

**Genesis**  
**Chapter Twenty-Eight**

- Jacob is Sent Away
- Jacob's Dream

## Jacob Is Sent Away Verses 1-9

### Verses 1-2

**“So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and commanded him, saying to him, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. <sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother.”**

As Abraham sent a servant to Laban’s house in Haran to find a wife for Isaac, now Isaac sends Jacob to the same place to find a wife for his son. Esau’s marriage to two Hittite woman caused great misery for Rebekah and Isaac. She said in 27:46; *“I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth like these from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”* The possibility of Jacob following in his brother’s footsteps was too much for his parents to bear, so Jacob was sent to Haran to find a wife from the daughters of Laban. Isaac not only commanded Jacob to go but he blessed him in doing so.

### Verses 3-5

**“<sup>3</sup> May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, so that you may become a multitude of peoples. <sup>4</sup> May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, so that you may possess the land where you live as a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.” <sup>5</sup> Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.”**

The blessing Isaac bestowed on Jacob was in the name of God Almighty, *El Shaddai* (17:1). The blessing: *“May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, so that you may become a multitude of peoples. <sup>4</sup> May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, so that you may possess the land where you live as a stranger, which God gave to Abraham.”*

The importance of this blessing is that it established Jacob as the third patriarch. The blessing from God to Abraham, from Abraham to Isaac, and from Isaac to Jacob.

### Verses 6-9

**“<sup>6</sup> Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, *and that* when he blessed him he commanded him, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,” <sup>7</sup> and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. <sup>8</sup> So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; <sup>9</sup> and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, the sister of Nebaioth.”**

As Esau witnessed these events, they decided to try to win his father’s blessing by also taking a wife from one of his cousins, from the line of Ishmael. He did not understand that an Ishmaelite wife was not the path to receiving Isaac’s blessing.

## Jacob's Dream Verses 10-22

### Verses 10-12

**“Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. <sup>11</sup> And he happened upon a particular place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and made it a support for his head, and lay down in that place. <sup>12</sup> And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”**

Jacob meets God at Bethel. Using a rock as a pillow Jacob drifts off to sleep and God reveals heaven to him.

**John 1:51**, In Jesus' calling of Nathanael, He makes it clear that He, Jesus, is the access to heaven; *“And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*

**John 14:6** *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

This dream confirms to Jacob that heaven is real and that there is real access and interaction between heaven and earth.

### Verses 13-15

**“<sup>13</sup> Then behold, the LORD was standing above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. <sup>15</sup> Behold, 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 promised you.”**

God speaks to Jacob. Jacob would have heard the stories of the Lord appearing to his grandfather Abraham and to his father Isaac. Now he is allowed to have the same experience. God confirms to Jacob the covenant he established with Abraham (12:1-3) and confirmed with Isaac (26:2-5). God confirming the promises would have been encouraging and would have provided hope, but the most important words Jacob heard must have been: **“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 promised you.”**

Growing up Jacob had heard the stories but now he hears the words directly from God himself assuring Jacob that God was with him.

**Philippians 1:6** *“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”*

### Verses 16-19

**“<sup>16</sup> Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “The LORD is certainly in this place, and I did not know it!” <sup>17</sup> And 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!”<sup>18</sup> So Jacob got up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had placed as a support for his head, and set it up as a memorial stone, and poured oil on its top.<sup>19</sup> Then he named that place Bethel; but previously the name of the city had been Luz.”**

Once again, the covenant promises were affirmed. God had become the God of Abraham. The God of Isaac and now the God of Jacob. Jacob was not seeking God. In fact he was fleeing from the consequences of his deception. This is not only a picture of God faithfully keeping His promises, but this is a picture of God’s grace. Jacob’s deceptive actions, his spiritual immaturity, his willingness to do as he wished were not attributes of a life lived for God, yet in Jacob’s misery, God reveals Himself and extends His grace.

#### **Verses 20-22**

**“<sup>20</sup> Jacob also made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and give me food to eat and garments to wear,<sup>21</sup> and I return to my father’s house in safety, then the LORD will be my God.<sup>22</sup> And this stone, which I have set up as a memorial stone, will be God’s house, and of everything that You give me I will assuredly give a tenth to You.”**

If you wonder how impactful God’s words assuring Jacob that He was with him were, understand that those words and that assurance had a life changing impact on Jacob:

- As he was fleeing from Laban – God again spoke these words to him (31:3)
- Jacob’s own testimony includes these words (31:5)
- Jacob includes these words when he passes on the blessing to the next generation (48:21).

