

# **Genesis 30 - Rachel's Children by Bilhah; Leah's Children by Zilpah; Jacob and the Mandrakes; Joseph is Born; Jacob's Contract with Laban**

## **II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)**

- (3) Life of Jacob (Gen 27:1—36:43)
  - (C) Jacob's lineage (Gen 29:1—30:24)
    - (b) Jacob's children (29:31—30:24)
      - (ii) Through Bilhah (30:1-8)
      - (iii) Through Zilpah (30:9-13)
      - (iv) Through Leah (30:14-22)
      - (v) Through Rachel (30:22-24)
  - (D) The preservation of Jacob (Gen 30:25—33:20)
    - (a) Threat of Laban (30:25—31:45)
      - (i) Business deal with Laban (30:25-43)

## **Genesis 30**

- (C) Jacob's lineage (Gen 29:1—30:24)
  - (b) Jacob's children (29:31—30:24)
    - (ii) Through Bilhah (30:1-8)

**1** Now when Rachel saw that she had not borne Jacob *any* children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I am going to die."

**1** Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."

**1** Rachel noticed that she was not bearing children for Jacob, so because she envied her sister Leah, she told Jacob, "If you don't give me sons, I'm going to die!"

**1** And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

- A completely unreasonable demand...Jacob had four children already, so she was the reason she hadn't borne children yet

— Since Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, it makes sense that they had more sex than Jacob and Leah

- Ironically, she would later die during childbirth while giving birth to Benjamin
- 2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"
- 2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"
- 2 That made Jacob angry with Rachel, so he asked her, "Can I take God's place, who has not allowed you to conceive?"
- 2** And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?
- In his unkindness, Jacob recognized God's providence in bearing children
- 3 Then she said, "Here is my female slave Bilhah: have relations with her that **she may give birth on my knees**, so that by her I too may obtain a child."
- 3 She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children."
- 3 Rachel responded, "Here's my handmaid Bilhah. Go have sex with her. She can bear children on my knees so I can have children through her."
- 3** And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.
- "...she may give birth on my knees" - meaning Rachel would be the legal mother
- Rachel's sons through Bilhah do not reflect the faith Leah had
- Her effort to have children through her maid servant reflects Sarah's similar attempt with Hagar
- 4 So she gave him her slave Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob had relations with her.
- 4 So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.
- 4 So Rachel gave Jacob her woman servant Bilhah to be his wife, and Jacob had sex with her.
- 4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.
- 5 Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.
- 5 Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.
- 5 Bilhah conceived and bore a son for Jacob.
- 5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.
- 6 Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan.

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6 Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me! He has heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore, she named him Dan.

6 And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan.

- The names of the two sons born to Bilhah reflected Rachel's bitter struggle and feeling of victory

- "...Dan" - that is, "judging"

— The name Dan is explained by the word *dananni*, God has vindicated me, that is, He now had corrected Rachel's wrong, her barrenness

7 And Rachel's slave Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

7 Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

7 Rachel's servant conceived again and bore a second son for Jacob,

7 And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.

8 So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestling I have wrestled with my sister, *and* I have indeed prevailed." And she named him **Naphtali**.

8 So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali.

8 so Rachel said, "I've been through a mighty struggle with my sister and won." She named him Naphtali.

8 And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

- "...Naphtali" - "my wrestling"; reflected Rachel's great struggle (*naptule*) which, she said, "I fought" (*niptalti*) with my sister

### (iii) Through Zilpah (30:9-13)

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her slave Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing children, she took her woman servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

9 When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

10 And Leah's slave Zilpah bore Jacob a son.  
10 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.  
10 Leah's servant Zilpah bore a son to Jacob,  
10 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.

11 Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him **Gad**.  
11 Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad.  
11 and Leah exclaimed, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad.  
11 And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.  
- Leah responded by offering Jacob her maidservant Zilpah, to whom Gad ("good fortune") had come  
- "...Gad" - a troop, or company

12 And Leah's slave Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.  
12 Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.  
12 Later, Leah's servant Zilpah bore a second son for Jacob.  
12 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.

