

Genesis 28-30: 24

Bible Study

Review

God had chosen Jacob, the second born of Isaac's twins, to receive the birthright inheritance which normally goes to the firstborn

Jacob and his mother, lacking in faith deceived Isaac to obtain the birthright blessing

Esau demanded the birthright blessing even though he has sold it to Jacob

Esau then hated Jacob and threatens to kill him—which prompts Rebekah to tell Jacob to flee to her homeland of Haran

Esau's Hittite (Canaanite) wives cause grief to Isaac and Rebekah

➤ More motivation for Jacob to seek a wife from Rebekah's homeland of Haran



Genesis 28

As Abraham had charged Isaac

Genesis 28:1-2

¹Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

²Arise, go to **Padan Aram**, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.

Abraham had sent his servant to obtain a wife for Isaac—now he sends Jacob by himself

v. 2 “your **mother’s** father”.... “your **mother’s** brother”—emphasizes his close relationship to his mother

Map of Ancient Near East

Padan-Aram
(Haran)



Genesis 28:3-4

³ “May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples;

⁴ And give you **the blessing of Abraham**, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham.”

Jacob—inherits the blessings of Abraham

- First time **he** has been designated to receive those promises (Isaac thought he was blessing Esau previously)

Genesis 28:5-7

⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

⁶ **Esau saw** that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”

⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.

Esau is slow to react but now realizes that he had not taken the right wife...he takes action possibly hoping to gain favor with this father and a better blessing

Genesis 28:9

⁹So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

Esau marries a relative—of Ishmael's family, when he realized his father rejected the Canaanite wives

Note: **intermingling of descendants** of Esau and Ishmael—continued in history (Arab peoples)

Genesis 28:10-12

¹⁰Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

¹¹So he came to a certain **place** and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that **place** and put it at his head, and he lay down in that **place** to sleep.

¹²Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

v. 11 **“place”**—is Bethel

Where his grandfather, Abraham had camped and built an altar to worship God upon entering the land (12:8)

Angels are found in scripture going about the earth watching over nations

v. 12 “This vision of the angels, is an assurance of God’s protection of Jacob, even though he is leaving home” (Word)

Genesis 28:13-15

¹³And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: “**I am the Lord God of Abraham** your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

¹⁴Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; **and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**

¹⁵Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”



The covenant confirmed to Abraham was **now confirmed by God to Jacob...**
(last part of v. 14 is quoted exactly from chapter 12:3 as given to Abraham)

Genesis 28:16-17

¹⁶Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know *it.*”

¹⁷And he was **afraid** and said, “How awesome *is* this place! This *is* none other than the house of God, and this *is* the gate of heaven!”

Jacob’s first personal encounter with God
(Word) “Throughout scripture the encounter with God brings fear; when sinful man meets the Holy God, he is overawed and often becomes acutely conscious of his sin and unworthiness to stand in the divine presence”

Genesis 28:18-19

¹⁸Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it. —> Dedicated it, a memorial

¹⁹And he called the name of that place [£]**Bethel**; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

Jacob seems to have taken this stone with him as he traveled:

(v. 20-22)—mentions it in context of returning to Isaac

(35: 14-15)—anointed it again later in Bethel

(49: 24)—prophesied that it would be with the descendents of Joseph in the end time

Genesis 28:20-22

²⁰Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,

²¹so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then **the Lord shall be my God.**

²²And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God’s house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.”

Jacob now changes from serving God for selfish reasons to honoring God and recognizing God’s sovereign lordship (**character change**)

Genesis 29:1-3

450 mile journey—15 days at 30 miles a day

¹So Jacob went on his **journey** and came to the land of the people of the East.

“went on his journey”= “lifted up his feet”

➤ Hebrew idiom only here in the Bible

(JFB) “he resumed his way the next morning with a light heart and elastic step” (after the divine vision)

Mesopotamia--Haran

Always associated with God’s blessing

Covered well—water was precious

²And he looked, and saw a **well** in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A **large stone** was on the well’s mouth.

³Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well’s mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well’s mouth

Because of shifting desert sands, evaporation, etc, a well in the desert was covered with a large stone

Genesis 29:4-6

⁴And Jacob said to them, “My brethren, where *are* you from?” And they said, “We *are* from Haran.”

⁵Then he said to them, “Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?” And they said, “We know him.”

⁶So he said to them, “Is he well?” And they said, “*He is* well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.”

v. 6

(BKC) “Rachel just *happened* to be coming to the well...this timing was the work of the loving God who was leading all the way”

Genesis 29:7-8

⁷Then he said, “Look, *it is* still high day; *it is* not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed *them*.”

⁸But they said, “We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well’s mouth; then we water the sheep.”

v. 7 Jacob seems to want to get the shepherds out of the way so that he can converse with his cousin in private

Genesis 29:9-10

⁹Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with **her father's sheep**, for she was a shepherdess.