To show how spiritually immature Jacob was, here at one of the most intimate moments one can have with God, Jacob makes a vow. However, the words he uses are not words of faith but words of doubt

- *If* God will be
- *then* the LORD will be

“*If*” and “*then*” are words of negotiation not words of worship. To his credit, Jacob does build an altar and does worship God. This scene reveals, like many of us, that Jacob has a long way to go in understanding just how amazing and wonderful God is!

**Genesis**  
**Chapter Twenty-Nine**

- Jacob Meets Rachel
- Laban's Treachery

## Jacob Meets Rachel Verses 1-20

### Verses 1-3

**“Then Jacob set out on his journey and went to the land of the people of the east. <sup>2</sup> He looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, because they watered the flocks from that well. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large. <sup>3</sup> When all the flocks were gathered there, they would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep. Then they would put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.”**

Jacob set out on what is going to be a journey which will last years. He is starting this journey with renewal hope and affirmation. The vision of the activity taking place from heaven to earth and the affirmation that God gave Jacob will be what sustains him in the upcoming trials and challenges.

Heading East and arriving at a well, Jacob knew the story of how his grandfather's servant found his mother, Rebekah, at a well. She volunteered to water all the servants' camels and the servant knew this was the wife for Isaac. Now Jacob arrives at a well in the same Mesopotamian territory and he finds three flocks of sheep and some lazy shepherds. None of the shepherds greet this visitor so Jacob speaks first.

### Verses 4-8

**“<sup>4</sup> Jacob said to them, “My brothers, where are you from?” And they said, “We are from Haran.” <sup>5</sup> So he said to them, “Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?” And they said, “We know *him*.” <sup>6</sup> And he said to them, “Is it well with him?” And they said, “It is well, and here is his daughter Rachel coming with the sheep.” <sup>7</sup> Then he said, “Look, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them.” <sup>8</sup> But they said, “We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep.”**

Jacob, wanting to know if he was close to his destination, asks these shepherds where they are from and if they knew Laban. Their response allowed Jacob to know he had made it to his destination and maybe because he was a little eager to get to Laban's house he suggested that the shepherd water their sheep so they can go graze and be healthy. Apparently the shepherds were not impressed with Jacob's suggestion for they had their own system and had no desire to change their system.

### Verses 9-12

**“<sup>9</sup> While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. <sup>10</sup> When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of his mother's brother Laban. <sup>11</sup> Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and raised his voice and wept. <sup>12</sup> Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.”**

Back at Bethel, did God give Jacob any type of vision or description of who his wife was to be? If so, we were not told of such a moment, but the way Jacob responded to seeing Rachel

was interesting. Moving the large stone from the top of the well was usually a task for several men, but Jacob jumps up and removes the stone himself. The other shepherds were at the well first, but Jacob waters Laban's sheep first.

It would have taken some time for Jacob to water all of Laban's flock. As that task is being done, we are not told if there was much conversation between Jacob and Rachel, but we are told when Jacob had finished watering the sheep he kissed Rachel. Here is a man kissing a woman who is not his wife or mother. Jacob is overwhelmed with emotion; he kisses his cousin and soon he will kiss his cousin's father as well. Jacob must believe that this meeting is the beginning of God's promises made back at Bethel. Rachel responds by running and telling her father.

#### Verses 13-14

**“<sup>13</sup> So when Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he told Laban all these things. <sup>14</sup> And Laban said to him, “You certainly are my bone and my flesh.” And he stayed with him a month.”**

Laban would have remembered a similar situation when a servant showed up asking for the hand of his sister. That servant brought great gifts. However, unlike Abraham's servants, Jacob did not arrive with ten camels, nor did he have any gifts of gold. In fact, Laban quickly realized that Jacob came empty handed.

#### Verses 15-20

**“<sup>15</sup> Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” <sup>16</sup> Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in figure and appearance. <sup>18</sup> Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” <sup>19</sup> Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me.” <sup>20</sup> So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him like *only* a few days because of his love for her.”**

Lacking gifts, the only thing of worth Jacob could offer Laban for Rachel's hand in marriage was his service. The price for his bride was to be seven years, which again shows Laban's greed and materialistic heart. This price was a double dowry for the going rate in that culture was three or four years. On the other hand, this would be a period of preparation; God will be able to humble Jacob and allow him to grow in faith and maturity.