13 Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him **Asher**.  
13 Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.  
13 She said, "How happy I am, because women will call me happy!" So she named him Asher.  
13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.  
- "...Asher" - *beashri*, "happy"; "blessing"; Leah saw that with God's help she was prospering

See [12 Tribes of Israel](#).

(iv) Through Leah (30:14-22)

**14** Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found **mandrake fruits** in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

**14** Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

**14** Some time later, during the wheat harvest season, Reuben went out and found some mandrakes in the field and brought them back for his mother Leah. Then Rachel told Leah, "Please give me your son's mandrakes."

**14** And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.

- "...mandrake fruits" - *dudaim*, literally means "love apples"

— These are berries that have white and reddish blossoms and a yellow fruit similar to small apples (Cf. Song 7:130)

— Mandrakes were considered aphrodisiacs; contextually, Rachel's request was based on it being a sexual stimulant

**15** But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

**15** But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

**15** In response, Leah asked her, "Wasn't it enough that you've taken away my husband? Now you also want to take my son's mandrakes!"

But Rachel replied, "Okay, let's let Jacob sleep with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes."

**15** And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.

- This was a harsh refusal by Leah. She did not want to improve Rachel's love life in light of the fact that Rachel was already the favored of Jacob

— However, Leah sold the mandrakes to Rachel for sex with Jacob

**16** When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must have relations with me, for I have indeed **hired** you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night.

**16** When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night.

**16** When Jacob came in from the field that evening, Leah went to meet him and told him, "You're having sex with me tonight. I traded my son's mandrakes for you!" So he slept with her that night.

**16** And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.

- Leah slept with Jacob that night because Rachel sold him for the evening for the mandrakes
- This desperate bargain by Rachel was an attempt to become pregnant with the aid of the mandrakes, a fable that failed to understand that God gives children (v6,17,20,22)
- "...hired" - *sachar*, which is the root word for her next son's name (Issachar, v18)

### **Polygamy**

The competition between the two sisters/wives is demonstrated in using their maids as surrogate mothers (v3,7,9,12), in declaring God had judged the case in favor of the plaintiff (v6), in bartering for time with the husband (v14-16), in accusing one of stealing her husband's favor (v15), and in the name given to one son—"wrestled with my sister" (Naphtali, v8).

The race for children was also accompanied by prayers to the Lord or by acknowledging His providence (v6,17,20,22; 29:32-33,35).

This bitter and intense rivalry, all the more fierce because they were sisters, and even though they occupied different dwellings with their children as customary, shows that the evil lay in the system itself (bigamy), which as a violation of God's ordinance (Gen 2:24) could not yield happiness.

- 17 God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.
- 17 God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.
- 17 God heard what Leah had said, so she conceived and bore a fifth son for Jacob.
- 17** And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.
- 18 Then Leah said, "God has given me my reward, because I gave my slave to my husband." So she named him Issachar.
- 18 Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar.
- 18 Then Leah said, "God has paid me for giving my servant to my husband as his wife." So she named him Issachar.
- 18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.
- Thus Leah hired Jacob with the plants and had a son, Issachar
- 19 And Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob.
- 19 Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob.
- 19 Later, Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son for Jacob.
- 19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.

20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; **finally my husband will acknowledge me as his wife**, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him **Zebulun**.

20 Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.

20 Then Leah said, "God has given me a good gift. This time my husband will exalt me, because I've borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun.

