

## Genesis 30 Part 2 Bible Study

### Genesis 30:25-43

So far, we have seen Jacob work for Rachel, get Leah, work more for Rachel, work beyond getting Rachel. We have seen the two sisters give birth to 13 children, all while Jacob has essentially been the indentured servant of his uncle Laban for 14 years.

*30:25 After Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so that I can go home to my own country. 30:26 Let me take my wives and my children whom I have acquired by working for you. Then I'll depart, because you know how hard I've worked for you."*

*30:27 But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your sight, please stay here, for I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me on account of you."*

*30:28 He added, "Just name your wages—I'll pay whatever you want." (Genesis 30:25-28)*

*By looking at this passage can you guess what prompted Jacob to ask Laban to let him go home? (see vs. 25)*

*Why does Laban not want them to leave? (see vs. 27)*

We don't know what *divination* Laban is referring to, but obviously the increase in his flocks was a good omen.

*What does Laban offer to Jacob to get him to stay? (see vs 28)*

Now let's look at Jacob's response:

*30:29 "You know how I have worked for you," Jacob replied, "and how well your livestock have fared under my care. 30:30 Indeed, you had little before I arrived, but now your possessions have increased many times over. The Lord has blessed you wherever I worked. But now, how long must it be before I do something for my own family too?"*

*30:31 So Laban asked, "What should I give you?" "You don't need to give me a thing," Jacob replied, "but if you agree to this one condition, I will continue to*

*care for your flocks and protect them: <sup>30:32</sup> Let me walk among all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb, and the spotted or speckled goats. These animals will be my wages. <sup>30:33</sup> My integrity will testify for me later on. When you come to verify that I've taken only the wages we agreed on, if I have in my possession any goat that is not speckled or spotted or any sheep that is not dark-colored, it will be considered stolen." <sup>30:34</sup> "Agreed!" said Laban, "It will be as you say." (Genesis 30:29-34)*

*What does Jacob confirm from Laban's conclusion about his stay there? (see vs. 27 and 30)*

*Why might Jacob's proposal sound like a good one to the crafty Laban?*

*In this region sheep are mostly solid white and goats are solid brown or black. So, offering to take only the reject spotted animals sounds like a fair deal. After all, how many could there be?*

*<sup>30:35</sup> So that day Laban removed the male goats that were streaked or spotted, all the female goats that were speckled or spotted (all that had any white on them), and all the dark-colored lambs, and put them in the care of his sons. <sup>30:36</sup> Then he separated them from Jacob by a three-day journey, while Jacob was taking care of the rest of Laban's flocks. (Genesis 30:35-36)*

*What steps does Laban take to assure that Jacob's flock of misfits doesn't grow? What does this tell us about Laban's character and/or faith in God?*

*<sup>30:37</sup> But Jacob took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond, and plane trees. He made white streaks by peeling them, making the white inner wood in the branches visible. <sup>30:38</sup> Then he set up the peeled branches in all the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. He set up the branches in front of the flocks when they were in heat and came to drink. <sup>30:39</sup> When the sheep mated in front of the branches, they gave birth to young that were streaked or speckled or spotted.*

*By looking at this passage, what would you say is Jacob's plan?*

Scientifically, there is no evidence that this practice would have the outcome Jacob wanted. However, as you read on notice how selective breeding might have had something to do with the increase in the speckled flock.

*30:40 Jacob removed these lambs, but he made the rest of the flock face the streaked and completely dark-colored animals in Laban's flock. So, he made separate flocks for himself and did not mix them with Laban's flocks. 30:41 When the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would set up the branches in the troughs in front of the flock, so they would mate near the branches. 30:42 But if the animals were weaker, he did not set the branches there. So, the weaker animals ended up belonging to Laban and the stronger animals to Jacob. 30:43 In this way Jacob became extremely prosperous. He owned large flocks, male and female servants, camels, and donkeys. (Genesis 30:25-43)*

Genesis doesn't go into how it all worked scientifically, but what it does tell us is that God protected Jacob. Back in Genesis 28:15 He said to him, "I am with you! I will protect you wherever you go and will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I promised you!" Genesis 31 continues with this proof:

*31:1 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining, "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father! He has gotten rich at our father's expense!" 31:2 When Jacob saw the look on Laban's face, he could tell his attitude toward him had changed. 31:3 The Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives. I will be with you." 31:4 So **Jacob sent a message for Rachel and Leah** to come to the field where his flocks were. 31:5 There he said to them, "I can tell that your father's attitude toward me has changed, but the God of my father has been with me. 31:6 You know that I've worked for your father as hard as I could, 31:7 but your father has humiliated me and changed my wages ten times. But God has not permitted him to do me any harm. 31:8 If he said, 'The speckled animals will be your wage,' then the entire flock gave birth to speckled offspring. But if he said, 'The streaked animals will be your wage,' then the entire flock gave birth to streaked offspring. 31:9 In this way God has snatched away your father's livestock and given them to me. (Genesis 31:1-9)*

Once again family members are angry with Jacob, only this time it's not his brother plotting to kill him, it's his brothers-in-law airing their anger with him. We will see this same kind of resentment amongst brothers when Jacob's

sons get older and resent their brother Joseph. This confirms, like so many other passages in scripture, that dysfunctional families are nothing new.

Now that it is no longer just Jacob getting away from Esau, but his two wives and 13 children, along with large flocks and herds, it will be a lot harder to break away.