### Laban's Treachery

#### Verses 21-35

#### Verses 21-27

**“<sup>21</sup> Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give *me* my wife, for my time is completed, that I may have relations with her.” <sup>22</sup> So Laban gathered all the people of the place and held a feast. <sup>23</sup> Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to him; and *Jacob* had relations with her. <sup>24</sup> Laban also gave his female slave Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a slave. <sup>25</sup> So it**

**came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, “What is this *that* you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?”<sup>26</sup> But Laban said, “It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn.<sup>27</sup> Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me, for another seven years.”**

After seven years it was time for Laban to let Jacob know the price for his bride had been paid and he was free to take Rachel as his wife. Jacob’s demand of “*give me...*” versus a more courteous exchange seems to describe Laban trying to extort as much service from Jacob as he could. It seems Laban was not the one to say the debt had been paid; it was Jacob who had to go to Laban and say the debt was paid.

Here is where the real deception begins. Laban gathering people and hosting a feast would have seemed perfectly normal. We are told Laban made sure this ceremony took place in the evening. In this culture a bride was fully veiled until she and her husband went to the groom’s tent where the marriage would be consummated. Obviously, many questions arise from this scenario. How could Jacob not have known he was with Leah not Rachel? How could Leah have willingly deceived Jacob and betrayed Rachel? The only elements we have to answer some of those questions are the wedding ceremony took place late at night. There must have been MUCH wine at the feast and the groom’s tent was dark. As for Leah, either she wanted to hurt her sister or maybe she too secretly loved Jacob. Another question would be WHY did Rachel allow this deception to happen? The father had absolute authority over his house, did Laban demand Rachel to let Leah take her place?

Once morning came and the darkness was gone and the wine had subsided, Jacob realized what Laban had done. However, it was too late. The marriage had already been consummated. There was no reversing that; Leah was Jacob’s wife. In rage Jacob confronts Laban and this father’s greed is on full display. Jacob can’t change the fact that he married Leah, but he can agree to pay the price for the bride he really wants, another seven years for Rachel. At the end of Leah’s bridal week, Jacob took Rachel as his wife with the stipulation that he will work *another* seven years.

Years before Jacob was involved with family and a deceptive act. With his mother they plotted to deceive his father into giving him the first-born blessing which Isaac wanted to bestow upon Esau. Now Jacob understands what it feels like to be on the receiving end of being deceived with a ceremony which cannot be reversed.

#### **Verses 28-30**

**“<sup>28</sup> Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.<sup>29</sup> Laban also gave his female slave Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her slave.<sup>30</sup> So Jacob had relations with Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.”**

With no option left, Jacob yielded to Uncle Laban’s extortion and worked another seven years. Sister wives, one loved one not loved, each having servants (who become concubines), the fruit of greed, deception, and the consequences of sin.

### Verses 31-35

“<sup>31</sup> Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was unable to have children. <sup>32</sup> Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and named him Reuben, for she said, “Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me. <sup>33</sup> Then she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.” So she named him Simeon. <sup>34</sup> And she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore he was named Levi. <sup>35</sup> And she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, “This time I will praise the LORD.” Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.”

From this dysfunctional arrangement, God established the Twelve tribes of Israel. While Jacob was working off his seven years for Rachel, Leah became the mother of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, which meant she was the mother of the kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi. Her offspring includes Moses, David, and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rachel became the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob also had two sons with Leah’s servant Zilpah and named them Gad and Asher. With Rachel’s servant Bilhah, Jacob had two more sons and named them Dan and Naphtali.

In this situation it seemed God understood Jacob’s lack of love for Leah. As Leah had children, the names of each child spoke to God’s compassion towards Leah. The first son was named Reuben whose name means “look, a son.” Genesis 29:32 says, <sup>32</sup> Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and named him Reuben, for she said, “***Because the LORD has seen my affliction***; surely now my husband will love me.” Leah names her second son Simeon which means “the lord has heard.” 29:33 says, “Because ***the LORD has heard*** that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.” Leah’s third son with Jacob is named Levi which means “attachment.” 29: 34 says, “she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, “***Now this time my husband will become attached to me***, because I have borne him three sons.” The fourth son, Judah, which means “praise”, 29:35 “And she conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, “***This time I will praise the LORD.***” Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.”