20 And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name *Zebulun*.

- "...finally my husband will acknowledge me as *his wife*" - Leah, though still unloved as confirmed by Jacob's frequent absence from her home, hoped her 6th son would win his permanent residence with her

- The name of Leah's sixth son Zebulun, has the double significance of dowry or "gift" as well as "honor"
- Leah said God gave her Zebulun as a gift and her husband would treat her with honor
- Thus Leah's hopes never left her
- "...Zebulun" - *zaval*, "dwelling"

21 Afterward she gave birth to a daughter, and named her **Dinah**.

21 Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

21 After that, Leah conceived, bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.

21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

- "...Dinah" - the feminine form of the name Dan, meaning "judge"

- After bearing six sons, Leah bore a daughter

— This is one of several daughters that Jacob had (37:35; 46:7,15), but Dinah is the only one named (because of the events of Gen 34)

(v) Through Rachel (30:22-24)

22 Then God **remembered** Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb.

22 Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb,

22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

- "...remembered" - not in the sense that He forgot her, but in the sense of moving toward her in grace

23 So she conceived and gave birth to a son, and said, "God has taken away my disgrace."

23 So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach."  
23 so she conceived, bore a son, and remarked, "God has removed my shame."  
23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:  
- Rachel's first natural born child, a son

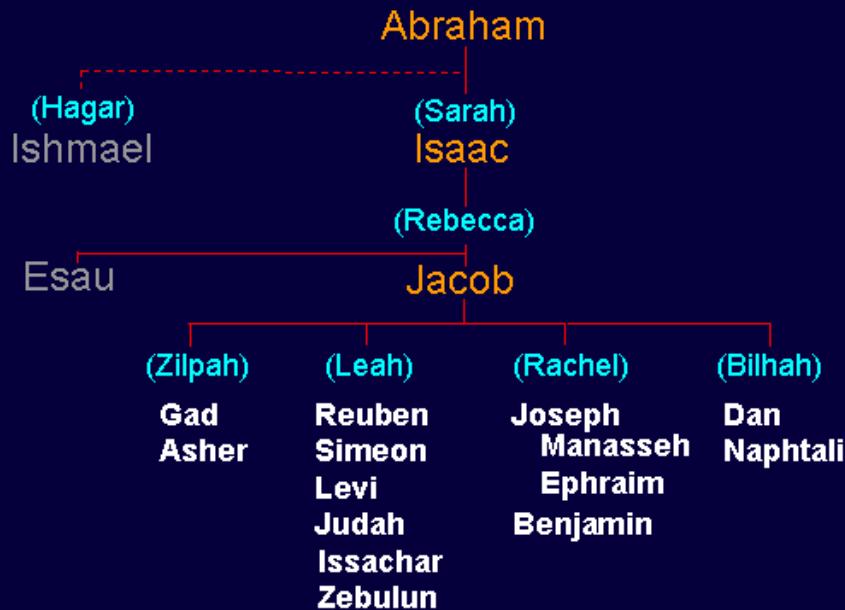
24 And she named him **Joseph**, saying, "May the LORD give me another son."  
24 She named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD give me another son."  
24 Because she had been asking, "May God give me another son," she named him Joseph.  
24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son  
- Finally Rachel gave birth to Joseph (yoseph) but not by the mandrakes  
— This shows that births are given by God, not manipulated by people  
- "...Joseph" - "addition"  
— Joseph's name, like Zebulun's, had a double meaning: she said, God has taken away ('asap) my disgrace; and she prayed that He would add (yoseph) another son  
— By naming him with the hope that God would add to her another son, her hope was that Joseph would not be her only biological son and that she will have another one.  
— Indeed her hope was fulfilled later on when she gave birth to Benjamin, although the fulfillment of that hope would cost Rachel her life

### **Names & Meanings of 12 Tribes**

Simeon	(Heard)...the Lord has heard, God hears me
Levi	(Attached)...my husband...will be attached, joined
Judah	(Praise)...I will praise the Lord
Dan	(Judge)..."God has judged me," etc.
Gad	Granted good fortune
Asher	Happy am I
Naphtali	my wrestling
Manasseh	making me to forget
Issachar	purchased me
Zebulun	dwelling
Joseph	will add to me
Benjamin	Son of His right hand

See [12 Tribes of Israel](#) for more information on where and how the 12 Tribes are listed in Scripture.

