the courtyard. The lights dim.

The Seven Years

of Jacob's Labor: {vignettes} A moving spotlight shows in turn:

- 1) Jacob the shepherd: Noonday heat on the hill, gathering the sheep, caring for them. He sits down to think,...
- 2) In the night: Jacob huddles under rags on the ground. He shivers with cold. His back is towards the hill. Above him the vision of Rachel appears, dances, disappears.
- 3) Work in the courtyard: Jacob carries a heavy load. Rachel runs in, she has brought him a present; he unfolds it. It is a "coat of many colors." Leah, spinning, watches them from a distance. Jacob thanks Rachel. She runs off and he picks up his load to follow her. Leah is drawn after them.
- 4) Leah's dance of jealousy and unfulfilled desire: From rage and desire she is reduced to tears, she is to carry her burden silently.
- 5) Fulfillment of the Contract: Jacob, wearing the coat given him by Rachel, enters the courtyard; slaves call in Laban; Jacob bows.
(Spoken): "And Jacob said: 'Give me my wife, as the days of my labor are fulfilled and I will go in to her.'" Laban bows and gives a sign.

The Wedding Feast: A preparation: a soft mallet beating a large drum; children running by; slaves hurrying in all directions; large jugs of wine; steaming pots and bowls are carried and placed on long tables at the wall; guests are arriving and are seated.

The Bride and Groom made ready. In a corner of the courtyard women bring out and surround Rachel. They hold a copper mirror, torches. Rachel, beloved by the women, has her hair combed, beads put around her neck, oil and perfumes rubbed in, the veil put over her head. Shortly after Rachel's entrance, in another corner of the courtyard, Jacob and men enter; white

garments are put on him; bracelets and amulets on his neck and arms; drinks are passed around.

The Exchange: Laban enters leading Leah. Entering the women's corner, stopping and ordering the slaves and Rachel, he takes off the bridal veil, puts it on Leah's head. Unwilling hands complete the exchange. Rachel, at first stunned, pleads with her father, then crouches in a corner, stifling her cries, then runs off stage. Slaves complete the dressing of Leah.

The Wedding Ceremony and Climax of the Feast A dance has developed in the courtyard on the fertility motif. Laban, carrying an idol in his hand, holds the bride with the other hand. He leads the dancing procession towards Jacob's corner. Jacob appears, followed by the men. Laban unites bride and groom; they leave the stage. The celebration now is reaching its climax and maintains it for a while. Then, as the scene and lights begin to fade, we see Rachel on the hill, the theme of her sorrow mixing with the celebration, rising above it, finally fading. Night descends; morning comes.

Discovery of the Betrayal Empty courtyard, remains of the feast as of a battlefield, are strewn all over. Jacob bursts on to the stage. He rushes around the courtyard seeking Laban, trying to comprehend what was done to him. Laban appears, men behind him. He is cool, insolent, superior. (The following is spoken): "And Jacob said, 'What hast thou done to me? Did I not serve thee for Rachel? Wherefore hast thou deceived me?' And Laban said: 'So must it not be done in our country to give away the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill seven more years and we will give you also this one.'"

Search and Reunion Jacob tears past Laban in search of Rachel. When she sees him, she flees. Later she falls to

the ground, unconsolable. She embraces the stone. Jacob's desperate effort to reach her till she finally listens, as he says: (Spoken) "Seven more years will I work for thee, Rachel."

Finale

As they mount the hill and sit on it, his left arm under her head, his right embracing her, the vision of the angels reappears, while they listen to the Theme of the Promise.