## **Genesis**

### **Chapter Thirty**

- The Sons of Jacob
- Jacob Prospers

## The Sons of Jacob Verses 1-24

### Verses 1-8

**“Now when Rachel saw that she had not borne Jacob *any* children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I am going to die.”<sup>2</sup> Then Jacob’s anger burned against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”<sup>3</sup> Then she said, “Here is my female slave Bilhah: have relations with her that she may give birth on my knees, so that by her I too may obtain a child.”<sup>4</sup> So she gave him her slave Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob had relations with her.<sup>5</sup> Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.<sup>6</sup> Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.” Therefore she named him Dan.<sup>7</sup> And Rachel’s slave Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.<sup>8</sup> So Rachel said, “*With mighty wrestling I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed.*” And she named him Naphtali.”**

As the favorite wife of the third patriarch, Rachel expected to be the one to fulfil the family line and promises bestowed upon this family by God. In the ancient days, a woman who was barren felt like, and may have been seen as, a failure. While her sister Leah was able to provide Jacob one son after another, Rachel’s fury burned within. As Leah hoped her fertility would cause Jacob to finally love her, Rachel became more desperate. One sister was desperate to be loved; the other sister was desperate to have a son.

Rachel lashes out at her husband demanding children, Jacob responds with a rebuke, reminding her only God can produce life. Despite this reality Rachel tries to take matters into her own hands and devises a plan where she can have children by way of her maidservant. Rachel knew the failure which took place when Sarah had the same idea with Hagar. Rachel knew the tension between Esau and Jacob yet her intolerance overcomes her and she gives her husband her maidservant. Bilhah does conceive twice, the first son named Dan, which means “judged” or “vindicated”. “Then Rachel said, “***God has vindicated me***, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son” (30:6). The second son was named Naphtali which means “wrestlings”. “So Rachel said, “***With mighty wrestling I have wrestled with my sister***, and I have indeed prevailed” (30:8).

### Verses 9-13

**“<sup>9</sup> When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her slave Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. <sup>10</sup> And Leah’s slave Zilpah bore Jacob a son. <sup>11</sup> Then Leah said, “How fortunate!” So she named him Gad. <sup>12</sup> And Leah’s slave Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. <sup>13</sup> Then Leah said, “Happy am I! For women will call me happy.” So she named him Asher.”**

Leah responds to Rachel’s actions by giving her maidservant to Jacob. Zilpah is successful in conceiving, and she too gives Jacob two more sons. The first son is named Gad which means “good fortune.” “Then Leah said, “***How fortunate!***” So she named him Gad” (30:11). The second son is named Asher which means “happy.” “Then Leah said, “***Happy am I! For women will call me happy***” (30:13).

### Verses 14-16

“<sup>14</sup> Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrake fruits in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.” <sup>15</sup> But she said to her, “Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son’s mandrakes also?” So Rachel said, “Therefore he may sleep with you tonight in return for your son’s mandrakes.” <sup>16</sup> When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must have relations with me, for I have indeed hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he slept with her that night.”

If we thought this soap opera could take any more turns, we have the situation of Reuben finding some mandrakes in the fields and bringing them to his mother. What are mandrakes? They are an aphrodisiac. Its yellow plum size summer fruit were known for arousing desire and many believe they could help infertile women conceive. They were commonly called “love apples”.

### Song of Solomon 7:13

*“The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.”*



### Mandrake

*Mandragora officinalis*

A relative of tomato, potato, and tobacco. It contains a complex chemical mixture.

### Mandrakes

The concept of mandrake was superstition not science however the cultural concept was enough for these two sisters to get into a negotiation over who gets to keep the fruit of desire. As Esau once traded his birthright for a bowl of stew, Leah trades her mandrakes for a night with “their” husband. It seemed Rachel ‘controlled’ which wife or maidservant had conjugal rights to Jacob. For lack of better terminology, Jacob is ‘hired’ for his services. This shows the depth of jealousy and vindictiveness involved in this family dynamic. Rachel gets the mandrakes, but

remains childless for several more years, and Leah has the evening with Jacob and the outcome is Leah has another son. This son is named Issachar which means ‘wages’.

#### Verses 17-21

**“<sup>17</sup> God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. <sup>18</sup> Then Leah said, “God has given me my reward, because I gave my slave to my husband.” So she named him Issachar. <sup>19</sup> And Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. <sup>20</sup> Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good gift; finally my husband will acknowledge me *as his wife*, because I have borne him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun. <sup>21</sup> Afterward she gave birth to a daughter, and named her Dinah.”**

Leah goes on to have two more children, a daughter named Dinah which means ‘judgment’ or ‘vindication’ and another son whose name is Zebulun, whose name means ‘dwell’.