# The Patriarchs



(D) The preservation of Jacob (Gen 30:25–33:20)

- (a) Threat of Laban (30:25–31:45)
  - (i) Business deal with Laban (30:25-43)

**25** Now it came about, when Rachel had given birth to Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, so that I may go to my own place and to my own country.

**25** Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country.

**25** After Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob told Laban, "Send me off so that I can go back to my place and country.

**25** And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

- Jacob now had 11 sons with the birth of Joseph
- 14 years had transpired, and both bride prices were paid in full
- Jacob had fulfilled the arrangement with Laban in full, and was owed nothing more from Laban than what was already paid him
- Jacob wanted to return to his "home," the Land of Canaan; he didn't have citizenship in any specific city-state there, but that was his Land

26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for **you yourself know my service** which I have rendered you."

26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you."

26 Give me my wives and children for whom I've served you. Then I'll leave, since you're aware of my service to you."

26 Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

- "...you yourself know my service" - Laban was aware that Jacob had fulfilled his end of the agreement

27 But Laban said to him, "If it pleases you at all, *stay with me*; I have **determined by divination** that the LORD has blessed me on your account."

27 But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, *stay with me*; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account."

27 Then Laban responded, "If I've found favor in your sight, please stay with me, because I've learned through divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.

**27** And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

- "...determined by divination" - literally "to divine through a serpent"

— Laban was a pagan who practiced occult divination, and through this occult practice he recognized that Jacob's God, Whoever that might be, was blessing Laban because of his relationship with Jacob

— What Laban experienced was the blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant, and he didn't want to lose that blessing. If Jacob left, Laban thought he'd lose it.

28 He continued, "Name me your wages, and I will give them."

28 He continued, "Name me your wages, and I will give it."

28 Name your wage, and I'll give it to you."

28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

- Laban offered to pay Jacob a wage and allow him to name his price

29 But Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you and how your livestock have fared with me.

29 But he said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me.

29 But Jacob replied to Laban, "You know how I've served you and how your cattle thrived under my care.

**29** And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

30 For you had little before I came, and it has **increased** to a multitude, and **the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned**. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?"

30 For you had little before I came and it has increased to a multitude, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?"

30 What you had previously was only a few head, but the herd has now multiplied, because the LORD has blessed you through my efforts. But now, when am I going to be able to provide for my own household?"

30 For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

- Jacob summarizes his 14 years of labor for Laban. He points out three things:

(1) Laban knew the value of Jacob's work

- "...increased" - "to break forth"; denotes an explosion of growth since Jacob came to work for him

(2) Laban was the recipient of the blessing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, as Jacob pointed out

- "...the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned" - Jacob claims responsibility, through the power of God and His promises, for Laban's success (note change in pronouns: "thee" since "my" coming).

— The point is that God blessed Laban not because of any righteousness or spirituality on Laban's part, since he was a pagan idolater; God only blessed him because of his relationship to Jacob

(3) Jacob expressed his desire to provide financial security for himself and his family

— Up to now, Jacob's work had provided financial security for Laban; he now wanted to provide for his large family, not just work for room and board

31 So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this *one* thing for me, I will again pasture *and* keep your flock:

31 So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this *one* thing for me, I will again pasture *and* keep your flock:

31 "What do I have to give you?" Laban asked.

Jacob responded, "You don't have to give me anything. Just do this for me: Let me tend your flock again and watch over it.

**31** And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock:

- Jacob agreed that God had blessed Laban (v30). Thus Jacob proposed a plan by which (ostensibly) he would gain little.

— Laban was not to pay Jacob anything now; rather, if Laban would do one thing for Jacob now (allow Jacob to tend his flock)

32 let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled or spotted sheep and every black sheep among the lambs, and the spotted or speckled among the goats; and *those* shall be my wages.

32 let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep and every black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *such* shall be my wages.

