

Genesis

Chapter 29



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This chapter gives us an account of God’s providences concerning Jacob, pursuant to the promises made to him in the foregoing chapter. I. How he was brought in safety to his journey’s end, and directed to his relations there, who bade him welcome (v. 1–14). II. How he was comfortably disposed of in marriage (v. 15–30). III. How his family was built up in the birth of four sons (v. 31–35). The affairs of princes and mighty nations that were then in being are not recorded in the book of God, but are left to be buried in oblivion; while these small domestic concerns of holy Jacob are particularly recorded with their minute circumstances, that they may be in everlasting remembrance. For “the memory of the just is blessed.”¹

Jewish Study Bible: In a scene remarkably similar to the one in Chapter 24, when Abraham’s servant finds a wife for Isaac, Jacob no sooner arrives in Haran than he encounters Laban’s daughter, Rachel, and begins the negotiations to marry her. But this time things do not go smoothly, and Jacob the trickster must drink a hefty dose of his own bitter medicine.²

Genesis 29:1

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

Torah Class: When Jacob left his family at Beer-Sheba, it was with spiritual agitation, a heavy heart, fear and trepidation, guilt.....

But, after his encounter with Yehoveh, something was changed in him. He was more certain, focused, calm....he was filled with that inner state that gentile Christians call “a peace without understanding”. Hebrews would say he received HaShem’s shalom.

We don’t know how long it took for Jacob to reach Haran, about a 400-mile journey from the southern end of Canaan. But, when he arrived he immediately sought out his mother’s family.

Sometimes we get so focused on the Land of Canaan, the Promised Land that eventually would become Israel, that we forget the ancestral connection between the Promised Land and Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was Abraham’s birthplace; and a large part of his family remained there. We find Abraham sending a servant back to what he certainly considered his roots, to find a suitable wife for his son, Isaac. And, now Jacob goes back to exactly the same place, for the same purpose. But, what a contrast between how Eliezar, Abraham’s servant, came to Haran, versus how Jacob arrived. Eliezar arrived with an entourage of men, camels, and gifts to offer a potential bride for Isaac. Jacob arrived with the shirt on his back, and nothing else.³

Then Jacob went on his journey—The original is very remarkable: And Jacob lifted up his feet, and he traveled unto the land of the children of the east. There is a certain

¹Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ge 29:1). Peabody: Hendrickson.

² The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

³ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

cheerfulness marked in the original which comports well with the state of mind into which he had been brought by the vision of the ladder and the promises of God. He now saw that having God for his protector he had nothing to fear, and therefore he went on his way rejoicing.⁴

Genesis 29:2

And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

[stone was upon the well's mouth] Stones were placed on the mouths of wells to protect from impurities and drifting sands which could soon choke them. Some were so large and heavy they required the strength of several men to remove them.

stone over well mouth. The stone served a double function, as a guard against contamination or poisoning of the well and as a social control mechanism, preventing any of the herdsmen in the area from drawing more water than was their right. Apparently water was scarce in this “open country” and thus the right to use the well was a jealously guarded one. Bedouin herders seldom wish to even divulge the location of wells within their territory, so this degree of security is not out of place. The stone may even have served to disguise the location of the well from the casual passerby. Wells of this time were not surrounded by protective walls, so the stone would also have prevented animals (or people) from inadvertently stumbling into it.⁵

Shepherds would naturally gather at a well. As in the case of Abraham's servant (24:10, 11), Jacob met Rachel at a well, perhaps even at the same well. Because God allowed a number of significant events to occur at wells, they become a symbol of God's blessing and care (see 16:14; 21:19, 30; 26:32; Isa. 12:3; John 4:1–26).⁶

Genesis 29:3

And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

Missler: Jacob came to Haran and his adventures with Laban begin...⁷

⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the New Testament

⁵ Bible Background Commentary

⁶ The Nelson Study Bible

⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

[all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth] It was customary to wait until all the flocks had gathered before opening the wells. They were usually opened in the early morning and in the evening. Then the people came to get water. Women carried water, except in large cities where both men and women did. Villages were built near wells and springs, but not near enough for a household to be disturbed by the noise and dust of the crowds. Because of the scarcity of water in certain places constant strife and even wars have been fought over wells. Isaac and the king of Philistia had strife for many months (perhaps years) over certain wells that Isaac had dug (Genesis 26:15-33).⁸

The implication is that it would take the collective strength of all the shepherds to roll the rock off the well. Jacob, energized by the sight of his cousin, will soon do so alone.⁹

Genesis 29:4

And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence *be ye*? And they said, Of Haran *are we*.

My brethren, whence *be ye*?—The language of Laban and his family was Chaldee and not Hebrew; (see Genesis 31:47); but from the names which Leah gave to her children we see that the two languages had many words in common, and therefore Jacob and the shepherds might understand each other with little difficulty. It is possible also that Jacob might have learned the Chaldee or Aramitish language from his mother, as this was his mother's tongue.¹⁰

Genesis 29:5

And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know *him*.

[son of Nahor] "Son" is used here for grandson. Laban was the son of Bethuel, the son of Nahor (Genesis 22:20-24; Genesis 24:15,24,29,47,50; Genesis 28:2).

Genesis 29:6

And he said unto them, *Is he well*? And they said, *He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep*.

Is he well?—הַשְּׁלוֹם לוֹ hashalom lo? Is there peace to him? Peace among the Hebrews signified all kinds of prosperity. Is he a prosperous man in his family and in his property? And they said, He is well, שְׁלוֹם shalom, he prospers.¹¹

⁸ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

¹⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

¹¹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

female shepherd. While it is not uncommon today for women and small children to herd Bedouin flocks, in antiquity women would have done so only when the household had no sons. It was a dangerous practice since they might be molested, but it was also a way of attracting a husband.¹²

29:1-6. The structure and the content of this passage reflect the significance of the Bethel experience. Jacob had been fleeing from Esau; now he was looking for a bride. This change in purpose was due to God's promise given him at Bethel. His quest now was the fulfillment of part of that promise, namely, the seed, while Jacob was outside the land. Moreover, Jacob's spirit was now magnanimous and unselfish. He had a new outlook.

Significantly Jacob's meeting of Rachel parallels his father's meeting of Rebekah (chap. 24). Certainly Laban, Rebekah's brother, would have remembered how God had led Eliezer. Yet this narrative, unlike chapter 24, does not emphasize divine leadership; but it is implied. Here was a man who received a marvelous vision. He knew God's plan to bless him and lead him. So Jacob hastened on his mission (continued on his journey is lit., "picked up his feet"). He "happened" onto a spot where a well was located; it "happened" to be near Haran, where Laban lived (29:5), and Laban's daughter Rachel just "happened" to be coming to the well (v. 6). This timing was the work of the loving sovereign God who was leading all the way (cf. 24:27). The fact that the meeting took place at a well is significant because a well was often associated with God's blessing (cf. 16:13-14; 21:19; 26:19-25, 33).¹³

The immediate appearance of Rachel recalls that of Rebekah in 24:15 and again suggests a hidden hand behind the events.¹⁴

Genesis 29:7

And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

Genesis 29:8

And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together—It is a rule that the stone shall not be removed till all the shepherds and the flocks which have a right to this well be gathered together; then, and not before, we may water the sheep.

Henry: All the stages Israel's march to Canaan are distinctly noticed, but no particular journal is kept of Jacob's expedition further than Beth-el; no, he had no more such happy nights as he had at Beth-el, no more such visions of the Almighty. That was intended for

¹² Bible Background Commentary

¹³ Bible Knowledge Commentary

¹⁴ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

a feast; he must not expect it to be his daily bread. But, 1. We are here told how cheerfully he proceeded in his journey after the sweet communion he had with God at Beth-el: *Then Jacob lifted up his feet*; so the margin reads it, v. 1. Then he went on with cheerfulness and alacrity, not burdened with his cares, nor cramped with his fears, being assured of God's gracious presence with him. Note, After the visions we have had of God, and the vows we have made to him in solemn ordinances, we should run the way of his commandments with enlarged hearts, Heb. 12:1. 2. How happily he arrived at his journey's end. Providence brought him to the very field where his uncle's flocks were to be watered, and there he met with Rachel, who was to be his wife. Observe, (1.) The divine Providence is to be acknowledged in all the little circumstances which concur to make a journey, or other undertaking, comfortable and successful. If, when we are at a loss, we meet seasonably with those that can direct us—if we meet with a disaster, and those are at hand that will help us—we must not say that it was by chance, nor that fortune therein favoured us, but that it was by Providence, and that God therein favoured us. Our ways are ways of pleasantness, if we continually acknowledge God in them. (2.) Those that have flocks must look well to them, and be diligent to know their state, Prov. 27:23. What is here said of the constant care of the shepherds concerning their sheep (v. 2, 3, 7, 8) may serve to illustrate the tender concern which our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, has for his flock, the church; for he is the good Shepherd, that knows his sheep, and is known of them, Jn. 10:14. The stone at the well's mouth, which is so often mentioned here, was either to secure their property in it (for water was scarce, it was not there *usus communis aquarum—for every one's use*), or it was to save the well from receiving damage from the heat of the sun, or from any spiteful hand, or to prevent the lambs of the flock from being drowned in it. (3.) Separate interests should not take us from joint and mutual help; when all the shepherds came together with their flocks, then, like loving neighbours, at watering-time, they watered their flocks together. (4.) It becomes us to speak civilly and respectfully to strangers. Though Jacob was no courtier, but a plain man, dwelling in tents, and a stranger to compliment, yet he addresses himself very obligingly to the people he met with, and calls them his *brethren*, v. 4. The law of kindness in the tongue has a commanding power, Prov. 31:26. Some think he calls them brethren because they were of the same trade, shepherds like him. Though he was now upon his preferment, he was not ashamed of his occupation. (5.) Those that show respect have usually respect shown to them. As Jacob was civil to these strangers, so he found them civil to him. When he undertook to teach them how to despatch their business (v. 7), they did not bid him meddle with his own concerns and let them alone; but, though he was a stranger, they gave him the reason of their delay, v. 8. Those that are neighbourly and friendly shall have neighbourly and friendly usage.¹⁵

¹⁵Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ge 29:1). Peabody: Hendrickson.

