

## JACOB PREPARES TO LEAVE LABAN

**TEXT: GENESIS 30:1-43**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. We saw last week that after all of the conniving and confusion with Laban and his two daughters, Jacob started his family.
2. And being married to two wives soon brought its inevitable results. Jacob preferred Rachel and he resented Leah (29:30, 31).
3. The LORD compensated Leah for the lack of her husband's affections by giving her four sons, while Rachel was barren.
4. Leah may have been a willing accomplice in her father's deceitful scheme, but apparently she knew the LORD, and gave her sons names that honored God (29:32-35).
- (1) Reuben – “See, a son” (29:32). “Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.”
- (2) Simeon – “Hearing” (29:33). “Because the LORD hath heard I was hated.”
- (3) Levi – “Joined” (29:34). “Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons.”
- (4) Judah – “Praise” (29:35). “Now will I praise the LORD.”
5. Leah realized that the hand of God was being put forth on her behalf, and she trusted that through the birth of her sons Jacob's feelings towards her would be changed (29:32-35).
6. It is noteworthy that it was Leah, not Rachel, who was the mother of the promised seed (29:35). The Lord Jesus Christ is descended from the tribe of Judah. In Revelation 5:5, the Lord Jesus is called “the Lion of the tribe of Juda.”

I. JACOB'S CHILDREN

II. JACOB'S TESTIMONY

III. JACOB'S WAGES

### **I. JACOB'S CHILDREN (30:1-24)**

1. It didn't take long for Rachel's carnal character to begin to surface. Jacob should have noticed this earlier but apparently he was so captivated by her beauty he didn't see it.

2. Jacob's answer to Rachel, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" indicates he understood that God was in control (30:2).
3. It is the omnipotent God of heaven who gives children.
4. Rachel was jealous that her sister Leah was bearing Jacob children and she was not (Genesis 30:1, 2).
5. Rachel was carnal, envious, selfish, peevish, discontented, and demanding. Sadly, many wives are like that!
6. Rachel eventually gave Jacob Bilhah, her handmaid for a concubine, and Bilhah conceived and bare Jacob a son, Dan, whose name means, "God hath judged (vindicated) me" (30:3-6).
7. Polygamy was practiced in Old Testament times, but God never approved of it. Genesis 30 shows us the jealousies and bitterness and strife caused by polygamy.
8. Bilhah then bare Jacob a second son, "Naphtali," which means "wrestlings" (30:7, 8).
9. When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing children, she took Zilpah her handmaid and gave her to Jacob as another wife, or concubine (30:9).
10. Zilpah bare two sons for Jacob – Gad, which means, "A troop cometh," and Asher, which means, "Blessed" (30:10-13).
11. By this time, Jacob had eight sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. At this point, Rachel was still unable to conceive.
12. Then one day, in the days of wheat harvest, Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah (30:14).
13. The fruit of the mandrakes was yellow and similar in size to a small apple. They were called "love apples" because people in the ancient Near East thought the mandrakes were an aphrodisiac able to stimulate sensual desire and aid conception.
14. Therefore, Rachel said to Leah, "Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes" (30:14b).
15. In the Song of Solomon 7:13, the Shulamite woman says to her beloved, "The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved."
16. Though there are many references to mandrakes in folklore in various cultures, these are the only two references to

mandrakes in the Bible – here in Genesis 30 and in Song of Solomon 7:13.

