

Genesis Chapter 30 Continued

Genesis 30:25 "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."

"And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph": At which time his fourteen years of servitude were ended; for Jacob was in Laban's house twenty years, fourteen were spent in serving for his wives, and the other six for his cattle, which begun from this time, as the context clearly shows (see Genesis 31:41).

So that, as the Jewish writers truly observe, in seven years' time Jacob had twelve children born to him, eleven sons and one daughter. He had served seven years before he had either of his wives.

"That Jacob said unto Laban, send me away": Give me leave to depart thy house: he had a right to demand his liberty and to insist upon it, since the time of his servitude was up; but he chose to have leave, and part in a friendly manner.

"That I may go unto mine own place, and to my own country": To Beer-sheba, where his father and mother lived, and whom, no doubt, he longed to see; and to the land of Canaan, in which that place was, which was his native country and was given him by promise, and was to be the inheritance of his seed. Jacob's wish to return to Canaan was not hidden from Laban (verse 30).

Genesis 30:26 "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."

"Give me my wives": His two wives, Leah and Rachel, and the two maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, which he had given him for wives also; he desires to leave and take them with him.

"And my children": His twelve children. He did not desire his father-in-law to take any of them, and keep them for him, but was desirous of having them with him. No doubt for the sake of their education, though he had nothing of his own wherewith to support them. Not doubting that God would make good his promise in giving him food and raiment, and returning him to his country; and which his faith applied to his family as well as to himself.

"For whom I have served thee": Not for his children, but for his wives, his two wives.

"And let me go": Free from thy service, and to my own country.

"For thou knowest my service which I have done thee": How much and great it is, and with what diligence and faithfulness it has been performed, and that the time of it fixed and agreed upon was at an end.

Many years had passed since Jacob left his home. He came to this strange land and lived and took two wives. He did not know whether his parents were still alive, or not. His brother's anger had probably cooled by now. You might say, he was homesick. Jacob had fulfilled his side of the bargain with Laban.

Genesis 30:27 "And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, [tarry: for] I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake."

"And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in thine eyes, tarry": One would think he could not expect to have much from him, by his treatment of him. But he craftily coaxing him in this fawning, flattering way, in order to gain a point. He begs of him, in a very humble and pleading manner.

If he had any love for him that he would not depart from him, but stay with him, which he should take as a great favor. But he could not insist upon it, as bound in duty or as a point of justice.

"For I have learned by experience": By the observations made in the fourteen years past.

"That the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake": Laban had so much religion as to ascribe the blessings, the good things he had, to the Lord, as the author and giver of them. And so much honor, or however, thought it was more in his interest to own it, that it was for Jacob's sake that he was thus blessed.

The word translated is used sometimes of divination (seeking knowledge of the future or the unknown by supernatural means), and the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem render it, "I have used divinations". And according to Jarchi and Aben Ezra, Laban was a diviner and soothsayer; and by the teraphim he had in his house (Genesis 31:19).

Laban divined, and knew thereby that he was blessed for the sake of Jacob. But, as Schmidt observes, it is not credible that the devil should give so famous a testimony to Laban of Jehovah and Jacob.

"I have found" (see note on Deut. 18:9-12).

This was the first time we really hear any praise going from Laban to Jacob. He was, in a roundabout way, reminding Jacob that he took him in. Experience is the best teacher. This was no exception.

Laban realized that Jacob was a man of God. He also realized, that the blessings God had poured out were because of Jacob, and not anything that he had done. When God pours a blessing, it is so big it will extend to those in close association.

Genesis 30:28 "And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give [it]."

“Appoint me thy wages”: On the two occasions that Laban asked this of Jacob it was to urge him to stay. The first time (29:15), Laban had sought to reward a relative, but this time it was because he had been rewarded since “the Lord has blessed me on your account” (verse 27).

Jacob readily confirmed Laban’s evaluation in that “little” had indeed become “a multitude” (verse 3), since he had come on the scene. Laban’s superficial generosity should not be mistaken for genuine goodness (see 31:7). He was attempting to deceive Jacob into staying because it was potentially profitable for him.

