

# Genesis 30:25-31:55

Bible Study

## Review

### Chapter 28

Jacob is urged by Isaac to return to the homeland of Padam Aram (Haran) to find a wife

God in a dream promises to be with Jacob, and confirms to him, the blessings of his father's

### Chapter 29

Jacob desires to marry Rachel but had nothing to offer his uncle except his own labor...so he agrees to work seven years for Laban in exchange for Rachel's hand in marriage

Laban deceives Jacob and substitutes his older daughter Leah on the wedding night

Jacob serves another seven years in order to marry Rachel

### Chapter 30:1-24

Eleven of the twelve children of Israel are born to Leah, Zilpah, Rachel and Bilhah....

➤ Including Joseph (v. 24) to Rachel

Genesis 30: 25-43

“Jacob outwits Laban”

**Genesis 30:25**

<sup>25</sup>And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country.

Shortly after Joseph was born, the term of service expired...Jacob now demands to return home to Canaan

<sup>26</sup>Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you.”

Jacob reminds Laban that he has completed his 14 years of service, asks for dismissal and to keep his wives and children

<sup>27</sup>And Laban said to him, “**Please stay**, if I have found favor in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake.”

v. 27 Laban admits that he had been blessed through Jacob—(as God had promised Abraham’s descendents 12: 2 “and you shall be a blessing”)

➤ But Laban does not want to let him go

<sup>28</sup>Then he said, “Name me your wages, and I will give *it*.”

‘name your wages’ (NSB) “these words must have sounded hollow to Jacob, given his earlier experience in striking a deal with Laban”

“**wages**” (JFB) “Eastern shepherds receive for their hire **not money**, but a certain amount of the **increase or produce of the flock**”

<sup>29</sup>So *Jacob* said to him, “You know how I have served you and how **your** livestock has been with me.

Jacob refers to the value of his service which has produced and increased



<sup>30</sup>For what you had before I *came* was little, and it has increased to a great amount; **the Lord has blessed you since my coming**. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?”

v. 30 last part (paraphrase)

‘Since God has blessed you because of my work, now you can do something for me, or my family’

<sup>31</sup>So he said, “What shall I give you?” And Jacob said, “**You shall not give me anything.** If you will do **this thing** for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks:

Jacob proposes **a deal** that looks like he will gain little

<sup>32</sup>Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *these* shall be my wages.

**Jacob’s deal** was to remove speckled , spotted and colored sheep and goats them from the flock,

But not for payment...(these speckled and spotted will be given to Laban) (v. 35-36)

➤ Jacob is now left with the more pure (white) stock

(Heb) “it shall be my wages”  
[future]

In the **future** any spotted or colored animals **born** in the flock would be his wages

This deal was to Laban’s advantage—

Now Jacob was depending upon **God’s favor**

For any spotted animals to be born in the future, when Jacob had white animals—to Laban this seems impossible

<sup>33</sup>So **my righteousness** will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you:  
every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me.” (Because he has the white stock)

Jacob now looks to righteous character instead of cunning and trickery....

(paraphrase) 'it shall be as you said'

Laban

<sup>34</sup>And Laban said, “Oh, that it were according to your word!”

<sup>35</sup>So **he** removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons.

<sup>36</sup>Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Cunning Laban insures himself by removing the abnormally colored animals and sending them with his sons, a three day distance (12 miles)

<sup>37</sup>Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed **the white** which *was* in the rods.

<sup>38</sup>And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should **conceive** when they came to drink.

(Heb.) –to be hot...in heat [mate]...at this time God speaks to him in a dream (31: 10-12)

Jacob put the sap from the rods to the water possibly as an ‘additive’ to bring the animals to heat

(LASB) “Some say that there was a belief among herdsmen that vivid impressions at mating time influenced the offspring”

<sup>39</sup>So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted.

<sup>40</sup>Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban’s flock.

(NSB) “Jacob placed sticks of various colors in the watering troughs to **symbolize his belief that God** would bless him with more speckled and spotted lambs.

Indeed, God blessed Jacob as he had promised. Jacob added all the speckled and spotted animals to his own herd”



[mated]

<sup>41</sup>And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock **conceived**, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

<sup>42</sup>But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

<sup>43</sup>Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

V. 42-43 (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

“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.

In addition, Jacob used selective breeding by mating the stronger animals for himself and the weak female goats and sheep for Laban.”

v. 43 “exceedingly prosperous”—Jacob's wealth

*Exceedingly* (Heb.) = greatly, greatly

## Chapter 31

'wealth' (glory)—the weight of being rich (13:2)

### Genesis 31:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Now *Jacob* heard the words of **Laban's sons**, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth."