Genesis 29:9

And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

[**Rachel**] *Rachel ha'am* A wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Means, *ewe (lamb)*, and she probably had her name from her fondness for these animals.

Gen 29:6. (EDLS: Gen 1:3; Third letter, fourth word + 28).¹⁶

Rachel came with her father's sheep—So we find that young women were not kept concealed in the house till the time they were married, which is the common gloss put on *עלמה* *almah*, a virgin, one concealed. Nor was it beneath the dignity of the daughters of the most opulent chiefs to carry water from the well, as in the case of Rebekah; or tend sheep, as in the case of Rachel. The chief property in those times consisted in flocks: and who so proper to take care of them as those who were interested in their safety and increase? Honest labor, far from being a discredit, is an honor both to high and low. The king himself is served by the field; and without it, and the labor necessary for its cultivation, all ranks must perish. Let every son, let every daughter, learn that it is no discredit to be employed, whenever it may be necessary, in the meanest offices, by which the interests of the family may be honestly promoted.¹⁷

Ramban: “For she was a shepherdess” The intent of this is to relate that Laban's sheep had no shepherd other than Rachel, since her father turned over the flock to her alone. She alone tended them all the days, and Leah did not go with the flock at all. The matter was thus unlike that of the daughters of Jethro, where all seven daughters tended the flock simultaneously, as it is said, And they came and drew water. Perhaps due to Leah's eyes being tender, the rays of the sun would have hurt her, or because Leah was older and of marriageable age, her father was more concerned about her. Jethro however was honored in his community and he was the priest of the country, and he was confident that people would be afraid of approaching his daughters. It may be that Laban was more modest than Jethro for Abraham's family was proper and modest, but Rachel was yet young and there was no concern for her. This is the sense of the verse, And Jacob kissed Rachel. It may be as Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra said that where the Hebrew word for “kissing” is followed by the letter lamed – [as here: *Vayishak Yaakov Rachel*, instead of the word *eth*] – it means not on the mouth, but that he kissed her on her head or on her shoulder.¹⁸

Genesis 29:10

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

¹⁶ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

¹⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

¹⁸ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Torah Class: His search is rewarded at a water well, where 3 flocks of sheep were waiting to be watered; the shepherds point out Rachel, Jacob's first cousin, his mother's niece, daughter of Laban.

We learn a little bit about how water well etiquette worked in those days. Water wells were important places because much work was involved to create one, and much care was involved in maintaining it. Further, a well was owned by someone; either the local king, or in this case, a local family. And since the humans of the settlement the well was dug for needed water daily.....and the animals that were part of their lives also had to drink regularly as well.....the well became a place of meeting for the country folk, much the same as the city gates was the place of meeting for city folk.

And we find there was a large rock over the top of the well. This was normal and customary; first, it was to keep dust, small varmints, and even children from falling into the well and polluting it. But, it was also to keep people who wanted water from helping themselves. Rather, water had to be purchased from the wells owner. The shepherds with those flocks of sheep were waiting until evening, when the owner of the well would come, roll the rock off, and collect a fee from them; then, their animals could drink.

In our scene, Jacob wants the shepherds to water their animals and leave, so he can have a private conversation with the family members he has come to find. So, since Jacob is family, he feels justified in rolling the rock off the mouth of the well and allowing the sheep to drink.....so that the Shepherds will go.¹⁹

Jacob went near, and rolled the stone—Probably the flock of Laban was the last of those which had a right to the well; that flock being now come, Jacob assisted the shepherds to roll off the stone, (for it is not likely he did it by himself), and so assisted his cousin, to whom he was as yet unknown, to water her flock.

The future bridegroom's heroism at the well foreshadows Moses' scene of the victimized daughters of Reuel in Exod. 2:16-22.²⁰

Genesis 29:11

And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

[kissed Rachel] This was an Eastern custom of greeting and friendship. Even men kissed men (Genesis 29:13; Genesis 27:27; Genesis 33:4; Genesis 45:15; Genesis 48:10; Exodus 4:27; Exodus 18:7; 1 Samuel 20:41; Luke 15:20; Acts 20:37).

And wept—From a sense of the goodness of his heavenly Father, and his own unworthiness of the success with which he had been favored. The same expressions of kindness and pure affection are repeated on the part of Laban, Genesis 29:13.

McGee: This verse has always been strange to me. Frankly, kissing *that* girl and then weeping is hard for me to understand! However, I am of the opinion that this boy had had

¹⁹ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

²⁰ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

a lonely trip from the moment he had left home. We need to remember that from Beth-el he had to go up by the Sea of Galilee, then up into Syria. He had to cross that desert. I suppose he had many experiences along the way. When he arrived, he was very cocky and greeted the men there in a matter-of-fact way as though he had known them all of their lives. He asks them questions, then probably in an officious way takes the stone from the mouth of the well. I suppose when he greeted this girl who was a member of his mother's family he welled up with emotion and wept. That is the only way I can explain it. But I am sure that the next time he kissed her he didn't weep!²¹

Genesis 29:12

And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

Missler: When Jacob watered Laban's flocks, a note of anticipation seems apparent: subsequent chapters show how Laban and his flocks prospered in Jacob's presence. In contrast with Laban's lazy shepherds Jacob was generous, zealous, and industrious. He had a mission, a quest. That burning goal implanted by previous experience drove him to succeed.²²

You will notice that he calls himself her father's brother. The Hebrew does not make a lot of the distinctions we make today. We've got it reduced down to whether a person is a *kissing* cousin or not, but in that day if you were related, you were a brother. That is the way it is translated here and quite properly so. But in English we would say that Jacob was her father's nephew and that he was a son of Rebekah, her father's sister.²³

Rachel's running to Laban recalls Rebekah's (24:28), and adds to our mounting suspicion that she is to be the next matriarch of the chosen family. But, as we shall soon see, things are not so simple.²⁴

Genesis 29:13

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

[he told Laban all these things] Jacob probably told Laban the purpose of his journey, and what had happened at Bethel and upon his arrival at the well, "all these things".

²¹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:121). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²² Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

²³ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:121). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁴ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 29:14

And Laban said to him, Surely thou *art* my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

Torah Class: Jacob introduces himself to Rachel, and as is customary, kisses this family member. Kissing in this era did not necessarily denote sexuality or affection. Kissing was a greeting, generally the equivalent of a handshake, today, although it was not usually done between strangers. Then Jacob weeps with joy knowing his journey is over, and he has likely even met his future wife. It was a good day. We're told Rachel is a shepherdess; this is a somewhat unusual occupation for a woman in this area of the world; Bedouin women of the Sinai and Arabian Peninsulas, hundreds of miles to the south, often tended flocks and herds..... but Mesopotamian women and eventually Israeli women did not.

Laban, Rachel's father, hears of Jacob's arrival and comes to meet him. Here is a good chance for us to better understand something that even scholars will identify as "contradictions" in the Bible. In verse 5, when Jacob inquires of his mother's family, he asks some shepherds if they know "Laban, the son of Nahor". Now, in earlier chapters of Genesis, we're told that Laban is the son of B'tu'el, not Nahor. So, what gives? Well, Nahor is actually Laban's grandfather. And, what is being described here is which CLAN Laban belongs to.....the clan of Nahor. Often when we get more formal identities of people in the Bible, it will say "of the tribe of so and so, and the son of X". "Son of...." doesn't necessarily actually mean a father and son biological relationship as we think of it. Sometimes it DOES mean father and son, but just as often it is attaching a person with his clan, as it is here. Knowing which is which is in the context, and the expectation of the author that the reader knows full well that Nahor is Abraham's brother, and Laban is his grandson. So, these supposed contradictions of names are not contradictions at all; it was just the normal way of speaking and explaining one's identity in that era.²⁵

Henry: Here we see, 1. Rachel's humility and industry: *She kept her father's sheep* (v. 9), that is, she took the care of them, having servants under her that were employed about them. Rachel's name signifies *a sheep*. Note, Honest useful labour is that which nobody needs be ashamed of, nor ought it to be a hindrance to any one's preferment. 2. Jacob's tenderness and affection. When he understood that this was his kinswoman (probably he had heard of her name before), knowing what his errand was into that country, we may suppose it struck his mind immediately that this must be his wife. Being already smitten with her ingenuous comely face (though it was probably sun-burnt, and she was in the homely dress of a shepherdess), he is wonderfully officious, and anxious to serve her (v. 10), and addresses himself to her with tears of joy and kisses of love, v. 11. She runs with all haste to tell her father; for she will by no means entertain her kinsman's address without her father's knowledge and approbation, v. 12. These mutual respects, at their first interview, were good presages of their being a happy couple. 3. Providence made that which seemed contingent and fortuitous to give speedy satisfaction to Jacob's mind, as soon as ever he came to the place which he was bound for. Abraham's servant, when he came upon a similar errand, met with similar encouragement. Thus God guides his

²⁵ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

people with his eye, Ps. 32:8. It is a groundless conceit which some of the Jewish writers have, that Jacob, when he kissed Rachel, wept because he had been set upon in his journey by Eliphaz the eldest son of Esau, at the command of his father, and robbed of all his money and jewels, which his mother had given him when she sent him away. It was plain that it was his passion for Rachel, and the surprise of this happy meeting, that drew these tears from his eyes. 4. Laban, though none of the best-humoured men, bade him welcome, was satisfied in the account he gave of himself, and of the reason of his coming in such poor circumstances. While we avoid the extreme, on the one hand, of being foolishly credulous, we must take heed of falling into the other extreme, of being uncharitably jealous and suspicious. Laban owned him for his kinsman: *Thou art my bone and my flesh*, v. 14. Note, Those are hard-hearted indeed that are unkind to their relations, and that *hide themselves from their own flesh*, Isa. 58:7.²⁶

Genesis 29:15

And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?