#### Verses 22-24

**“<sup>22</sup> Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup> So she conceived and gave birth to a son, and said, “God has taken away my disgrace.” <sup>24</sup> And she named him Joseph, saying, “May the LORD give me another son.”**

After trying to use the maidservants to manipulate being a mother and after trying to turn to the superstition of mandrakes, Rachel finally seeks God, “*God listened to her and opened her womb.*” Rachel gives birth to Joseph whose name means “may He add.” “She named him Joseph, saying, **“May the LORD give me another son”** (30:24).

### Jacob Prospers Verses 25-30

#### Verses 25-30

**“Now it came about, when Rachel had given birth to Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, so that I may go to my own place and to my own country. <sup>26</sup> Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you.” <sup>27</sup> But Laban said to him, “If it pleases you at all, stay with me; I have determined by divination that the LORD has blessed me on your account.” <sup>28</sup> He continued, “Name me your wages, and I will give them.” <sup>29</sup> But Jacob said to him, “You yourself know how I have served you and how your livestock have fared with me. <sup>30</sup> For you had little before I came, and it has increased to a multitude, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?”**

After serving twenty years in Laban’s household, fourteen years for wives and six years for flocks, Jacob knows it’s time that he returns to the land God had promised Abraham’s descendants. Years ago, when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife of Rebekah, we were given a glimpse of Laban’s character and his lust for materialism. That lust appears here again as Jacob declares it’s time for him to leave with his family. Laban confesses, in a very odd manor, that he believes God told him he was blessed, made rich, because of Jacob; “*I have determined by divination that the LORD has blessed me on your account.*” This confession confirms Laban’s

desire is not for God but for prosperity. He believes that he was ‘blessed’ because God was blessing Jacob and Jacob was in his household. Thus, the attempted negotiation of “*Name me your wages, and I will give them.*” Laban did not want to release Jacob; he did not want to send his son-in-law off with a blessing. He was selfish and wanted to have as much as he could and felt Jacob was the key to his further prosperity. Chapter thirty-one reveals Laban’s true heart

#### **Genesis 31:42**

*“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed...”*

#### **Genesis 31:43**

*“Laban answered and said to Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine.”*

## **The Covenant of Mizpah Verses 31-43**

### **Verses 31-36**

**“<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 one thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flock: <sup>32</sup> let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled or spotted sheep and every black sheep among the lambs, and the spotted or speckled among the goats; and those shall be my wages. <sup>33</sup> So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled or spotted among the goats, or black among the lambs, if found with me, will be considered stolen.” <sup>34</sup> Laban said, “Good, let it be according to your word.” <sup>35</sup> So he removed on that day the striped or spotted male goats, and all the speckled or spotted female goats, every one with white on it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and put them in the care of his sons. <sup>36</sup> And he put a distance of three days’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban’s flocks.”**

When shepherds were hired hands a common price for their services was 10% of the flock would become his and a percentage of the wool and milk also becomes his. Jacob asked Laban a question, “*when shall I provide for my own household?*” (30:30). Laban’s response is simple, what do you want? Jacob asks for the speckled and spotted sheep and goats. This seemed like a very one-sided request. Most sheep are white; to be spotted or speckled was rare so there were few. The same for goats who were commonly a single dark color, black or brown. As Jacob’s livestock bred with Laban’s it seemed Laban was getting a much better deal.

### **Verses 37-43**

**“<sup>37</sup> Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar, almond, and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white that was in the rods. <sup>38</sup> He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the drinking troughs, that is, in the watering channels where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink. <sup>39</sup> So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks delivered striped, speckled, and spotted offspring. <sup>40</sup> Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban’s flock. <sup>41</sup> Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the drinking troughs, so that they would mate by the**

rods; <sup>42</sup> but when the flock was sickly, he did not put them in; so the sickly were Laban's, and the stronger were Jacob's. <sup>43</sup> So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys."

The peeling of stick and placing the sticks in front of the animals as a way of manipulating them into having strong striped offspring would be classified as superstition. However, again God was on Jacob's side.

**Genesis 31: 10-13**

*"In the breeding season of the flock **I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled.** <sup>11</sup> Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' <sup>12</sup> And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. <sup>13</sup> I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'"*

Jacob credits his method of breeding instructions to a dream from God. The striped, spotted animals would produce strong healthy offspring which would be Jacob's and the same-colored animals would produce feeble offspring which would be Laban's. Jacob became rich and his prosperity was not from being deceitful, but by the hand of God blessing him.