Laban was just making a deal with Jacob to work for him. He knew Jacob was fair, so he said whatever you want I will pay.

Genesis 30:29 "And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me."

"And he said unto him": Jacob to Laban.

"Thou knowest that I have served thee": Not only diligently and faithfully, without any salary, excepting for his wives. Otherwise he had no wages for his service all this time, which therefore should be considered for the future.

"And how thy cattle was with me": Always under his care, and he ever watchful of them; spent all his time and labor with them, and had no opportunity of getting anything for himself.

Genesis 30:30 "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?"

"For it was little which thou hadst before I came": Perhaps but a single flock, and that not a very large one, since Rachel, his youngest daughter, had the care of it.

"And it is now increased unto a multitude": Or "broke forth", spread itself over the fields and plains, hills and mountains adjacent, so that they were covered with his sheep, these bringing forth thousands and ten thousands (Psalm 144:13).

"And the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming": Or "at my foot"; ever since he set foot in his house. Aben Ezra observes it as a proverbial saying, such a one has a good foot, a lucky one, wherever he comes a blessing or success goes with him. Or the meaning may be, wherever Jacob went or led his flock, and fed it, it prospered, the blessing of God going with him.

"And now, when shall I provide for mine own house?" suggesting it was his duty to do it, and it was high time he did it, since he had a large family to provide for (see 1 Timothy 5:8).

Jacob was just telling Laban here, that he, with God's help, had built Laban a huge herd of cattle. He saw his family growing and desired to have something for them. It was time to have his own herd. Soon he would need to help his children get started on their own.

Genesis 30:31 "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."

“What shall I give thee”: 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.

Jacob was not asking for a hand out. He was willing to work for Laban, to build himself a herd.

Genesis 30:32 "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."

He offered Laban a plan that could bless him while costing Laban nothing. He would continue to care for Laban’s animals, as he had been doing. His pay would consist of animals not yet born, animals which would seem the less desirable to Laban because of their markings and color.

“Removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle; and all the brown”: Evidently, Jacob relied on a superstition that the offspring would be influenced by the fears or expectations of the mother during pregnancy (verses 37-38). Tests have shown that spotting gives way to solid color in the breeding of goats.

Modern genetic studies on dominance and development have supported Jacob’s method, which at one time seemed to link the Bible with groundless supposition. Jacob’s success was also attributed to selective breeding (verses 40-42), in addition to divine help (31:10-12).

Genesis 30:33 "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."

None of the solid color animals would be taken by Jacob, and if any were born into Jacob’s flocks, Laban could take them (they were considered as stolen).

Only those animals born speckled, spotted, striped, or abnormally colored would belong to Jacob. Evidently, most of the animals were white (sheep), black (goats), and brown (cattle).

Few were in the category of Jacob’s request. Further, Jacob would not even use the living speckled or abnormally colored animals to breed more like them. He would separate them into a flock of their own kind, apart from the normally colored animals. Only the spotted and abnormally colored offspring born in the future to the normally colored would be his.

Here was an easy way to tell their animals apart. Very few sheep are brown. Most are white, so Jacob was trying to take a large quantity of animals. Really, he was taking the odd and unusual animals of the flock. Jacob spoke of his righteousness speaking for him. He knew God would abundantly bless his flock.

Genesis 30:34 "And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word."

Since it seemed to Laban that the birth of such abnormally marked animals was unlikely to occur in any significant volume from the normally colored, he agreed.

Laban was just saying it was a deal.

Genesis 30:35 "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 believed this a small and favorable concession on his part to maintain the skills of Jacob to further enlarge his herd and flocks. Jacob, by this, put himself entirely 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 from the normal animals in Jacob's care.

The children worked in those days alongside their parents. Jacob was more or less overseer of all, his and Laban's, but his boys would specifically take care of his animals. So the two groups of animals would not get mixed up and interbred, we see in the next Scripture what Jacob did.

Genesis 30:36 "And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks."

"And he set three days' journey between himself and Jacob": Not three days' journey for a man, but for cattle. This distance there was between the place where Laban and his sons kept the spotted, speckled, and brown cattle, and that in which Jacob kept the flock only consisting of white sheep.