Because thou art my brother, etc.—Though thou art my nearest relative, yet I have no right to thy services without giving thee an adequate recompense. Jacob had passed a whole month in the family of Laban, in which he had undoubtedly rendered himself of considerable service. As Laban, who was of a very saving if not covetous disposition, saw that he was to be of great use to him in his secular concerns, he wished to secure his services, and therefore asks him what wages he wished to have.²⁷

This Uncle Laban is clever. Who had said anything about going to work? Jacob hasn't. So Uncle Laban is very tactful and says that he doesn't want Jacob to work for him for nothing. He says that he will pay Jacob. Frankly, you don't live with Laban a month without making some sort of an arrangement to pay your board. Uncle Laban is a clever one also, and now he is going to deal with his nephew.²⁸

Ramban: "Is it because thou art my brother, that thou shouldst serve me for nought?" Scripture did not relate that Jacob served Laban. It is possible that from the time Scripture stated, And he watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother, the flock never left his care, for when he saw that Rachel was a shepherdess, Jacob had compassion for her and desired that she no longer tend the sheep. So, out of his love for her, he tended them.

It is also possible to say that Laban spoke with cunning. First he said to him that he is his bone and his flesh, and that he will have compassion for him as a man has compassion for his own bone and flesh, but when he was that Jacob tarried there, supporting himself from Laban's belongings, he said to him, "Is it because thou art my brother, that thou

²⁶Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ge 29:9). Peabody: Hendrickson.

²⁷Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

²⁸McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:121). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

shouldest serve me for nought? For I know that you will henceforth serve me for you are an ethical man, and you will not support yourself from the property of others. Nor do I desire that the labor you perform for me be free without full compensation. Therefore tell me what you want for your hire, and I will give it.” Jacob then discerned Laban’s mind, and he told him that he would serve him for seven years for Rachel. Undefined, “serving” here means tending the sheep, for this is what was needed and this was the subject of their conversation.²⁹

Genesis 29:16

And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Laban; *Laban*. Father of Leah and Rachel. Means, *white; shining*. (EDLS: Gen 1:14; Fourth letter, 11th word, - six. Adjacent letters spell, *Leah* hal and *Rachel* ljr. Gen 24:29).³⁰

Leah; *Lai'ah* . The daughter of Laban and sister of Rachel. (EDLS: Gen 1:25; First letter, sixth word, + six It is so amazing that *Laban* and *Rachel* are also encoded at six ELS. Leah means, *weary; weak eyes*. Gen 29:16).³¹

Genesis 29:17

Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.

[tender] Hebrew: *rak* (H7390), translated "tender" (Genesis 18:7; Genesis 33:13; Deut. 28:54-56; 1 Chron. 22:5; ; 1 Chron. 29:1), "soft" (Job 41:3; Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 25:15), and "weak" (2 Samuel 3:39). It could mean any one of these. Various translations read: "no sparkle, tender, weak, timid, attractive."

[beautiful] Hebrew: *yapheh* (H3303) *to'ar* (H8389), beautiful in shape, countenance, features, and appearance. She was lively, vivacious, and extremely attractive.

Leah’s eyes. In the comparative description of Rachel and Leah, the only comment about Leah concerns her eyes. The term used is generally considered positive and speaks of fragility, vulnerability, tenderness or a delicate quality (NIV note). Although eyes were a principal component of beauty in the ancient world, Leah’s positive features paled in comparison to Rachel’s loveliness.³²

²⁹ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

³⁰ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

³¹ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

³² Bible Background Commentary

Chumash; Classic Questions: “Why were Leah’s eyes tender?”

Rashi: She expected to fall into Esau’s lot [and become his wife], so she wept. For everyone was saying, “Rebekah has two sons, and Laban has two daughters: the older daughter is for the older son, and the younger daughter for the younger son.”

“If the patriarchs kept the entire Torah before it was given, how could Jacob marry two sisters?”

Chizkuni: Our Sages said that a person who converts to Judaism is like a newborn baby. [Thus, since Jacob converted Rachel and Leah before marrying them, they were “newly born” and thus no longer considered to be sisters in Jewish Law.]

Ramban: The patriarchs only kept the entire Torah while they were in the Land of Israel. Jacob, at this point, was outside the Land, so he was able to marry two sisters.

Parashas Derachim: Jacob knew, through prophecy that he was to establish twelve tribes. Therefore, he knew that he needed to marry both Leah and Rachel.³³

Genesis 29:18

And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

[for Rachel thy younger daughter] In European society the father gave a dowry with his daughter. In the East he received it for his daughter. Polygamy was perhaps partly responsible for the custom. Covetous fathers profited by their daughters. The place of women in the household (servants of higher rank) was likely another reason.³⁴

seven years’ labor. Typical marriage customs would have included a payment made to the bride’s family by the groom or his family. This could provide a sort of trust fund to provide for the wife should the husband die, desert her or divorce her. Alternatively it was at times used by the family to pay the bride price for the bride’s brothers. In some cases it was even returned to the bride in the form of an indirect dowry. In the Nuzi texts a typical bride price is thirty or forty shekels of silver. Since ten shekels of silver is a typical annual wage for a shepherd, Jacob is paying a higher price. That can be understood, however, given the circumstances: Jacob is in no position to negotiate, and the payment is being made in labor.³⁵

This is one of the very few explicit references to romantic love in the Tanakh. Interestingly, the subject of one of the others is Jacob’s father, Isaac, who loved Rebekah (24:67).³⁶

³³ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

³⁴ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

³⁵ Bible Background Commentary

³⁶ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Chrysostom; “Love reduces work and time”

See in this case too, I ask you, his keen discernment and how he had no desire for accumulating money. Far from haggling with Laban in the manner of a hireling and demanding something more, Jacob remembered his mother and his father’s directions and showed his extraordinary meekness in saying, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” You see, on seeing her from the outset at the well, he fell in love with her. See the man’s right attitude: He sees a time for himself and by means of this period of years he provides himself with an adequate incentive for his own continence. Why are you surprised, dearly beloved, that he promised to serve seven years for the maiden he loved? To show, in fact, how his great love reduced the labor and the period of time, sacred Scripture says, “Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and in his eyes they were but a few days when measured against his love for her.” The period of seven years, it is saying, was counted but a few days because of his surpassing love for the maiden. You see, when someone is smitten with love’s desire, far from seeing any problem, he easily puts up with everything, albeit fraught with danger and much difficulty besides, having in view one thing only – obtaining the object of his desire. Homilies on Genesis 55:7³⁷

Genesis 29:19

And Laban said, *It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.*

[It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man] It was customary to let daughters marry relatives rather than men of other races.

Torah Class: Laban, of course, offers his hospitality to his nephew. A month passes and the self-serving Laban broaches the question to Jacob: “what shall be your wages”. This is the signal that it is understood that Jacob is a semi-permanent visitor. Of course Laban sees that Jacob would be a valuable addition to his family, as he is a gifted shepherd and a hard worker. He also likely noticed that Jacob was quite taken with the beautiful Rachel. Jacob offers 7 years of his labor to Laban in return for her hand. By the way, this was NOT the custom of those times for a father to in essence sell his daughter to a man in exchange for servitude. And, a little later we find that Laban’s two daughters reveal the shame they felt for being, quite literally sold for a price when they say in Genesis 31:14,15, “Are we not counted as strangers? For he (Laban, their father) has sold us”.³⁸

Missler: Jacob’s plan was to work seven years to have Rachel as his wife. Those seven years of work passed quickly for Jacob because of his love for her. Interestingly the wives of each of the first three patriarchs were beautiful: Sarah (12:11), Rebekah (24:15-16), and Rachel (29:17).³⁹

³⁷ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

³⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

³⁹ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

Genesis 29:20

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her.

Dake Believes that Jacob took his wives at the beginning of the entire 14-year dowry period, working for Laban to pay the dowry while living with both Leah and Rachel.⁴⁰

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel—In ancient times it appears to have been a custom among all nations that men should give dowries for their wives; and in many countries this custom still prevails. When Shechem asked Dinah for wife, he said, Ask me never so much—dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me. When Eliezer went to get Rebekah for Isaac, he took a profusion of riches with him, in silver, gold, jewels, and raiment, with other costly things, which, when the contract was made, he gave to Rebekah, her mother, and her brothers. David, in order to be Saul’s son-in-law, must, instead of a dowry, kill Goliath; and when this was done, he was not permitted to espouse Michal till he had killed one hundred Philistines. The Prophet Hosea bought his wife for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley. The same custom prevailed among the ancient Greeks, Indians, and Germans. The Romans also had a sort of marriage entitled *per coemptionem*, “by purchase.” The Tartars and Turks still buy their wives; but among the latter they are bought as a sort of slaves.

Herodotus mentions a very singular custom among the Babylonians, which may serve to throw light on Laban’s conduct towards Jacob. “In every district they annually assemble all the marriageable virgins on a certain day; and when the men are come together and stand round the place, the crier rising up sells one after another, always bringing forward the most beautiful first; and having sold her for a great sum of gold, he puts up her who is esteemed second in beauty. On this occasion the richest of the Babylonians used to contend for the fairest wife, and to outbid one another. But the vulgar are content to take the ugly and lame with money; for when all the beautiful virgins are sold, the crier orders the most deformed to stand up; and after he has openly demanded who will marry her with a small sum, she is at length given to the man that is contented to marry her with the least. And in this manner the money arising from the sale of the handsome served for a portion to those whose look was disagreeable, or who had any bodily imperfection. A father was not permitted to indulge his own fancy in the choice of a husband for his daughter; neither might the purchaser carry off the woman which he had bought without giving sufficient security that he would live with her as his own wife. Those also who received a sum of money with such as could bring no price in this market, were obliged also to give sufficient security that they would live with them, and if they did not they were obliged to refund the money.” Thus Laban made use of the beauty of Rachel to dispose of his daughter Leah, in the spirit of the Babylonian custom, though not in the letter.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Dake’s Study Notes, Dake’s Study Bible

⁴¹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

Genesis 29:21

And Jacob said unto Laban, Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

Genesis 29:22

And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast.