17. Merrill F. Unger says the fragrant mandrakes symbolize “the joys and delights of God-ordained conjugal felicity” (*Unger’s Commentary on the Old Testament*).
18. There may be something to the power of mandrakes, but it is God who has the power to give children (cf. 30:2).
19. Genesis 30:17 says, “And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son” (cf. 29:31; 30:2, 22).
20. The outcome is not what Rachel expected, because Rachel wanted children, but all she got was the mandrakes. Leah wanted Jacob, so she traded them to Rachel for the mandrakes. And so the mandrakes did nothing for Rachel, but Leah got herself another son by parting with them.
21. Someone put it this way – “Life is strange with its twists and turns, as every one of us sometimes learns.”
22. Issachar was Leah’s fifth son, and his name means, “God hath given me my hire” or “God hath given me my reward” (30:18; cf. verse 16). Leah traded her mandrakes to Rachel in exchange for the opportunity to lie with Jacob that night, and so Leah named her son accordingly (30:14-16).
23. And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob her sixth son, Zebulun, which means, “Dwelling” (30:19, 20). Leah hoped that Jacob would dwell in her tent.
24. Leah was also the mother of Dinah, which means “Judgment” (30:21). This seems to refer to the terrible story concerning Dinah and the family of Shechem recorded in chapter 34.
25. Perhaps Jacob had other daughters, but their names are not recorded. Genesis 37:35 says Jacob had daughters; however, this could be a reference to daughters-in-law or granddaughters.
26. “God remembered Rachel...” (30:22). This does not imply that God had ever forgotten Rachel. Men tend to be forgetful, but God is not forgetful.
27. Whenever the Bible says God remembers, it means, God delivers. God heard Rachel’s cry.
28. Exodus 2:24 says that when the children of Israel were in bondage in Egypt, “God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.”

29. God always remembers His children. With reference to His children, there is only thing that God forgets, and that is our sins. In Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17 we read these precious words, "And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."
30. God heard the prayers of Rachel and He opened her womb (30:22, 23). God granted Rachel her heart's desire in the birth of her son Joseph, who became the most prominent of Jacob's twelve sons.
31. Joseph's name means, "Adding" (30:24). He was Jacob's eleventh son, and his favorite. Genesis 37:3 says, "Now Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age."
32. After Joseph was born, Rachel said, "The LORD shall add to me another son" (30:24). This prophecy was fulfilled later on when Benjamin was born. Benjamin was the twelfth and the last of Jacob's twelve sons. His birth, and Rachel's death, are recorded in Genesis 35.

## **II. JACOB'S TESTIMONY**

1. Jacob didn't have much of a testimony. Reading the book of Genesis, one might even think Jacob was as lost as his brother Esau or his father-in-law Laban.
2. But God must have seen much in Jacob, and God was very patient with Jacob.
3. And despite his obvious shortcomings, Jacob did know the LORD, and even worldly-minded Laban recognized that (cf. 30:27).
4. Laban knew that it was not just Jacob's skills as a cattleman that made him such a valuable worker, it was God's hand upon Jacob.
5. Something happened to Jacob when Joseph was born. It seems like this was something of a turning-point in Jacob's life.
6. Jacob had already served his seven years for Leah, and an additional seven years for Rachel. He had been repeatedly deceived and cheated by Laban. Jacob knew he had to leave Laban, and he yearned to return to his own country.
7. Jacob had worked hard for his father-in-law Laban for about twenty years (31:38, 41). Jacob longed for his homeland, and

so he said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country”(30:25, 26).

### **III. JACOB’S WAGES**

1. Laban was not happy with Jacob’s request, and was unwilling to lose such a valuable servant.
2. Therefore, Laban suggested to Jacob that he should stay and name his salary, and he would agree to pay it (30:28).
3. But Jacob had to remind Laban how the LORD had blessed him since Jacob went to work for him. Jacob felt that now it was time for him to provide for his own large household (30:29, 30).
4. Jacob agreed to stay on a little longer, if Laban would agree with his terms (30:31). Jacob proposed to leave with Laban all the animals of one color, and to keep for himself those that were spotted and speckled among the sheep and the goats.
5. All Jacob wanted was the opportunity to build his own flock of sheep and goats from the speckled and spotted animals in Laban’s flocks. These animals were considered inferior so Laban agreed to Jacob’s proposition.
6. Jacob would go through Laban’s flocks and remove from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and these would be his “hire,” i.e., his wages (30:32).
7. Jacob was willing to start with nothing, confident that “in time to come” (30:33), his plan would work.
8. Laban immediately agreed to Jacob’s proposal (30:34), and he proceeded to remove his goats and sheep and hand them over to the care of his sons (30:35).
9. And before Jacob could change his mind or alter his plans, Laban put the distance of a three days’ journey between his flock and Jacob (30:36).
10. Jacob warned Laban, “So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come” (30:33), but apparently Laban did not stop to consider what those words meant.
11. After Laban left, Jacob took rods (sticks) of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and peeled white streaks in them, i.e., exposing the white bark (30:37).
12. Jacob then put these white-streaked, peeled rods in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, so that the flocks should conceive when they came to drink (30:38).