And this was done, that the flocks might not be mixed, and that there might be no opportunity to take any of the spotted ones, and that they might not stray into Jacob's flock. Lest any of his seeing them might bring forth the like, such precaution was used.

"And Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flock": Those that remained after the spotted, speckled, and brown were taken out. And Jacob having none but white sheep, there was no great likelihood, according to the course of nature, of his having much for his hire.

Since he was only to have the spotted, speckled and brown sheep that came from them, the chances were very low for his increase as generally like begets like.

This had to be a huge area to be room for three days between them. Probably, over twenty miles were between the two groups of animals.

“Rods”: Jacob was knowledgeable about sheep, goats, and cattle, having kept his father’s animals for most of this 90 years, and Laban’s for the last 14 years. He knew that when one uncommonly marked animal was born (with a recessive gene); he could then begin to breed that gene selectively to produce flocks and herds of abnormally marked animals, which were in no way inferior physically to the normally marked.

Once he began this breeding process, he sought to stimulate it by some methods that may appear superstitious and foolish to us (as the mandrakes in verse 14). But it is most likely that he had learned that, when the bark was peeled, there was some stimulant released into the water that stimulated the animals to sexual activity.

In (verse 38), the word “conceive” (mated), is literally, in Hebrew “to be hot,” or as is said of animals “to be in heat.” His plan was successful (verse 39), and kept his own flock separate from the abnormally colored ones of Laban.

His system worked to his own advantage, not that of Laban (verse 42), who had for years taken advantage of him. Jacob gave God the credit for the success of his efforts (31:7, 9).

Genesis 30:37 "And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which [was] in the rods."

"And Jacob took him rods of green poplar": Of the white poplar tree, called green, not from the color, but from the moisture, being such as were cut off of the tree.

"And of the hazel and chestnut tree": The former some take to be the almond tree, as Saadiah Gaon, and others; and the latter to be the plantain or plane tree, so Ainsworth, and others say.

"And pilled white strakes in them": Took off the bark of them in some places, and left it on in others, which made white strakes.

"And made the white appear which was in the rods": That part of the rods which was stripped of the bark appeared white; and it appeared the whiter for the bark that was left on in other parts. And both made the rods to appear to have various colors, which was the design of Jacob in pilling them.

Genesis 30:38 "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."

"And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks": Opposite them, in the view of them.

"In the gutters in the watering troughs, when the flocks came to drink": That is, in places of water, where troughs or vessels were made, into which the water ran convenient for the cattle to drink out of; and here he placed his party colored rods right over against the flocks.

"That they should conceive when they came to drink": As it was most likely they should when they were together at the water, and had refreshed themselves with it; and being "heated", as the word signifies, with a desire of copulation, might conceive in sight of the above rods which were set to move upon their imagination at the time of their conception.

In order to produce cattle of different colors, to which no doubt he was directed of God. and it had, through his blessing, the wished for success, as follows:

Genesis 30:39 "And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted."

"And the flocks conceived before the rods" At them, and in sight of them; which had such influence upon them through the force of imagination, and a divine power and providence so directing and succeeding this device, that they:

"Brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted": Such as Jacob was to have for his hire; and, though there was no doubt a more than ordinary assembly of divine Providence attending this affair. Yet there have been many strange things brought about in a natural way by the strength of imagination.

And the Apis, or Egyptian ox, which had peculiar spots in it, was produced in like manner, so that there was always in succession one of the same form and color, as Austin asserts; and it may be observed, what is affirmed by some writers, that sheep will change their colors according to the different waters they drink of at the time of their being covered.

And that some rivers drunk from will make white sheep black, and black white, and others red and yellow. But as Jacob was directed of God to take this method, this is sufficient to justify him, and upon his blessing and providence the success depended, whatever there may be in nature to bring about such an effect.

And as it was to do himself justice, who had been greatly injured by Laban, it was equally as just and righteous a thing to take this course, as it was for the Israelites by a divine direction to borrow jewels, etc. of the Egyptians, whereby they were repaid for their hard service.