[**made a feast**] It was customary to have a wedding feast for a week (Genesis 29:27-28; Judges 14:12).

wedding feast. Since a wedding is based on a contract between two families, it is similar to treaties and to business transactions. Like them, the marriage would have been consummated with a ritual meal (a sign of peace between the parties). There would also be a procession to a designated “first home” (usually within the house or tent of the groom’s father, although not in Genesis 29) and sexual intercourse between the couple. The bride would be veiled during these public festivities, and it may be assumed that the high spirits would have led to drunkenness, both factors in Jacob’s inability to recognize the substitution of Leah for Rachel at the feast.⁴²

Genesis 29:23

And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

Genesis 29:24

And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid *for* an handmaid.

[**Zilpah**] She became the mother of Gad and Asher (Genesis 30:10-13). Slaves given to daughters at marriage were her property; the husband had no authority over them.

Zilpah; Zilpah One of Jacob's concubines. Means, *a fragrance dropping as mrryh*. Gen 29:24. (EDLS: Gen 1:29; First letter, 24th word, + 16).⁴³

gift of maidservant. It was quite common for the bride to receive a gift of a maidservant on the occasion of her marriage. In this way she obtained her own personal household or entourage, providing her with both greater prestige and help in performing her duties.

⁴² Bible Background Commentary

⁴³ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

Genesis 29:25

And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

[it was Leah] The bride was always veiled and the bride chamber dark. Leah was brought to him in the evening and Jacob was deceived.

[beguiled me] *ramah*, (H-7411, *raw-maw'*; a primitive root; to *hurl*; specifically to *shoot*; figurative to *delude* or *betray* (as if causing to fall) :- beguile, betray, [bow-] man, carry, deceive, throw. Jacob deceived others (Genesis 27); now he began to be the victim of deceptions (Genesis 31:7-10,31; Genesis 34:30; Genesis 37:28-36; Genesis 35:22; Genesis 43:1-28).

29:23-25 Jacob was enraged when he learned that Laban had tricked him. The deceiver of Esau was now deceived himself. How natural it is for us to become upset at an injustice done to us while closing our eyes to the injustices we do to others. Sin has a way of coming back to haunt us.⁴⁴

29:23-25 The “deceiver” (“Jacob”) was deceived. Jacob, who had dealt so mercilessly with both Isaac and Esau, suddenly realized that he had worked seven years for a false hope. Laban had deceived Jacob (vv. 21-26; 31:7), forcing Jacob to commit yet another seven years (v. 27) in order to have Rachel. Even then, Rachel was barren, while Leah soon gave birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (from whom would come Israel’s kings, 49:10).⁴⁵

Chumash; Toras Menachem: After being fooled into marrying Leah, Jacob challenged Laban, “Why have you deceived me?” Jacob accused Laban of fraud. From this we see (at the literal level) that Noachide Law prevented one person from deceiving another, otherwise Jacob words would have had no basis.

Consequently, Laban could not merely shrug Jacob’s remark off – for then he would be admitting liability for fraudulent behavior. Rather, he was forced to give a legal defense: “In our neighborhood, we don’t do such a thing, to give the younger one before the firstborn”. His behavior was not fraudulent because Jacob’s request to marry Rachel was a breach of local practice.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Life Application Bible Notes

⁴⁵ Believers Study Bible Notes

⁴⁶ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

Genesis 29:26

And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

Missler: Jacob's anger was to no avail. Now, as the object of trickery, he would understand how Esau felt. Laban offered a technicality of local custom: "the younger before the firstborn." Those words must have pierced Jacob! In his earlier days he, the younger, had deceptively pretended before his father to be the older brother: *What a man sows he reaps* (Gal 6:7).⁴⁷

[It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn] It wasn't mentioned to Jacob in making the contract, but it was an eastern custom (a law in some parts) for daughters to marry according to seniority, unless the older daughter was deformed or unfit for marriage. Even if a father had the chance to give the younger in marriage advantageously, he first had to get the older one married. Laban hid this from Jacob until he married Leah, confident Jacob would do anything to get Rachel. Laban received a good dowry for both daughters. Cp. Judges 15:2; 1 Samuel 14:49; 1 Samuel 18:17-20,28.⁴⁸

It must not be so done in our country—It was an early custom to give daughters in marriage according to their seniority; and it is worthy of remark that the oldest people now existing, next to the Jews, I mean the Hindoos, have this not merely as a custom, but as a positive law; and they deem it criminal to give a younger daughter in marriage while an elder daughter remains unmarried. Among them it is a high offense, equal to adultery, "for a man to marry while his elder brother remains unmarried, or for a man to give his daughter to such a person, or to give his youngest daughter in marriage while the eldest sister remains unmarried."—Code of Gentoo Laws, chap. xv., sec. 1, p. 204. This was a custom at Mesopotamia; but Laban took care to conceal it from Jacob till after he had given him Leah. The words of Laban are literally what a Hindoo would say on such a subject.⁴⁹

custom of older married first. It is the practice of people of the ancient Near East, and still a tradition today in that area, for the oldest daughter to be married first. This prevents a younger sibling from shaming a sister who may not be as beautiful and also prevents the financial drain on the family caused by spinsters. Females were used, through marriage contracts, to obtain wealth and prestige for the family. If an older sister was bypassed and then never married, her family would be left with the responsibility to support her.⁵⁰

At the marriage ceremony in those days, the woman was veiled, heavily veiled, so that she couldn't be seen. Poor Jacob didn't see the girl he was getting until the next morning.

⁴⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁴⁸ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁴⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁵⁰ Bible Background Commentary

Lo and behold, it wasn't Rachel—it was Leah! At the moment he saw he had been tricked. I wonder if he didn't recall something of his own father when he, Jacob, had pretended to be the elder. He deceived his father, and that was the reason he had to leave home. You see, God does not approve of that type of conduct. The chickens are now coming home to roost. Jacob pretended to be the elder when he was the younger. Now he thinks he's getting the younger and he gets the elder. The tables are turned now, and it has become an awful thing for Jacob. To Jacob it is a criminal act that Laban has done, but notice how Uncle Laban passes it off. He is an expert at this type of thing. He tells Jacob that there was a little matter in the contract, a clause in the fine print, that he had forgotten to mention to Jacob. It was a custom in their country that the elder daughter must marry first, and the younger daughter could not marry until the elder daughter was married. But Uncle Laban is willing to be very generous in his dealings; so he has an offer to make.⁵¹

What is this you have done to me? Echoes Pharaoh's and Abimelech's indignation after Abraham and Isaac tried to pass their wives off as their sisters (12:18; 20:9; 26:10). Jacob's accusation of deceit is richly ironic in light of his own deceit in passing himself off as his older brother (27:35). Similarly, Laban's answer in v. 26 is an exquisitely ironic reaffirmation of the principle that Jacob has violated in buying Esau's birthright (25:29-34) and defrauding him of his father's highest blessing (27:1-45). Having acquired his older brother's birthright for a bowl of lentils, he now proves unable to acquire the woman he loves even with seven years of harsh labor (31:38-41). A remarkable Midrash in the Talmud speaks of Rachel's selflessness and her concern to spare her unloved older sister humiliation. Jacob the Midrash reports, had given Rachel certain tokens by which he could identify her, lest her deceitful father succeed in substituting Leah. Worried that he sister would then be put to shame in her wedding bed, she handed the tokens over to Leah. In reward for Rachel's self-effacement, the Midrash concludes, King Saul was numbered among her descendants. (b. Meg. 13b).⁵²

Genesis 29:27

Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

[Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years] Laban appealed to Jacob not to disturb the week of feasting to which many people had been invited (Genesis 29:22). He wished to hide any evidence of trouble or disappointment, and therefore promised Rachel also when the week was fulfilled for an additional seven years' work—if Jacob would cooperate and accept Leah (Genesis 29:27-28). Jacob agreed because of his great love for Rachel.

⁵¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:122). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵²The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Fulfill her week—The marriage feast, it appears, lasted seven days; it would not therefore have been proper to break off the solemnities to which all the men of the place had been invited, Genesis 29:22, and probably Laban wished to keep his fraud from the public eye; therefore he informs Jacob that if he will fulfill the marriage week for Leah, he will give him Rachel at the end of it, on condition of his serving seven other years. To this the necessity of the case caused Jacob to agree; and thus Laban had fourteen years' service instead of seven: for it is not likely that Jacob would have served even seven days for Leah, as his affection was wholly set on Rachel, the wife of his own choice. By this stratagem Laban gained a settlement for both his daughters. What a man soweth, that shall he reap. Jacob had before practiced deceit, and is now deceived; and Laban, the instrument of it, was afterwards deceived himself.⁵³

bridal week. The relationship between the seven-day story of creation and the idea of creating new life through marriage may be the origin of the bridal week. Diverting the bride and groom from other tasks was also designed to insure a pregnancy early in the marriage.

Genesis 29:28

And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

“Week” of years: important to note; re. Daniel 9:24-27.

[Rachel his daughter to wife also] He probably lived with Rachel during the fourteen years.

29:28-30 Although Jacob was tricked by Laban, he kept his part of the bargain. There was more at stake than just Jacob's hurt. There was Rachel to think about, as well as God's plan for his life. When we are tricked by others, keeping our part of the bargain may still be wise. Nursing our wounds or plotting revenge makes us unable to see from God's perspective.⁵⁴

Genesis 29:29

And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid.

Missler: Jacob's joyful prospect of marrying Rachel turned, by Laban's deception, into a nightmare. In Laban Jacob met his match and also his means of discipline. Jacob had deceived his own brother and father, and now was deceived by his mother's brother! 20 years of drudgery, affliction, and deception lay ahead. Through Laban he received his own medicine of duplicity. But Jacob's tenacity shows that he counted these as minor

⁵³ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁵⁴ Life Application Bible Notes

setbacks. God took him, developed his character, turned the fruits of his deception into blessing, and built the promised seed, the nation of Israel.⁵⁵

[Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid] She was to be the mother of Dan and Naphtali (Genesis 30:3-8).