13. Jacob believed (perhaps superstitiously) the rods would be effective in producing a large offspring, and apparently he was right— “And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted” (30:39).
14. In verse 40, Jacob tried something similar. He separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the ring-streaked and all the brown sheep in the flock of Laban.
15. By careful breeding, Jacob developed a strain of stronger and healthier sheep and goats with the markings he desired (30:40-43).
16. Jacob may have understood the science of selective breeding, and perhaps he understood prenatal conditioning by visual impressions, but it should be noted that Jacob’s success is to be attributed more to divine intervention than to selective breeding or to prenatal influences.
17. Though Jacob was very clever and industrious, the key to his success was God’s blessings upon him (cf. 31:9-13, 42; 32:9, 10). Whether it is mandrakes or peeled rods, the key is God!
18. Jacob’s plan was very successful, and he increased exceedingly. He had large flocks as well as a great number of maidservants, and menservants (30:43).
19. Jacob said to Rachel and Leah, “the God of my father hath been with me” (31:5). This was the key to Jacob’s success.
20. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, Jacob “was not likely to be far behind in any effort for his own advantage, and we can see in this method of revenge the depth of his resentment against Laban. It was a case of equal meeting equal, for there is nothing to choose between them in the character and extent of their cleverness and craft” (*Genesis*).
21. Jacob was as crafty as his uncle Laban, and he finally found a way to outfox him.
22. Meanwhile, the LORD was continually trying to steer Jacob into the right pathway, and to bring him to the end of himself and his self-seeking.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. In Genesis 30:27, Laban said to Jacob, “For I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.”

2. Laban was one of those men who believed that religion was well and good for other people, but not for himself. There are many men like Laban in this world.
3. For example, some worldly men think it is very good for the man's wife to go to church, but they themselves cannot be bothered.
4. There are a few wives like that too. I recall evangelist Ed Carter saying to a worldly wife one night, "Your husband is one of the best men in this church. When are you going to get saved?"
5. She brushed him off, and shortly after that she died in a car crash.
6. Laban did not have any objection to the faith of Jacob or even with the faith of Leah and Rachel. He just didn't think he himself needed to be saved (cf. 31:30).
7. A number of years ago, W.A. Criswell preached a message from Genesis 31 entitled, "Can Your Gods Be Stolen?"
8. Dr. Criswell said, "One of the most unusual stories in the Bible. Can your gods be stolen? The answer is a decided and emphatic 'Yes!' If you bow down at the shrine of the gods of this world, your gods can be stolen. If you make money your god, your god can be stolen."
9. "Jay Gould, back yonder in two generations past, was the richest man in the world, and when he came to the end of his life, he said, and I quote him: 'I suppose that I am the most miserable man in the world.' ("Jay Gould on Himself," Waikato Times, Vol. XL, Issue 3218, 11 February 1893)."
10. "If your god is success, your god can be stolen. I so well poignantly remember when George Eastman who invented the Kodak camera and built one of the great corporations of America—the Eastman Kodak Company—I remember so well reading George Eastman sat in his luxurious, and beautiful, and palatial home and shot and killed himself—committed suicide."
11. "Can your gods be stolen? If it is to be famous and to be known, they can be stolen. Someone else can wear your laurels."
12. "If your god is beauty, it can be stolen. Those Hollywood stars—and I think of the most famous and possibly the most beautiful woman of them all; she committed suicide. Why? As she looked in the mirror and saw her beauty fading away, it was more than her heart could bear. Your gods can be stolen."