This is the first time in this narrative that we see Jacob hearing from God. *What does God say to him in vs. 3?*

*What does Jacob notice about their situation? (see vs. 5)*

In the second half of that verse he recognizes that God has been with him. *How do you think this acknowledgment would affect Jacob's attitude in this situation?*

*Look at verses 6-7. What does Jacob affirm that God has been doing for him?*

*In what way has God protected him? (see vs. 8-9)*

*What does this tell us about all of the efforts by Jacob to 'fix' things?*

This reveals to us that it was not a scientific phenomenon that turned the color of the flocks but the hand of God. Now in the text, Jacob explains to us where he got the idea to mess with the flocks:

*31:10 "Once during breeding season I saw in a dream that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and spotted. 31:11 In the dream the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' 'Here I am!' I replied. 31:12 Then he said, 'Observe that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled, or spotted, for I have observed all that Laban has done to you. 31:13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the sacred stone and made a vow to me. Now leave this land immediately and return to your native land.' (Genesis 31:10-13)*

*What vow did Jacob make to God at the sacred stone? (see vs. Gen. 28:20-22)*

*31:14 Then Rachel and Leah replied to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? 31:15 Hasn't he treated us like foreigners? He not only sold us, but completely wasted the money paid for us! 31:16 Surely all the*

*wealth that God snatched away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So now do everything God has told you.”*

*31:17 So Jacob immediately put his children and his wives on the camels. 31:18 He took away all the livestock he had acquired in Paddan Aram and all his moveable property that he had accumulated. Then he set out toward the land of Canaan to return to his father Isaac.*

*31:19 While Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole the household idols that belonged to her father. 31:20 Jacob also deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was leaving. 31:21 He left with all he owned. He quickly crossed the Euphrates River and headed for the hill country of Gilead. (Genesis 31:14-21)*

Now Jacob is going to take steps to get out of Dodge. Let's see what those are. We see the first one in our previous reading, 31:4. *What does Jacob do first? The next step he takes is in 31:17-19. What is it?*

*What two things happen in verses 19-20 that will prove to anger Laban?*

Three things have happened to help get Jacob in gear and out of the home of his father in law: the change in attitude of Laban, the need to be man of his own house, and the leading of the Lord. So, with the memory of all that God has done for him to protect and provide for him Jacob and his family are ready to go. *But, what does his timing say about Jacob's faith in God? (see vs. 20)*

*Have you ever kept your faithful actions a secret for fear of what others would think of you? In what way could this become a harmful witness?*

In verse 19, we see that Rachel steals her father's household idols. Like Jacob before her stealing his brother's inheritance, Rachel is steals something very precious to her father, his idols of protection. Some theologians believe that these idols were also what should be passed on to the first born.

*So, with Jacob gone, Laban comes back from shearing sheep to find his daughters and their flocks gone:*

*31:22 Three days later Laban discovered Jacob had left. 31:23 So he took his relatives with him and pursued Jacob for seven days. He caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. 31:24 But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and warned him, "Be careful that you neither bless nor curse Jacob." (Gen 31:22-24)*

*According to the passage above, how long did it take for Laban to notice that Jacob had left?*

*What does God tell Laban about Jacob? (see vs. 24)*

*31:25 Laban overtook Jacob, and when Jacob pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead, Laban and his relatives set up camp there too. 31:26 “What have you done?” Laban demanded of Jacob. “You’ve deceived me and **carried away my daughters** as if they were captives of war! 31:27 Why did **you run away secretly** and deceive me? Why didn’t you tell me so I could send you off with a celebration complete with singing, tambourines, and harps? 31:28 You didn’t even allow me to **kiss my daughters and my grandchildren good-bye**. You have acted foolishly! 31:29 I have the power to do you harm, but the God of your father told me last night, ‘Be careful that you neither bless nor curse Jacob.’ 31:30 Now I understand that you have gone away because you longed desperately for your father’s house. Yet why did you **steal my gods?**” (Genesis 31:25-30)*

*What 6 things does Laban accuse Jacob of here?*

*What is Jacob’s excuse for these things? (see vs. 31 below)*

*31:31 “I left secretly because I was afraid!” Jacob replied to Laban. “I thought you might take your daughters away from me by force. 31:32 Whoever has taken your gods will be put to death! In the presence of our relatives identify whatever is yours and take it.” (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.) 31:33 So Laban entered Jacob’s tent, and Leah’s tent, and the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find the idols. Then he left Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s. 31:34 (Now Rachel had taken the idols and put them inside her camel’s saddle and sat on them.) Laban searched the whole tent but did not find them. 31:35 Rachel said to her father, “Don’t be angry, my lord. I cannot stand up in your presence because I am having my period.” So, he searched thoroughly, but did not find the idols. (Genesis 31:31-35)*

*From this passage can you tell if Jacob was aware that Rachel had taken the idols? (see vs. 32)*

*How does Rachel avoid being found out? (see vs. 35)*

*31:36 Jacob became angry and argued with Laban. “What did I do wrong?” he demanded of Laban. “What sin of mine prompted you to chase after me in hot*

pursuit? <sup>31:37</sup> When you searched through all my goods, did you find anything that belonged to you? Set it here before my relatives and yours and let them settle the dispute between the two of us!

<sup>31:38</sup> "I have been with you for **the past twenty years**. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. <sup>31:39</sup> Animals torn by wild beasts I never brought to you; I always absorbed the loss myself. You **always made me pay** for every missing animal, whether it was taken by day or at night. <sup>31:40</sup> I was consumed by scorching heat during the day and by piercing cold at night, and I went without sleep. <sup>31:41</sup> This was my lot for twenty years in your house: **I worked like a slave for you**—fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, but **you changed my wages ten times!** <sup>31:42</sup> If the God of my father—the God of Abraham, the one whom Isaac fears—had not been with me, you would certainly have sent me away empty-handed! But God saw how **I was oppressed and how hard I worked**, and he rebuked you last night." (Genesis 31:36-42)

Jacob proceeds here, to explain the mistreatment he has received under the hand of Laban. What do we learn about God and humanity in this passage?

God.	Humanity.