Bilhah; *Bil'hah* Jacob's concubine and Rachel's handmaiden. The mother of Dan and Nephtali. Means, *timid*. Gen 29:29. (EDLS: Gen 1:27; First letter, fifth word, - 10).⁵⁶

Genesis 29:30

And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

Torah Class: Well the 7 years pass, and Jacob goes to Laban to extract his “wages”, which is none other than Rachel. Then, Jacob gets a taste of just how devastating deceit and betrayal can be: after the wedding ceremony, Laban switches out Rachel for Leah, his older and as yet unmarried daughter. No doubt, Jacob instantly thought back to that day he disguised himself as his brother and fooled his father; he must have assumed that what he was now experiencing was simply God’s payback for the dirty dealing he had perpetrated upon his father, Isaac, and his brother Esau several years earlier. In fact, the word DECEIVE is played up in this story of Jacob acquiring a bride, because it is so organically connected to the central theme of DECEIVE in the story of Jacob stealing the blessing from Esau.

So, in exchange for another 7 years of bond-servitude to Laban, Jacob also gets Rachel, who he marries right away after the customary 7-day wedding ceremony between he and his substitute-bride, Leah. This elderly man, 80 years old, suddenly finds himself in the position of trying to please not ONE but TWO wives.⁵⁷

[loved also Rachel more than Leah] This was the third generation having family trouble. Sarah, Hagar, and Abraham had trouble over Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 16:1-16; Genesis 17:18; Genesis 21:9-16; Galatians 4:21-31). Isaac and Rebekah had trouble over Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:28;27). Here we have a division between Jacob and his wives (Genesis 29:31-30:43).

29:20-28 People often wonder if working a long time for something they desire is worth it. Jacob worked seven years to marry Rachel. After being tricked, he agreed to work seven more years for her (although he did get to marry Rachel shortly after he married Leah)! The most important goals and desires are worth working and waiting for. Movies and television have created the illusion that people have to wait only about an hour to solve their problems or get what they want. Don’t be trapped into thinking the same is

⁵⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁵⁶ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

⁵⁷ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

true in real life. Patience is hardest when we need it the most, but it is the key to achieving our goals.⁵⁸

29:30 The evils of polygamy are readily observed in the family of Jacob: (1) rivalry (vv. 30, 32), (2) hatred (v. 31), (3) envy (30:1), (4) anger (30:2), (5) fighting (30:8), and (6) virtual prostitution (30:15, 16).⁵⁹

Henry: Here is, I. The fair contract made between Laban and Jacob, during the month that Jacob spent there as a guest, v. 14. It seems he was not idle, nor did he spend his time in sport and pastime; but like a man of business, though he had no stock of his own, he applied himself to serve his uncle, as he had begun (v. 10) when he *watered his flock*. Note, Wherever we are, it is good to be employing ourselves in some useful business, which will turn to a good account to ourselves or others. Laban, it seems, was so taken with Jacob's ingenuity and industry about his flocks that he was desirous he should continue with him, and very fairly reasons thus: "*Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought?*" v. 15. No, what reason for that?" If Jacob be so respectful to his uncle as to give him his service without demanding any consideration for it, yet Laban will not be so unjust to his nephew as to take advantage either of his necessity or of his good-nature. Note, Inferior relations must not be imposed upon; if it be their duty to serve us, it is our duty to reward them. Now Jacob had a fair opportunity to make known to Laban the affection he had for his daughter Rachel; and, having no worldly goods in his hand with which to endow her, he promises him seven years' service, upon condition that, at the end of the seven years, he would bestow her upon him for his wife. It appears by computation that Jacob was now seventy-seven years old when he bound himself apprentice for a wife, *and for a wife he kept sheep*, Hos. 12:12. His posterity are there reminded of it long afterwards, as an instance of the meanness of their origin: probably Rachel was young, and scarcely marriageable, when Jacob first came, which made him the more willing to stay for her till his seven years' service had expired.

II. Jacob's honest performance of his part of the bargain, v. 20. He served seven years for Rachel. If Rachel still continued to keep her father's sheep (as she did, v. 9), his innocent and religious conversation with her, while they kept the flocks, could not but increase their mutual acquaintance and affection (Solomon's song of love is a pastoral); if she now left it off, his easing her of that care was very obliging. Jacob honestly served out his seven years, and did not forfeit his indentures, though he was old; nay, he served them cheerfully: *They seemed to him but a few days, for the love he had to her*, as if it were more his desire to earn her than to have her. Note, Love makes long and hard services short and easy; hence we read of *the labour of love*, Heb. 6:10. If we know how to value the happiness of heaven, the sufferings of this present time will be as nothing to us in comparison of it. An age of work will be but as a few days to those that love God and long for Christ's appearing.

III. The base cheat which Laban put upon him when he was out of his time: he put Leah into his arms instead of Rachel, v. 23. This was Laban's sin; he wronged both Jacob and Rachel, whose affections, doubtless, were engaged to each other, and, if (as some

⁵⁸ Life Application Bible Notes

⁵⁹ Believers Study Bible Notes

say) Leah was herein no better than an adulteress, it was no small wrong to her too. But it was Jacob's affliction, a damp to the mirth of the marriage-feast, when in the morning behold it was Leah, v. 25. It is easy to observe here how Jacob was paid in his own coin. He had cheated his own father when he pretended to be Esau, and now his father-in-law cheated him. Herein, how unrighteous soever Laban was, the Lord was righteous; as Judges 1:7. Even the righteous, if they take a false step, are sometimes thus recompensed on the earth. Many that are not, like Jacob, disappointed in the person, soon find themselves, as much to their grief, disappointed in the character. The choice of that relation therefore, on both sides, ought to be made with good advice and consideration, that, if there should be a disappointment, it may not be aggravated by a consciousness of mismanagement.

IV. The excuse and atonement Laban made for the cheat. 1. The excuse was frivolous: *It must not be so done in our country*, v. 26. We have reason to think there was no such custom of his country as he pretends; only he banters Jacob with it, and laughs at his mistake. Note, Those that can do wickedly and then think to turn it off with a jest, though they may deceive themselves and others, will find at last that God is not mocked. But if there had been such a custom, and he had resolved to observe it, he should have told Jacob so when he undertook to serve him for his younger daughter. Note, As saith the proverb of the ancients, *Wickedness proceeds from the wicked*, 1 Sa. 24:13. Those that deal with treacherous men must expect to be dealt treacherously with 2. His compounding the matter did but make bad worse: *We will give thee this also*, v. 27. Hereby he drew Jacob into the sin, and snare, and disquiet, of multiplying wives, which remains a blot in his escutcheon, and will be so to the end of the world. Honest Jacob did not design it, but to have kept as true to Rachel as his father had done to Rebekah. He that had lived without a wife to the eighty-fourth year of his age could then have been very well content with one; but Laban, to dispose of his two daughters without portions, and to get seven years' service more out of Jacob, thus imposes upon him, and draws him into such a strait by his fraud, that (the matter not being yet settled, as it was afterwards by the divine law, Lev. 18:18, and more fully since by our Saviour, Mt. 19:5) he had some colourable reasons for marrying them both. He could not refuse Rachel, for he had espoused her; still less could he refuse Leah, for he had married her; and therefore Jacob must *be content, and take two talents*, 2 Kings v. 23. Note, One sin is commonly the inlet of another. Those that go in by one door of wickedness seldom find their way out but by another. The polygamy of the patriarchs was, in some measure, excusable in them, because, though there was a reason against it as ancient as Adam's marriage (Mal. 2:15), yet there was no express command against it; it was in them a sin of ignorance. It was not he product of any sinful lust, but for the building up of the church, which was the good that Providence brought out of it; but it will by no means justify the like practice now, when God's will is plainly made known, that one man and one woman only must be joined together, 1 Co. 7:2. The having of many wives suits well enough with the carnal sensual spirit of the Mahomedan imposture, which allows it; but we have not so learned Christ. Dr. Lightfoot makes Leah and Rachel to be figures of the two churches, the Jews under the law and the Gentiles under the gospel: the younger the more beautiful, and more in the thoughts of Christ when he came in the form of a servant; but he other, like

Leah, first embraced: yet in this the allegory does not hold, that the Gentiles, the younger, were more fruitful, Gal. 4:27.⁶⁰

Genesis 29:31

And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren.

[**hated**] "To hate" is an idiom of preference, not hatred as we understand it.

(Luke 14:26) *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

Seven Barren Women:

1. Sarah (Genesis 11:30; Genesis 16:1)
2. Rebekah (Genesis 25:21)
3. Rachel (Genesis 29:31)
4. Manoah's wife (Judges 13:2)
5. Hannah (1 Samuel 1:5)
6. Michal (2 Samuel 6:23)
7. Elisabeth (Luke 1:7). See Genesis 20

As in the case of Hagar (16:10-12; 21:17-18), God shows compassion to the un-favored mate, thus partly equalizing the disparity between her and her co-wife. Barrenness, in some instances a punishment (e.g., 2 Sam. 6:20-23), serves in Rachel's case to place her in succession to Sarah and Rebekah (11:30; 25:21).⁶¹

Ramban: "And the Eternal saw that Leah was hated" Now Leah had deceived her sister and also Jacob. For even if we were to say that she showed respect for her father, who took her and brought her in to him and she was not rebellious against him, she should have by word or sign indicated that she was Leah. All the more is this so sine she feigned herself all night to be another, which was the reason why Jacob did not recognize her until he saw her in the morning. It was for this reason that Jacob hated her. But God, knowing that she did so in order to be married to the righteous one, had compassion upon her. And so the Rabbis said in Bereshith Rabbah: "When Jacob saw the deeds by which Leah had deceived her sister, he decided to divorce her. But when the Holy One, blessed by He, remembered her by giving her children, Jacob said, "Shall I divorce the mother of these children?" This is the meaning of the expression, And the Eternal saw: He had compassion upon her so that Jacob should not leave her. But there are some scholars who say that in the case of two wives, one of whom is loved exceedingly, the second one, who is the less beloved, is called "hated" relative to the first, just as Scripture said, And

⁶⁰Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ge 29:15). Peabody: Hendrickson.