¹⁰And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that **Jacob went near and rolled the stone** from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

Jacob was so enthused and excited that he rolled the stone away that normally required several shepherds to move

Proper Eastern greeting

Jacob was zealous...he had a mission and that goal drove him to succeed

Genesis 29:11-13

¹¹Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept.

¹²And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's relative and that he *was* Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father.

¹³Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that **he ran to meet him**, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things.


v. 13 Perhaps Laban ran to greet Jacob, remembering the riches that were given before by Abraham's servant....but no riches are with Jacob

Genesis 29:14-15

¹⁴And Laban said to him, “Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh.” And he stayed with him for a month.

(Word) ‘*Surely*’ — “may suggest a rather grudging admission on Laban’s part of kinship”
i. e. – ‘You have convinced me that you are my nephew, so you may as well stay’

Things had been going well for Jacob...now they go downhill



¹⁵Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages *be*?”

(Word) “Laban’s question sounds concerned and friendly, but the very mention of ‘working’ and ‘pay’ introduces a jarring note” ...Jacob had nothing else to offer except labor

¹⁶Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

“Leah”= weary (Heb.)

Rachel= ewe (Heb.)
(Strong's) [the female being the predominant element of a flock]

¹⁷Leah's eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

'delicate'=weak (Companion)
(Word) "they had no fire or sparkle.."

Beautiful figure and lovely face—
Rachel was more attractive than Leah

¹⁸Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

A proposal is made to the father by promising to serve for a period of **seven** years—
regarded anciently as a time of complete and full period of service

(Word) "In the ancient Near East, betrothal was effected by
paying a 'bride price' [Ex. 22:16]

(Deut. 22:29)—OT marriage price fixed at **50 shekels**... Jacob
could not pay so he offers labor instead

A **laborer** was paid about **18** shekels a year—
Seven years service x 18= **126**

Laban accepts this great gift for his
daughters hand

He received more than twice what
a normal marriage gift would be

¹⁹And Laban said, "*It is* better that I give her to you than that I should give **her** to another man.
Stay with me." (the "her" is not mentioned)

²⁰So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of
the love he had for her.

²¹Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her.”

²²And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast

A feast would last for seven days, then the marriage would be completed

²³Now it came to pass in the **evening**, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.

(JFB) “The ample bridal veil enveloped the whole person so that it was impossible to discern the features of the wearer”

(Word) “The lateness of the hour, the veiling of the bride, and maybe a little too much drink allowed Laban to substitute the unloved Leah for the promised Rachel”

²⁴And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah *as* a maid.

(v. 24) seems like an afterthought:

- 1) Commentators—she might have been part of Laban’s deceptive plan
- 2) Both Zilpah and Leah would be mothers of the children of Israel
- 3) A handmaid was valuable dowry (smooth it over with Jacob)

Ch. 3: 13 God to Eve
18:18 Pharaoh to Abram
26:10 Abimelech to Isaac

Genesis 29:25

²⁵So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, “**What is this you have done to me?** Was it not for Rachel that I served you? **Why then have you deceived me?**”

“Why have you **deceived** me?—a man **reaps what he sows**

➤ This deception was perfectly fitted for Jacob who had deceived his father

²⁶And Laban said, “It must not be done so in our country, to give the **younger** before the **firstborn.**”

Laban cites the local custom not to give the younger in marriage before the older

...this most likely hit Jacob like a ton of bricks
(His previous deception to receive the birthright)

Genesis 29:27-28

²⁷Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.”

²⁸Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.

v. 27 Jacob was to complete a week of celebrating the nuptials with Leah, then he would receive Rachel for marriage, on the condition of serving him another seven years

“At the time of his marriage Jacob was eighty-four years of age”(Barnes)

(JFB) “It is evident that the marriage of both sisters took place nearly about the same time, and that such a connection was then allowed, though **afterwards prohibited**”

God later gave this law to Israel:

Leviticus 18: 18

“Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive”

(BRC) “Monogamy is the ideal for marriage....the OT reports of those who had multiple wives....such things are reports of what did happen, not examples of what should happen

Leah's week-- fulfills the celebration week for Leah

²⁸Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter **Rachel as wife also**.

(Companion) "A popular mistake to suppose that Jacob did not marry Rachel till the end of the second seven years, for in the first seven years were born seven sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, and **Joseph...**"

²⁹And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.

³⁰Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

Jacob complies: and serves seven years for Rachel
Bilhah is given to Rachel as a dowry

- These seven years do not seem like a 'few days' this time

(Expositors) "Jacob's past had caught up with him, and he could do no more than accept the results and serve Laban seven more years"

And.....Another **126 shekels** for Laban

When God “sees” he acts:
(6:5; 7: 1; Ex. 2: 25)

Jacob’s family: v.31-35
(12 sons of Israel)

³¹When **the Lord saw** that Leah *was* unloved, **He opened her womb**; but Rachel *was* barren

(Word) “Jacob had been promised he would have a multitude of descendents, and it was through the unloved Leah and her maid Zilpah that eight of the twelve tribes traced their decent”

Leah—a woman of **faith**..addresses: **Lord**

Leah hoped bearing a child
would inspire his love

Genesis 29:32

³²So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name ^f**Reuben**; for she said, “The Lord has surely **looked on my affliction**. Now therefore, my husband will love me.”

