

Genesis 30: Jacob in Haran

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This chapter is an immediate continuation of the narrative from Chapter 29.

Leah's fruitfulness is **bitterness** to Rachel. She appeals to Jacob for **children**.

Rachel's complaint sounds a great deal like **Aunt Rebekah's** complaint.

Jacob's **favoritism** is not sufficient to please Rachel, nor is she content to take pleasure in her sister's prosperity.

"There was much amiss in the contest and competition between these two sisters, yet God brought good out of this evil; for, the time being now at hand when the seed of Abraham must begin to increase and multiply, thus Jacob's family was replenished with twelve sons, heads of the thousands of Israel, from whom the celebrated twelve tribes descended and were named."

—Matthew Henry

Rachel appeals to **Jacob** for children, as if he had the power to grant or withhold them. She wrongly appeals to him instead of **God**.

Jacob's reproof is **justified**—he acknowledges that God alone can grant Rachel's petition.

"He to whom we offer supplications is to us a god." —Matthew Henry

Rachel gives Bilhah to Jacob. The maids were viewed as **surrogate mothers**—bearing children for their mistresses. (*berek*—"on my knees")

The names of Dan and Naphtali reflect Rachel's spirit of **envy** toward Leah.

Dan = "a judge"

Naphtali = "wrestling"

Leah returns the gesture by giving Zilpah to Jacob.

Gad = "fortune"

Asher = "happy"

Reuben was about **five** years old when he found mandrakes in the field. Mandrakes were believed to be an aphrodisiac.

The exchange between Leah and Rachel is a bit **testy**. Leah agrees to exchange her mandrakes for a night with Jacob. What is the irony of Leah's complaint?

Leah conceives and bears two more children.

Issachar = "recompense"

Zebulun = "exalted"

We have reason to believe that Leah and Rachel were depending in some part on God's providence because we're told that God **listened**.

Finally, God **remembered** Rachel and she conceived.

Joseph = "Jehovah has added"

Leah's daughter **Dinah** is mentioned here and will be the focal point of the tragic events in chapter 34. Her name means "judged" or "vindicated" (compare to *Dan*).

Joseph's birth occurs at about the time the Jacob finishes his **14** years' service to Laban (by now Reuben would be entering his teen years).

At this point, Jacob has nothing but his **family**; in another six years, he will be so wealthy that Laban's sons will start to **grumble**. ("With only my staff I crossed this Jordan," Gen 32:10.)

"Those that trust in God, in his providence and promise, though they have great families and small incomes, can cheerfully hope that he who sends mouths will send meat. He who feeds the brood of the ravens will not starve the seed of the righteous." —Matthew Henry

Within a few hundred years, God multiplied Jacob into a nation of **millions**. (Numbers 1)

When Jacob begs leave, Laban once again sees an opportunity to **take advantage**.

Laban acknowledges that he has been blessed on account of **Jacob** and **God**.

Laban shows no personal interest in the God who has blessed him, nor does he express any interest in his daughters and grandchildren. He is only interested in the "**prosperity gospel**."

Laban again entreats Jacob to name his wages, placing him in an inferior position of **negotiation**.

Notice how Jacob's wages illustrate his dependence upon God's **providence**.

Jacob choosing the speckled and spotted sheep as wages was a shrewd way to prevent accusations of **theft** and to protect himself against **fraud**.

Jacob probably noticed that right after striking a deal, all the spotted sheep in Laban's flock suddenly **disappeared**.

Laban may have removed the speckled and spotted from the rest of the flock to prevent them from multiplying to Jacob's advantage.

The practice of placing the sticks before the sheep may have originated in **Canaan** where the speckled and spotted sheep were preferred over black and white.

We are told *what* Jacob did with the sticks, but not *why* he did it (or how God used it to multiply the sheep in Jacob's favor). Some argue that God commanded Jacob to do this, while others maintain that the sticks were a scheme.

Jacob became very rich in livestock and servants, as illustrated by his gift to **Esau**. (Gen 32:14-15)

Jacob had a lousy boss, but showed **diligence** in spite of Laban's craftiness. Jacob was trusting that God would provide for him even through a greedy boss. Not even Laban could thwart God's purposes.