⁶¹The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

he loved Rachel more than Leah, but not that he hated her. Leah however was ashamed of the matter and so God say her affliction.⁶²

Chrysostom; “God’s creative wisdom”

See God’s creative wisdom. Whereas one woman by her beauty attracted her husband’s favor, the other seemed to be rejected because she lacked it. But it was the later God awoke to childbirth while leaving the other’s womb inactive. He thus dealt with each in his characteristic love so that one might have some comfort from what was born of her and the other might not triumph over her sister on the score of charm and beauty. Homilies on Genesis 56:14.⁶³

Genesis 29:32

And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

Missler: Leah named her firstborn **Reuben** (*re’uben*), indicating that the Lord had seen her misery (*ra’ah be’onyi*). Another wordplay joins it: Now at last my husband will become attached to (*ye’ehabani*) me. This naming showed her hope but also her consolation and faith. [Reuben: that is, See a son?] [Jacob never saw her affliction, but God did (cf. “*Beer Lahai Roi*,” lit., “the well of the Living One who sees me,” 16:14; 24:62; 25:11).]⁶⁴

[Reuben] Reuben means behold a son—God has looked on my affliction of being less loved by my husband than Rachel (Genesis 29:30-32).

Reuben; *Rue’ben* The first born of Jacob and Leah. Means, *a vision of the son*. (EDLS: Gen 1:21; Second letter, 12th word, + 34).⁶⁵

naming of children. The naming of children was a significant act and typically represented some circumstance or sentiment at the time of birth. It rarely addressed the supposed fate or destiny of the child directly and was not thought to determine the child’s destiny, but it was believed that the name was directly related to a person’s essential self and therefore could be expected to find significant associations with the person’s nature and experiences.

⁶² Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁶³ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

⁶⁴ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁶⁵ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Ramsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

Genesis 29:33

And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.

[**Simeon**] Simeon means hearing—because the Lord has heard that I was preferred less than Rachel and has given me another son to cause my husband to love me (Genesis 29:33).

Genesis 29:34

And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.

Missler: **Simeon** was so named because the Lord heard (*sama* ') that Leah was not loved. “God heard” was her testimony in faith to His provision (cf. “Ishmael,” which means “God hears,” 16:15). **Levi** was named for her hope that her husband would become *attached* (*yillaweh*) to her, but it was not to be.⁶⁶

[**Levi**] Levi means joined—my husband will be joined to me because I have borne him three sons.

Levi; Levai Levi was the third son of Jacob and Leah. Means, *attached*. Means, *attached*. Gen 29:34. (EDLS: Gen 1:1; Fifth letter, fifth word, + 70). You will notice that the Levites show up three separate times in this same count and in the same code.⁶⁷

Genesis 29:35

And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

[**Judah**] was her consolation; she would be satisfied to praise (*'odeh*) the Lord, for Judah means “let Him be praised.” Leah exhibited genuine faith during her great affliction.

[**Judah**] Judah means "praise"—I will PRAISE God for He has given me four sons and my husband will love me. His was to be the ruling tribe and from him was to come the Messiah, the Redeemer and Governor of all nations (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:6-7).

Judah; Yehudah Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah. Gen 29:35. (EDLS: Gen 2:7; Second letter, 15th word, - 11. Adjacent letters spell, *the Lamb of David*, *haseh Da'vid*. The hope, *tikvah* 22-letter increments. The Messiah, who is the Lamb of God,

⁶⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁶⁷ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

came from the line of David from the tribe of Judah. He is our only hope in this world and the world to come).⁶⁸

History, Promise—The promise of a large family began to be realized. Human intrigue, physical barrenness, and family relationship problems appear to be the immediate factors involved. The Bible’s inspired narrative points to God’s work as the guiding factor. In so doing the Bible does not hold the actions up as a moral example but shows how God can accomplish His purposes despite the weaknesses of His people.⁶⁹

Torah Class: Another dark side of Jacob is now revealed to us, in that he unfairly loved, and openly favored, Rachel more than Leah. The reason is suggested to us in V17, when it says that while Leah’s “eyes were weak”; since beauty is often related to the appearance of one’s eyes.....particularly among Middle Eastern cultures.... strong eyes or weak eyes were idioms that indicated either beauty or plainness. So, what we’re being told is that Rachel was considered to be beautiful while Leah was not; and it was apparently primarily on the basis of physical beauty that Jacob made his choice. There is NO reference at all to Jacob having consulted God on his choice of a wife. And, there is every reason to suspect that Leah should have been his choice over Rachel, as we’ll see shortly. What irony: Esau, the firstborn, handsome and macho, was passed over by God for Jacob, quiet and plain. Rachel, beautiful and impetuous, was passed over by God for Leah, quiet and plain. Why do I say Rachel was passed over? Let’s see what happens next.

Almost immediately, Leah starts giving Jacob children. Rachel cannot seem to get pregnant. First, Leah conceives Rueben.....the firstborn of Jacob. Put this little fact onto paper, or into your memory, because in a few weeks, we’re going to come back to this important detail. She goes on to give Jacob 3 more sons: Simeon, Levi, and Judah. In naming these children, Leah gives God all the praise and glory: Rueben means “look, a son”, because she felt God had seen that she was treated as a 2nd class citizen by Jacob, who fawned only over Rachel. Simeon means “hearing”, because God heard her prayers for another son. Levi means “joined” because she hoped now that she had given Jacob yet another son, Jacob would love her more. And, Judah means “praise”, because she praised God for blessing her with 4 healthy sons.

In offering her praise to God for these children, Leah was showing her character. And, God was blessing her for it. Not only did she give birth to Jacob’s firstborn, but look at two of the others: Levi and Judah. Leah, the plain one, was honored with carrying and giving birth to the Israelite line of priests and servants to God.....the Levites; and bringing Judah into this world, from whom the line of promise would be fulfilled in Jesus. For Yeshua was a Judah-ite.....we call the descendants of Judah, Jews. In a sad ending to this chapter, we are told Leah suddenly lost her ability to have children.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ The Cryptic Dictionary of Genesis One, 2005, Yacov & Yapha Rambsel, Messianic Ministries, Inc.

⁶⁹ Disciples Study Bible Notes

⁷⁰ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Bible Knowledge Commentary: 29:15-30. Jacob's joyful prospect of marrying **Rachel** turned, by Laban's deception, into a nightmare. In Laban... Jacob met his match and also his means of discipline. Jacob had deceived his own brother and father, and now was deceived by his mother's brother! Twenty years (31:38) of drudgery, affliction, and deception lay ahead. Through Laban he received his own medicine of duplicity. But Jacob's tenacity shows that he counted these as minor setbacks. God took him, developed his character, turned the fruits of his deception into blessing, and built the promised seed, the nation of Israel.

Jacob's plan was to work... seven years to have Rachel as his wife. Those seven years of work passed quickly for Jacob because of his love for her (29:20). Interestingly the wives of each of the first three patriarchs were beautiful: Sarah (12:11), Rebekah (24:15-16), and Rachel (29:17).

When the time came for the wedding feast (vv. 21-22), hearts were merry and spirits high. But in the night Leah, Rachel's older sister, was substituted. This was a masterpiece of shameless treachery—unloved Leah given to a man in love with Rachel.

Jacob's anger was to no avail. Now, as the object of trickery, he would understand how Esau felt. Laban offered a technicality of local custom: it is not right to marry the younger... before the older. Those words must have pierced Jacob! In his earlier days he, the younger, had deceptively pretended before his father to be the older brother (chap. 27). If social convention were to be set aside, it should be by God, not by deception. Laban's stinging words were left without any comment; the event was simply God's decree against Jacob.

The Bible demonstrates over and over the principle that what a man sows he reaps (Gal. 6:7). Some have called this irony or poetic justice, but it is more than that. It is divine retribution in which there is often a measure-for-measure turn of affairs. God orders the affairs of people to set things right. With Jacob this deception was perfectly fitted; it was divine punishment to bring his own craftiness before his eyes. He had deceptively presented himself to his father under the guise of Esau the firstborn; now Leah the firstborn was deceptively introduced to him under the guise of Rachel the younger! After his initial reaction Jacob recognized the deception for what it was and accepted it. He finished out the bridal week (Gen. 29:27; cf. week in v. 28) at the end of which he was given Rachel (two wives in seven days). (Each daughter was given a servant girl as a wedding gift, a custom common in that society. Leah was given Zilpah, v. 24, and Rachel received Bilhah, v. 29; cf. 30:4-13.) Then Jacob worked... another seven years, which he owed Laban in return for Rachel (29:30; cf. 31:38, 41).