<sup>2</sup>And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it *was* not *favorable* toward him as before.

v. 1 The summary of Jacob's wealth in the last verse of chapter 30.... is followed by Laban's sons complaining: 'Jacob's success is our loss'

### Genesis 31:3

<sup>3</sup>Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

God's call to Jacob to return to the land of promise echoes his call to Abram (12: 1-2)

(BKC) “He (Jacob) wanted to take with him a willing family, so he attested to God’s leading and provision”



**Genesis 31:4-5**

<sup>4</sup>So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock,

<sup>5</sup>and said to them, “I see your father’s countenance, that it *is not favorable* toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me.

<sup>6</sup>And you know that with all my might I have served your father.

(as often as he could)

<sup>7</sup>Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.

<sup>8</sup>If he said thus: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: ‘The streaked shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore streaked.

<sup>9</sup>So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me.

(Gen. 30:38)

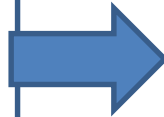
<sup>10</sup>“And it happened, **at the time when the flocks conceived**, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a **dream**, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted.

<sup>11</sup>Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’

<sup>12</sup>And He said, ‘Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.

<sup>13</sup>I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family

v. 11 “Angel of God”= Angel of the Lord



v. 12 God explained his **intervention** to cause the speckled and multi-colored animals...  
[because] “I have seen all the Laban is doing to you”

v. 13 (Word) “At Bethel, Jacob had vowed that if the Lord protected him and brought him back to his homeland, the Lord would be his God, and he would worship there”

<sup>14</sup>Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Is there still any portion or **inheritance** for us in our father’s house?”

<sup>15</sup>Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money.

v. 15 (Word) “It seems that they are agreeing that their father had cheated their husband of his due and thereby has cheated them”

<sup>16</sup>For all these riches which **God** has taken from our father are *really* ours and our children’s; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it.”

v. 16 Jacob’s wives agree that God had given Jacob and the family what had belonged to them  
(BKC) “The response of both women was made in faith as well. Laban had exploited his daughter’s wealth and had lost their good will. So they were willing to leave their father”

<sup>17</sup>Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels.

<sup>18</sup>And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

A busy time for sheep farmers

### Genesis 31:19

<sup>19</sup>Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the **household idols** that were her father's.

Probably a distance of 3 or 4 days journey...she does this while he is away

**'household idols'** ['images' OKJ]

(Companion) "Heb. *Teraphim*—a kind of household gods, showing that the idolatry of Babylonia still clung to Laban's family"

*Teraphim* occurs 15 times in the Old Testament

(Barnes) "They seem to be busts of the human form...with which they were employed for the purpose of divination.

The employment of them in the worship of God, which Laban seems to have inherited from his fathers"

## Why did Rachel steal the *teraphim*?

1) Possibly because of ancient practice that ownership of the ancestor's images involves inheritance rights



(AID) "The findings of archaeologists in Mesopotamia and adjacent areas indicated that the possession of the *teraphim* images had a bearing as to who would receive the family inheritance"

2) (AID) "She may have viewed the possession of these as a means of blocking any legal attempt by her father to claim some of the wealth Jacob had gained while in his service"

3) (Barnes) "Rachel had a lingering attachment to these objects of her family's superstitious reverence, and secretly carried them away as relics of a home she was to visit no more, and as a source of safety to herself against the perils of her flight"

Jacob realized he cannot expect Laban to release him so he must flee

<sup>20</sup>And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee.

<sup>21</sup>So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

v. 21 "Crossed the river  
(Euphrates)"

"and headed toward the  
mountains of Gilead"

[between the Sea of Galilee and  
the Dead Sea]

■ Seven days journey





<sup>22</sup>And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.

<sup>23</sup>Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for **seven days' journey**, and he overtook him in the mountains of **Gilead**.

Laban's forces pursued quickly  
Jacob w/family and herds moved slow



Gilead

Laban and his men could do Jacob harm, so God intervenes in a dream

<sup>24</sup>But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, “Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.”

<sup>25</sup>So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

v. 24 “speak to Jacob neither good nor bad”  
(Barnes) “is merely to abstain from language expressing and prefacing violence”

<sup>26</sup>And Laban said to Jacob: “What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives *taken* with the sword?”

<sup>27</sup>Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?

Eastern custom to accompany departing family w/songs

<sup>28</sup>And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in *so* doing.

<sup>29</sup>It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.’

<sup>30</sup>And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father’s house, *but* why did you steal my gods?”

Laban lets on like he would have let him go without incident, and then accuses him of stealing his gods

<sup>31</sup>Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I said, ‘Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.’

<sup>32</sup>With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

v. 31 Jacob did not expect to be treated fairly by Laban

v. 32 Gives Laban liberty to search for the gods, unaware Rachel had taken them

<sup>33</sup>And Laban went into Jacob’s tent, into Leah’s tent, and into the two maids’ tents, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s tent.