32 Let me walk among your flocks today and remove every speckled or spotted sheep, along with every black lamb, and let me do the same with the speckled and spotted goats. These will be my wages.

32 I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire.

- As Jacob surveyed Laban's flock, he would remove three categories of animals:

- (1) Every speckled and spotted sheep
- (2) Every black one (rare)
- (3) Every speckled and spotted goat

— This was the starting point for Jacob

- Jacob was not getting all the animals in these three categories; he was only getting the offspring of this small group

— Jacob had the right to demand much more, because he had proven to be such a huge blessing to Laban over the past 14 years. Laban became a wealthy man because of Jacob, yet Jacob asked for minimal payment.

33 So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled or spotted among the goats, or black among the lambs, *if found* with me, will be considered stolen."

33 So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, *if found* with me, will be considered stolen."

33 In the future, you'll be able to verify my honesty because, when you come to check what I've earned, if you find a goat that's not speckled or spotted or a sheep that's not black, then it will have been stolen by me."

33 So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

- Jacob provided a way for Laban to test his honesty, simply by looking over his flock
- Every one of Jacob's flock that was not speckled or spotted, or black, would be counted as stolen

34 Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word."

34 Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word."

34 "Okay," Laban replied. "We'll do it the way you've asked."

**34** And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

35 So **he removed on that day** the striped or spotted male goats, and all the speckled or spotted female goats, every one with white on it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and put them in the care of his sons.

35 So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons.

35 That very day, Laban removed the male goats that were striped or spotted, all the female goats that were speckled or spotted—that is, every one that had white on them—and all the black lambs and placed them into the care of his sons.

35 And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

- "...he removed on that day" - Laban's deceit of Jacob; he pre-emptively removed those of the flock that would have been taken by Jacob, and gave them to his sons

- Laban did what was very unfair: Jacob was generous in his offer, but Laban likewise did not respond with generosity

- Laban removed everything that would favor Jacob's increase, by taking aside the animals whose offspring would be Jacob's starting point

- Rather than starting with a minimum, Jacob basically had to start with nothing

36 And he put *a distance of three days'* journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

36 And he put *a distance of three days'* journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

36 He sent them as far away from Jacob as a three days' journey could take them.

Meanwhile, Jacob kept tending the rest of Laban's flock.

36 And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

- For greater advantage, Laban immediately removed all the animals of abnormal color, giving them to his sons and not to Jacob

— And as an additional precaution he placed a three-day journey between them

— Thus he was seeking to ensure that Jacob would have a difficult time acquiring a large herd

— This was Laban's second deceit of Jacob

- Jacob, however, fulfilled his part of the agreement by tending Laban's flock; Laban, however, failed to fulfill his end of the agreement

### **Jacob's Deal with Laban**

Laban wanted Jacob to stay and asked what it would take for him to do so. Jacob wanted nothing except to be in a position for God to bless him. He was willing to stay, but not be further indebted to the scheming and selfish Laban. He offered Laban a plan that could bless him (Jacob), while costing Laban nothing.

Jacob would continue to care for Laban's animals, as he had been doing. His pay would consist of animals not yet born, which would be less desirable to Laban because of their markings and color. Jacob would not take any of the solid colored animals, but would instead be given back to Laban. Only animals born speckled, spotted, striped or abnormally colored would belong to Jacob. Further, Jacob would not use the abnormally-colored animals to breed more like them...he would separate them into a flock of their own, apart from the normally colored animals. Only the spotted and speckled animals in the future, born to the normally colored animals, would belong to Jacob.

Since it occurred to Laban that the birth of such abnormal animals was unlikely to occur in large numbers, he agreed. He believed this was a small concession to maintain Jacob's skills to further enlarge his flocks.

By this, Jacob put himself completely in God's hands. Only the Lord could determine what animals would be Jacob's. To make sure Jacob didn't cheat on his good deal, Laban separated the abnormally marked animals in Jacob's care.