Unfortunately Jacob was not the only believer who needed a Laban to discipline him.⁷¹

⁷¹ Bible Knowledge Commentary

Henry: We have here the birth of four of Jacob's sons, all by Leah. Observe, 1. That Leah, who was less beloved, was blessed with children, when Rachel was denied that blessing, v. 31. See how Providence, in dispensing its gifts, observes a proportion, to keep the balance even, setting crosses and comforts one over-against another, that none may be either too much elevated or too much depressed. Rachel wants children, but she is blessed with her husband's love; Leah wants that, but she is fruitful. Thus it was between Elkana's two wives (1 Sa. 1:5); for the Lord is wise and righteous. *When the Lord saw that Leah was hated*, that is, loved less than Rachel, in which sense it is required that we hate father and mother, in comparison with Christ (Lu. 14:26), then the Lord granted her a child, which was a rebuke to Jacob, for making so great a difference between those that he was equally related to,—a check to Rachel, who perhaps insulted over her sister upon that account,—and a comfort to Leah, that she might not be overwhelmed with the contempt put upon her: thus *God giveth abundant honour to that which lacked*, 1 Co. 12:24. 2. The names she gave her children were expressive of her respectful regards both to God and to her husband. (1.) She appears very ambitious of her husband's love: she reckoned the want of it her affliction (v. 32); not upbraiding him with it as his fault, nor reproaching him for it, and so making herself uneasy to him, but laying it to heart as her grief, which yet she had reason to bear with the more patience because she herself was consenting to the fraud by which she became his wife; and we may well bear that trouble with patience which we bring upon ourselves by our own sin and folly. She promised herself that the children she bore him would gain her the interest she desired in his affections. She called her first-born *Reuben* (*see a son*), with this pleasant thought, *Now will my husband love me*; and her third son *Levi* (*joined*), with this expectation, *Now will my husband be joined unto me*, v. 34. Mutual affection is both the duty and comfort of that relation; and yoke-fellows should study to recommend themselves to each other, 1 Co. 7:33, 34. (2.) She thankfully acknowledges the kind providence of God in it: *The Lord hath looked upon my affliction*, v. 32. "*The Lord hath heard*, that is, taken notice of it, *that I was hated* (for our afflictions, as they are before God's eyes, so they have a cry in his ears), *he has therefore given me this son.*" Note, Whatever we have that contributes either to our support and comfort under our afflictions or to our deliverance from them, God must be owned in it, especially his pity and tender mercy. Her fourth she called *Judah* (*praise*), saying, *Now will I praise the Lord*, v. 35. And this was he of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. Note, [1.] Whatever is the matter of our rejoicing ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. Fresh favours should quicken us to praise God for former favours. *Now will I praise the Lord* more and better than I have done. [2.] All our praises must centre in Christ, both as the matter of them and as the Mediator of them. He descended from him whose name was praise, for he is our praise. Is Christ formed in my heart? *Now will I praise the Lord.*⁷²

⁷²Henry, M. (1996, c1991). *Matthew Henry's commentary on the whole Bible : Complete and unabridged in one volume* (Ge 29:31). Peabody: Hendrickson.

29:1–30 Jacob marries Rachel and Leah

God's promised protection of Jacob soon proved itself. Jacob, like Abraham's servant years earlier (ch. 24), journeyed to northern Syria and there met his future bride at a well. And, like the servant, he stayed in the home of his cousins. But whereas the servant came laden with Abraham's wealth, Jacob brought nothing and was not half so attractive to the money-oriented Laban.

He had, however, fallen in love with Rachel (this is one of the few romantic marriages of the OT.) and, prompted by Laban, he asked if he could marry her. Normally betrothal was sealed by the payment of the bride-price (marriage present), given by the man's family to the bride's family (*cf.* the note on 24:53). Jacob, without any family support, could not make the usual payments, so he offered to work seven years for Rachel's hand.

When the years were up, Laban seemed reluctant to go ahead with the wedding, and Jacob had to push him (21). Little is known of wedding procedures in Bible times except what can be inferred from this passage and Jdg. 14. A seven-day party for friends and relations was the main event, but doubtless vows and pledges were exchanged too (*cf.* Ho. 2:2, 16). On the first evening the veiled bride was brought to her husband. Doubtless the veil, darkness and alcohol all prevented Jacob from realizing Leah had been substituted for Rachel.

Jacob's indignation is only briefly touched on in v 25 (see comments on 29:31–30:24 below). Despite human sin, however, God's plans were forwarded, for from Leah six of the tribes of Israel, including Judah, were descended. Laban did make one concession to Jacob, he allowed him to marry Rachel immediately, but he cruelly demanded an extra seven years' service for Leah. Those did not pass as quickly as the first seven (20; *cf.* 29:30ff.).

Note. 24 It was the universal custom in the orient for the bride to be given a large present by her father when she married. This was called the dowry. Usually it is not mentioned, but here it is, for Leah's exceptional dowry included a maid-servant called *Zilpah*. Zilpah and Bilhah (29) also became mothers of Israelite tribes (30:3–13).⁷³

⁷³Carson, D. A. (1994). *New Bible commentary : 21st century edition*. Rev. ed. of: The new Bible commentary. 3rd ed. / edited by D. Guthrie, J.A. Motyer. 1970. (4th ed.) (Ge 29:1). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press.

Gleanings in Genesis – Arthur Pink

JACOB AT PADAN-ARAM

GENESIS 29

IN our last article we followed Jacob as he left his father's house and commenced his long journey to Padanaram where lived Laban, his mother's brother. On his first night out from Beersheba he lit upon a certain place and making a pillar of the stones lay down to sleep. Then it was that he dreamed, and in the dream the Lord appeared unto him, probably for the first time in his life, and after promising to give him the land whereon he day and to make his seed as numerous as the dust of the earth and a blessing to all families, he received the comforting assurance that God would be with him, would keep him in all places whither he went, and ultimately bring him back again to the land given to him and his fathers. In the morning Jacob arose, poured oil on the stone pillar, and named the place Bethel, which means "The House of God."

The effect of this experience on Jacob is briefly but graphically signified in the opening words of Genesis 29, where we read, "*Then Jacob lifted up his feet*, and came into the land of the people of the East" (marginal rendering). The heaviness with which he must have left home had now gone. Assured of the abiding presence and protection of Jehovah, he went on his way lightheartedly. It deserves to be noted that the journey which Jacob had scarcely begun the previous day was an arduous and difficult one, From Beersheba, Isaac's dwelling place, to Padan-Aram, his destination, was a distance of something like five hundred miles, and when we remember that he vitas on foot and alone we can the better appreciate the blessed grace of Jehovah which met the lonely fugitive the first night, and gave him the comforting promise that He was with him and would keep him in *all* places whither he went (28:15). Little wonder, then, that now Jacob goes forth so confidently and cheerfully. As a Jewish commentator remarks, "His heart lifted up his feet." And, reader, do not we need to be reminded that our Iced has promised, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end?" If our hearts drew from this cheering and inspiring promise the comfort and incentive it is designed to convey should not we "lift up" our feet as we journey through this world? Oh! it is unbelief, failure to rest upon the "exceeding great and precious promises" of our God, and forgetfulness that He is ever by our side, that makes our feet leaden and causes us to drag along so wearily.

The remainder of the long journey seems to have passed without further incident, for the next thing we read of is that Jacob had actually come into that land which he sought. And here we find a striking *proof* that the Lord *was* with him indeed, for he was guided to a well where he met none other than the daughter of the very man with whom he was going to make his home! It was not by chance that Jacob lit upon that well in the field, nor was it by accident that Rachel came to that well just when she did. There are no chance-happenings or accidents in a world that is governed by God. It was not by chance that the Ishmaelites passed by when the brethren of Joseph were plotting his death, nor was it an accident they were journeying down to Egypt. It was not by chance that Pharoh's daughter went down to the river to bathe, and that one of her attendants discovered there the infant Moses in the ark of bullrushes. It was not by chance that upon a certain night, critical in the history of Israel, that Ahasuerus was unable to sleep and that he should arise and read the state-records which contained an entry of how Mordecai had foiled an attempt on the King's life, which led, in turn, to the saving of Mordecai's

life. So, we say, it was not by chance that Jacob now met Rachel. No; we repeat, there cannot be any chance happenings in a world that is governed by God, still less can there be any accidents in the lives of those He is constantly “with.” My reader, there are no chance-happenings, no chance-meetings, no chance delays, no chance losses, no chance anything in our lives. All is of Divine appointment.

But while we have called attention to God’s faithfulness in guiding Jacob to the well where he met Rachel, we must not ignore Jacob’s personal failure, a noticeable failure of *omission*. As he had come so near to the end of his journey and had almost arrived at his destination we would have thought, as he reached this well, that now was the time for him to very definitely commit himself into the hands of God, especially in view of the fact that he was engaged in the important and momentous undertaking of seeking a wife. Years before, when the servant of Abraham was upon a similar mission, seeking a wife for Isaac, when *he* arrived at a well we are told that “he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day” (24:12). But here in connection with Jacob we read of no prayer for Divine guidance and blessing, instead, we find him interrogating the Haran shepherds.

“And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well’s mouth. And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well’s mouth in his place. And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep” (29:26). Without doubt there is a spiritual meaning to each detail here. It cannot be without some good reason that the Spirit of God has told us this was in a *field*, that there were *three* flocks of sheep lying by it, and that there was a *great stone* upon the well’s mouth. But we confess we discern not their significance, and where spiritual vision be dim it is idle, or worse, to speculate.

“Behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.” At mention of Rachel, Jacob acted in a thoroughly characteristic manner: “And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, *and go* and feed them” (29:7). Jacob’s design is evident; he sought to send the shepherds away, so that he might be alone when he met Rachel. But his design was foiled, “and while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep: for she kept them.” And then follows a touching description of the meeting between Jacob and this young woman who was to become his wife.

“And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s brother, and that he was Rebekah’s son: and she ran and told her father” (29:10–12). These verses shed an interesting light on Jacob’s natural character. Rachel’s appearance awakened within him all the warmth of natural feeling. He courteously rolled away the stone, watered the sheep, kissed Rachel and burst into tears. The remembrance of home and the relationship of his *mother* to Rachel overpowered him—note the threefold reference to his mother in verse 10: “When Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of

Laban *his mother's* brother, and the sheep of Laban *his mother's* brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban *his mother's* brother." Jacob, then, was no cold, calculating stoic, but was of a warm disposition, and everything that revived the memory of his mother went to his heart. What a lovely human touch this gives to the picture! Nothing is trivial with God.