<sup>34</sup>Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find *them*.

<sup>35</sup>And she said to her father, “Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me.” And he searched but did not find the household idols

v. 34-35 “camels saddle’--Rachel hid the *teraphim* in the saddle bags and sat on the saddle....she then claimed she could not rise because of the time of the month for women

<sup>36</sup>Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: “What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?”

<sup>37</sup>Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set *it* here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both!

Jacob counter attacks Laban’s accusations—even his own men could see him innocent of the charges

<sup>38</sup>These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock.

“20 years”—Jacob had worked 14 years for the two wives and six years for the flocks

“have not miscarried”—(NSB) “Here Jacob affirmed his superior skills in managing the herds and God’s blessing”

<sup>39</sup>That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; **I bore the loss of it**. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night.

(Word) “Under traditional ancient Near Eastern law, the shepherd was not held responsible for any losses incurred from the attacks of wild beasts and in some cases of theft”

(NSB) “Jacob never charged Laban for any loss so that he could never charge Jacob for mismanagement”

The shepherd away from home for weeks sometimes

<sup>40</sup>*There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and **my sleep** departed from my eyes.

<sup>41</sup>Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

“you have changed my wages ten times” —ten times is a figure of speech for many times...referring to Laban’s promises to Jacob and then going back on his promises

<sup>42</sup>Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the **Fear of Isaac**, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. **God has seen my affliction** and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night.”

“**Fear of Isaac**”(Companion) “Fear put for the God whom Jacob worshipped”  
➤ Jacob’s character now—walking with God and being helped by God

“sent me away empty-handed” ... “**seen my affliction**”—phrases that point to the **Exodus**

<sup>43</sup>And Laban answered and said to Jacob, “*These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock; all that you see is mine.* But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?”

<sup>44</sup>Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.”

v. 43-44 Laban laments that he has to let everything go—surrender his children and proposes a covenant

(Word) “When foreigners seek to make covenants or oaths with the patriarchs, it is an acknowledgment of the latter’s superiority...Laban now feels he must protect himself from the power and blessing that evidently rest on Jacob; hence, he asks for a covenant”



<sup>45</sup>So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar.

<sup>46</sup>Then Jacob said to his brethren, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.

<sup>47</sup>Laban called it <sup>£</sup>Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it <sup>£</sup>Galeed.

The second time that Jacob set up a pillar—the first time was at Bethel where God had spoke to him on his way to Haran

The pillar and the heap of stones serve as witnesses—memorials of where a transaction takes place...**two** witnesses here for this important pact

(Word) “It is characteristic of ancient legal texts to summon a multitude of witnesses...it was not inappropriate of Jacob to want more than one witness... Laban was after all, a somewhat unreliable partner”

v. 47 Jegar Sahadutha and Galeed= witness heap  
From the language spoken by Laban (Aramaen or Syrian) / Hebrew by Jacob

<sup>48</sup>And Laban said, “This heap *is* a witness between you and me this day.” Therefore its name was called Galeed,

<sup>49</sup>also Mizpah,<sup>£</sup> because he said, “May the **Lord** watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.

<sup>50</sup>If you afflict my daughters, or if you take *other* wives besides my daughters, *although* no man *is* with us—see, God *is* witness between you and me!”

(NSB) “Mizpah means ‘outlook point’ and is related to the Hebrew word that means ‘to watch.’ God above had his eyes on both men to make them keep their covenant”

<sup>51</sup>Then Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which **I have placed** between you and me. [Jacob had placed it]

<sup>52</sup>This heap *is* a witness, and *this* pillar *is* a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.

(NSB) “The heap and the pillar were a double witness between the two men. Neither was to cross these **symbols** in order to harm the other”



<sup>53</sup>The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of **their father** judge between us.” And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

(JFB) “Jacob knowing that idolatry had crept in among that branch of the family (their father Terah was an idolater), swore by the Fear of Isaac”

<sup>54</sup>Then Jacob offered a **sacrifice** on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they **ate bread** and stayed all night on the mountain.

The only time in Genesis that Jacob prepares a sacrifice to worship

- Eating together cemented the agreement

<sup>55</sup>And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

Back to Harran in Mesopotamia

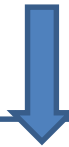
## Lessons

### **God protects his chosen—**

Despite his previous deceitfulness, God promised Jacob at Bethel that he would be with him

Jacob now relied on righteous conduct and faith in God to secure blessings instead of cunning and deceit

Jacob had to endure **20 years** of service and mistreatment (**trials**) while his character was being molded and shaped



Jacob's faith and endurance is an example for us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1)