**37** Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar, almond, and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white that was in the rods.

**37** Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which was in the rods.

37 Jacob took branches from white poplar trees, freshly cut almond trees, and some other trees, stripped off their bark to make white streaks, and uncovered the white part inside the branches.

37 And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods.

- Jacob made spotted rods from various local trees, and from these, he made cuttings to provide the streaking. The rods had a zebra coloring to them.

38 He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the drinking troughs, *that is*, in the watering channels where the flocks came to drink; and they **mated** when they came to drink.

38 He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink.

38 Then he placed the branches that he had stripped bare in all the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. He placed the branches in front of the flock, and they went into heat as they came to drink.

38 And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

- "...mated" - literally, "get hot and bothered" or "be in heat"

- Jacob placed the rods he created at the places where mating and conception would normally occur

39 So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks delivered striped, speckled, and spotted *offspring*.

39 So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.

39 When the flocks mated in front of the branches, they would bear offspring that were striped, speckled, or spotted.

39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

- God blessed Jacob in an unusual way: the striped, speckled and spotted offspring would belong to Jacob according to the agreement

- Laban's flock, the pure white sheep or pure black goats produced the striped, speckled and spotted offspring, which belonged to Jacob

- Here there is a wordplay on the name Laban for as Jacob peeled back the bark on the sticks and exposed the white (*laban*), he saw his flocks grow

- He played the Laban game and won—he outwitted "Whitey"

- Clearly, as Jacob later admitted (31:7-12), God intervened to fulfill the expectations Jacob had in the branches
- The peeled branches, placed in the watering troughs, appeared to make his animals reproductive as they mated in front of the troughs
- It is reported that especially in the case of sheep, whatever fixes their attention in copulation is marked upon the young
- Also, lambs conceived in the spring and born in the autumn were stronger than those born in the spring

These were superstitious practices employed by Jacob. He initially resorted to superstition and had accepted the popular theory in those days of prenatal influence that said a vivid sight during conception would leave its mark on the embryo. That is what Jacob believed, and what he practiced here.

What he eventually learned (31:10-13) was that it was not the rods that produced it, it was God working a miracle.

40 Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

40 Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

40 Jacob kept the lambs separate, facing the striped and entirely black ones that belonged to Laban's flock. He set his own herd by itself and would not let them be with Laban's flock.

40 And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.

- Jacob separated the striped, speckled and spotted flock from Laban's flock

41 Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the drinking troughs, so that they would mate by the rods;

41 Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods;

41 Whenever the more vigorous of the flock came into heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the flock to make them mate by the branches.

41 And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

42 but when the flock was sickly, he did not put *them* in; so the sickly were Laban's, and the stronger were Jacob's.

42 but when the flock was feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

42 But he didn't put the branches in front of any of the feeble members of the flock. As a result, the feeble ones belonged to Laban, but the stronger ones belonged to Jacob.

42 But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.

- In addition, Jacob used selective breeding by only using the rods when the stronger sheep mated; the rods would generate the spotted and speckled sheep, which were Jacobs

- Jacob did not use the rods when the weaker sheep mated, thus the offspring would be pure in color, belonging to Laban

- This was Jacob's revenge for Laban's deceit

- This was not the only time God's part in Jacob's success was much greater than it seemed to an observer

43 So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

43 So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

43 Therefore the man Jacob prospered so much that he had large flocks, female and male servants, as well as camels and donkeys.

43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

- So Jacob was greatly prospered in fulfillment of God's promise at Bethel, and at the expense of Laban, who now received in part the recompense due him

- A fascinating struggle developed between Jacob and Laban

- Laban's injustice and artifice preceded Jacob's project, just as Isaac's attempt to bless Esau had earlier prompted Jacob's deception

- In both cases the attempt to defraud Jacob was actually overcome by Jacob

- Afterward, however, Jacob viewed his real gain as divine blessing, though he had to accept the effects (fear and danger) of his craftiness