Reuben-- (Heb.)= *Behold a son*

“The Lord has surely **looked on my affliction**”—echoes Hagar’s remark of persecution (16:11) and foreshadows the Egyptian oppression of Israel (Ex. 3:7)

³³Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the Lord has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.” And she called his name [£]**Simeon**.

Simeon—(Heb.)= *hearing*
(BKC) “God heard, was her testimony in faith to His provision”

³⁴She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore his name was called [£]**Levi**.

Levi—(Heb.)= *a joining*
“my husband will become attached to me” (JFB) “this language is still used in the East by a wife who has become the mother of one or two sons”

³⁵And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Now I will praise the Lord.” Therefore she called his name **Judah**.[£] Then she stopped bearing.

Judah—(Heb.)= *let him be praised*
(Barnes) “Well may she praise the Lord; for this is the ancestor of the promised seed.
It is remarkable that the wife of priority, but not of preference, is the mother of the seed in whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed”

Chapter 30
“Domestic jealousies”

Genesis 30:1

¹Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!”

Rachel becomes impatient and jealous of her sister for bearing children, and blasts her husband...who then rebukes her

²And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”

(Heb.) *simple, timid*

³So she said, “Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear *a child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her.”

Rachel does what Sarah had done with Abraham—gives her handmaid to Jacob
(Barnes) “No express law yet forbade this course, though nature and Scripture by implication did”

⁴Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her.

⁵And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

⁶Then Rachel said, “God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she called his name [£]**Dan**.

Dan—(Heb.)= judge

(BKC) “The name Dan is explained by the word *dananni*, **God has vindicated me**, that is, He has now corrected Rachel’s wrong, her barrenness.”

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

⁸Then Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed.” So she called his name [£]**Naphtali**.

Naphtali—(Heb.)= *wrestlings of God*

Reflected Rachel’s struggle with her sister to have children

(BKC) “The names of the two sons born to Bilhah reflected Rachel’s bitter struggle and feeling of victory

Genesis 30:9-11

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

¹⁰And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

¹¹Then Leah said, [£]"A troop comes!" So she called his name [£]**Gad**.

Gad—(Heb.)= victory [also fortune]

➤ Leah also claims victory

¹²And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

¹³Then Leah said, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." So she called his name [£]**Asher**.

Asher—(Heb.)= *blessing* or happy

Leah recognized with God's help she was prospering

(Barnes) "Leah is seemingly conscious that she is pursuing a device of her own heart; and hence there is no explicit reference to the divine name or influence in the naming of the two sons of her maid"

Genesis 30:14

¹⁴Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest 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.”


Mandrakes—a plum-like fruit

(Word) “In ancient times, mandrakes were famed for arousing sexual desire and for helping barren women to conceive....

Rachel and Leah valued it as a fertility drug, Rachel because she had never conceived, Leah because she had become infertile”

(Companion) **Mandrakes:** “the root easily formed, by pinching it, into the shape of a man, hence its name.
Arabic —‘apples of Satan’

Leah grieves that Jacob prefers Rachel



¹⁵But she said to her, “*Is it* a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son’s mandrakes also?”
And Rachel said, “Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son’s mandrakes.”

Rachel makes a deal with Leah—Jacob could sleep with her a night in exchange for the mandrakes.....which she desired for her infertility

¹⁶When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, 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.” And he lay with her that night.

¹⁷And God **listened to Leah**, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

Leah gave up the mandrakes, but still bears a son (she had been infertile)—it is God who gave her the gift ‘**God listened to Leah**’

Leah goes on to bear three more children...Rachel now with the mandrakes remains barren for about three more years

¹⁸Leah said, “God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.” So she called his name [£]**Issachar**.

Issachar—(Heb.)= *there is hire, Or he is wages*

She hired Jacob with the fruit of the plants and had a son

¹⁹Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.

²⁰And Leah said, “**God has endowed me** *with* a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.” So she called his name [£]**Zebulon**.

²¹Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Zebulon—(Heb.)= *dwelling or habitation*

(Barnes) “The cherished thought that her husband will dwell with her who is the mother of six sons takes form in the name”

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

²³And she conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach.”

²⁴So she called his name [£]**Joseph**, and said, “The **Lord** shall add to me another son.”

Joseph—(Heb.)=*may He (God) add*

(Word) [name]“is a prayer for the future, a prayer that was indeed answered, but only at the cost of Rachel’s life; she died giving birth to Benjamin (35: 16-19)

(Word) “This short scene brings this episode to a happy conclusion...it marks the turning point in the Jacob story; from now on, Jacob’s thoughts are on going back to his homeland”

Lessons

Jacob's character change—from cunning deceiver to acknowledging God as supreme

But he still **reaps what he sows** and is deceived by his uncle Laban

Leah showed **faith in her affliction**— she was unloved but God heard her prayer and she was blessed with children and prospered