(This was written over one hundred years before the laws of genetics were discovered). We know that the result was from God not of Jacob's schemes.

Here it seems Jacob had a plan to get back at Laban for tricking him about Leah and Rachel. He was causing all the new born to be spotted, ringstraked, and speckled; adding to his stock and not Laban's. Perhaps, he believed Laban already had enough.

Genesis 30:40 "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."

"And Jacob did separate the lambs": The ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

"And set the faces of the flocks": That were all white.

"Towards the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban": Either to go before those that were all white, that they by looking at them might conceive and bring forth such, which was another device of Jacob's to increase his own sheep. Or else he set at the water troughs the white sheep on one side of them, and on the opposite side the speckled ones, etc. that the same effect might also be produced the more successfully both by the rods and by the speckled lambs.

"And he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto "Laban's cattle": Partly that they might not be mixed together, but kept distinct, that what was his property might be discerned from Laban's. And partly, lest his spotted ones, being mixed with Laban's white sheep, by continual looking at them, should conceive and bring forth such likewise, and so his flocks be lessened.

Genesis 30:41 "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."

"And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive": Whose limbs were well compact, and were strong and healthy.

"That Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods": And bring forth partly colored ones, and such as were robust and strong like themselves. This was another device of Jacob's to get the best of the flock.

Aben Ezra thinks this refers to the two seasons of the year, when the flocks conceived; the one was in Nisan, in the spring, and such as were brought on that conception were strong, and therefore Jacob chose to lay the rods in the gutters at that time, that he might have the best cattle.

And so, the Targum of Jonathan calls these here the forward ones, as it does those (in Genesis 30:42). We render feeble, the latter ones; which, according to Aben Ezra, conceived in Tisri or September, and what they brought were weak and feeble. (Based on the laws of genetics), Jacob's breeding of the best of the flock would produce higher quality offspring.

Genesis 30:42 "But when the cattle were feeble, he put [them] not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's."

"And when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in": Or "when covered", as Menachem, that is, with wool, and so not so desirous of copulation with the males, nor so fit and strong for generation. And therefore, he put not in the rods into the gutters, partly that he might have none feeble in his flock, and partly that he might not spoil Laban of his whole flock, strong and weak.

"So the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's": Not only his flocks became more numerous than Laban's, but were a better quality.

Genesis 30:43 "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses."

"And the man increased exceedingly": Jacob grew very rich.

"And had much cattle": The greater part of Laban's flocks brought forth speckled, spotted, and brown cattle, which, according to agreement, were Jacob's.

"And maidservants, and menservants": Which he got to take care of his household affairs, and to assist him in keeping his flocks.

"And camels, and asses": For his flocks increasing so very much, he sold many of his sheep at a good price, as Jarchi observes, and with it bought camels and asses. These were very fit for his use, when he should be obliged or think fit to remove into his own country, and which he was meditating, and had a direction from the Lord for, as in the following chapter.

In all of this, we must remember that Jacob, trickster, was still his name. Even though God had already promised to bless him, He had not changed all of his ways yet.

Genesis Chapter 30 Continued Questions

1. When did Jacob decide to leave Laban?
2. Where did he want to go?
3. Was there any documented evidence of Jacob hearing from his family while he was with Laban?
4. What had Laban learned from experience about Jacob?
5. What is a selfish reason to associate with the chosen of God?
6. What offer did Laban make Jacob for wages?
7. What happened to Laban's flock in the over 14 years that Jacob had worked for him?
8. Why did Jacob want his own flock?
9. What does Laban give Jacob?
10. What did Jacob offer Laban in work?
11. How would they separate the animals?
12. What remarks did Jacob make about his relation to God?

13. How far apart did they place the animals?
14. Who herded Jacob's flock?
15. Who fed Laban's flock?
16. What did Jacob do to make Laban's new born animals belong to him?
17. Who got the feeble?
18. Why did Jacob do this to Laban?
19. The increase of Jacob covered five things. Name them.
20. What must we remember about Jacob that helps us to understand what he did?