"And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month" (29:13, 14). The plan of Jacob's mother seemed to be working very well. Everything appeared to be running very smoothly. Esau had been left behind at a safe distance, the long journey from Beersheba to Padan-aram had been covered without harm, little or no difficulty had been experienced in locating his mother's brother. Rachel had shown no resentment at Jacob's affectionate greeting, and now Laban himself had accorded the fugitive a warm welcome, and for a whole month nothing seems to have broken their serenity. *And what of God?* What of His moral government? What of the law of retribution? Was Jacob to suffer nothing for his wrongdoing? Was the deception he had practiced upon Isaac to escape unnoticed? Would it, in his case, *fail* to appear that "the way of the transgressor is hard?" (Pro. 13:15). Ah! be not deceived; God is not mocked. Sometimes the actions of God's government may appear to move slowly, but sooner or later they are sure. Oftentimes this is overlooked. Men take too short a view: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed *speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11). It is in the sequel that God vindicated. History in fray meets denies God, but history as a whole is seen to be His story. Look at the cruel Egyptian taskmasters and at the helpless Hebrews. They cried to Heaven, and for years it seemed as though Heaven was deaf. But *the sequel* showed God *had* seen and heard, and in the sequel His righteous government was vindicated. We have had striking illustrations of this abiding principle in the history of our own times. A few years ago we were horrified by the Belgian atrocities on the Congo, and equally so by the cruel inhumanities practiced by the Russians upon the Jews. But behold *the sequel*—mark Belgium and Russia today! Yes, the way of the transgressor is hard, and so Jacob found it in the sequel.

"And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore *serve* me for nought? Tell me, what shall thy *wages* bet" (29:15). Here was the first cloud on Jacob's horizon, and the first appearing of the Divine rod of chastisement. Here, too, was a most striking example of the law of righteous retribution. Jacob was about to begin reaping that which he had sown. Perhaps this is not apparent on the surface, so we tarry to explain. It will be remembered that the end before Jacob and his mother in their scheming and lying was that he should secure from Isaac the blessing which was the portion of the first born. What this blessing was we know from the words of the Lord to Rebekah before her sons were born, words which expressly declared that Jacob *should* recede the firstborn's portion—"the elder *shall serve* the younger" (25:23). That, then, upon which Jacob had set his heart, and that which he had sought to obtain from Isaac by a wicked device, was the position of dignity and honor. Instead of serving he wanted to be served. How striking, then, to note that the very first word spoken by Laban after Jacob had enjoyed the hospitality of his house for a month, concerned that of *service!* How significant that Jacob should have fallen into the hands of a *crafty schemer!* Laban

was glad to receive Jacob into his household, but even though his nephew he did not intend that he should remain on indefinitely as a guest. No, he meant to profit by Jacob's presence, and so seeks to strike a bargain, lets Jacob know that if he remained with him it must be in the capacity of a *servant*, and so raises the question of "wages." This must have been a bitter portion for Jacob and a painful blow to his pride. He was beginning to learn that the way of the transgressor is hard.

But what follows is even more remarkable: "And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favored. And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Yeah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me? And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also" (29:16–28). The quotation is a lengthy one but it was necessary to give it in full so that the reader might be able to follow our remarks upon it. In the preceding paragraph we have seen how that the first lesson God was now teaching Jacob was that of humble *submission*—if he had refused to submit to God then he must submit to "serve" a human master. Here, in this quotation, we discover the second lesson that Jacob must learn was to *respect* the rights of the *first-born!* This was just what Jacob had disregarded in connection with Esau, so that which he had ignored concerning his brother he must bow to in connection with his wife. In the third place, mark how God was correcting the *impatience* of our patriarch. It was because he had refused to *wait God's time* for the fulfillment of His promise (as per 25:23) that he had involved himself in so much trouble, and had to leave home and flee from Esau; how fitting then he should now be obliged *to wait seven years* before he could obtain Rachel, and that he should be made to serve a further seven years for her after they were married!

In drawing this article to a close we would seek to expand briefly what seems to us to be the outstanding principle in the scripture we have just examined, namely, the principle of Divine retribution. "Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity, and sow wickedness, *reap the same*" (Job 4:8). In Laban's treatment of Jacob we see the deceiver deceived! This principle that whatsoever a man soweth *that shall* he also reap is writ large across the pages of Holy Scripture and is strikingly, nay marvelously, illustrated again and again. Pharaoh, King of Egypt, gave orders that every son of the Hebrews should be *drowned* (Ex. 1:22), and so in the end *he* was drowned (Ex. 14:28). Korah caused a cleft in the (congregation of Israel (Num. 16:2, 3), and so God made a cleft in the earth to swallow him (Num. 16:30). Again, we read of one Adoni-bezek that he fled, "and they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes.

And Adoni-bezek said, Three score and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: *as I have done, so God hath requited me!*” (Judg. 1:6, 7). Wicked Ahab caused Naboth to be slain and the dogs came and licked up his blood (1 Kings 21:19), accordingly we read that when Ahab died he was buried in Samaria, “And one washed the chariot (in which he had been slain) in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up *his* blood” (1 Kings 22:38). King Asa caused the prophet to be placed in “the house of *the stocks*” (2 Chron. 16:10 R. V.), and accordingly we read later that God punished *him* by a disease in his *feet* (1 Kings 15:23). Haman prepared a gallows for Mordecai, but was hanged upon it himself (Esther 7:10). Saul of Tarsus stood by and consented to the *stoning* of Stephen, and later we read that at Lystra the Jews *stored* Paul (Acts 14:19)—this is the more noticeable because Barnabas who was with him escaped!

But the most striking example of what men term “poetic justice” is the case of Jacob himself. First, he deceived his father and was, in turn, deceived by his father-in-law: Jacob came the younger for the elder to deceive Isaac, and has the elder daughter of Laban given instead of the younger for a wife. Second, we may mark the same principle at work in Jacob’s wife. In deceiving Jacob in the matter of Leah, Laban tricked Rachel; later we find Rachel tricking Laban (31:35). Again, we note how a mercenary spirit actuated Jacob in buying the birthright from Esau for a mess of pottage; the sequel to this was the mercenary spirit in Laban which caused him to change Jacob’s wages ten times (see 31:41). Finally we may remark, what is most striking of all, that Jacob deceived Isaac by allowing his mother to cover his hands and neck with “the skins of *the kids of the goats*” (27:16), and later Jacob’s sons deceived him by dipping the coat of Joseph in the blood of “*a kid of the goats*” (37:31) and making him believe an evil beast had devoured him: note, too, that Jacob deceived Isaac in regard to his favorite son (Esau), and so was Jacob deceived in regard to *his* favorite son (Joseph).

While it is true that very often *the connection between* evildoing and its evil consequences is not so apparent as in the above examples, nevertheless, God has given us, and still gives us, sufficient proof so as to provide us with solemn warnings of the fact that He is *not mocked*, that He *does* observe the ways of men, that He *hates* sin wherever it is found, and that His righteous government requires that “*every transgression and disobedience*” shall receive “a just recompense of reward” (Heb. 2:2). This “just recompense of reward” is visited upon His own children here in this world, not sent in anger but in love, not in judgment but directed to the conscience and heart so as to bring them to judge themselves for their evil doing. With the wicked it is often otherwise. Frequently they flourish here as a green bay tree, but at the Great White Throne the books shall be opened and every one of them shall be “judged *according to their works*.”

Should one who is out of Christ, a lost sinner, have read this article, let it be unto him as a voice crying “Flee from the wrath to come;” flee to the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, the only Refuge, who came into this world to save sinners. And, let the Christian reader learn anew the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and earnestly seek grace to enable him to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts so that he may “sow to the Spirit,” then shall he “of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (254). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Alfred Edersheim, Bible History, Old Testament

Chapter 17 - Jacob's Vision at Bethel - His Arrival at the House of Laban - Jacob's double Marriage and Servitude - His Flight from Haran - Pursuit of Laban, and Reconciliation with Jacob

(GENESIS 28:10-31:55)

IT had been a long and weary journey that first day when Jacob left his home at Beersheba.* More than forty miles had he traveled over the mountains which afterwards were those of Judah, and through what was to become the land of Benjamin. The sun had set, and its last glow faded out from the gray hills of Ephraim, when he reached "an uneven valley, covered, as with gravestones, by large sheets of bare rock, - some few here and there standing up like the cromlechs of Druidical monuments."** Here, close by a wild ridge, the broad summit of which was covered by an olive grove, was the place where Abraham had first rested for some time on entering the land, and whence he and Lot had, before their separation, taken a survey of the country. There, just before him, lay the Canaanitish Luz; and beyond it, many days' journey, stretched his weary course to Haran.*** It was a lonely, weird place, this valley of stones, in which to make his first night's quarters. But perhaps it agreed all the better with Jacob's mood, which had made him go on and on, from early morning, forgetful of time and way, till he could no longer pursue his journey. Yet, accidental as it seemed - for we read that "he lighted upon a certain place," - the selection of the spot was assuredly designed of God.

* We infer from the sacred text that Jacob made his first night's quarters at Bethel.

** Stanley, Sinai and Palestine, p. 217.

*** The journey from Beersheba to Haran is quite four hundred miles.

Presently Jacob prepared for rest. Piling some of the stones, with which the valley was strewn, he made them a pillow, and laid him down to sleep. Then it was, in his dream, that it seemed as if these stones of the valley were being builded together by an unseen hand, step upon step, "a ladder" - or, probably more correctly, "a stair." Now, as he watched it, it rose and rose, till it reached the deep blue star-spangled sky, which seemed to cleave for its reception. All along that wondrous track moved angel-forms, "ascending and descending upon it;" and angel-light was shed upon its course, till quite up on the top stood the glorious Jehovah Himself, Who spake to the lonely sleeper below: "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac." Silent in their ministry, the angels still passed up and down the heaven-built stairs, from where Jacob lay to where Jehovah spake. The vision and the words which the Lord spoke explain each other, the one being the symbol of the other. On that first night, when an outcast from his home, and a fugitive, heavy thoughts, doubts, and fears would crowd around Jacob; when, in every sense, his head was pillowed on stones in the rocky valley of Luz, Jehovah expressly renewed to him, in the fullest manner, the promise and the blessing first given to Abraham, and added to it this comfort, whatever might be before him: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this

land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." And what Jacob heard, that he also saw in symbolic vision. The promise was the real God-built stair, which reached from the lonely place on which the poor wanderer lay quite up to heaven, right into the very presence of Jehovah; and on which, all silent and unknown by the world, lay the shining track of angel-ministry. And so still to each one who is truly of Israel is the promise of that mysterious "ladder" which connects earth with heaven. Below lies poor, helpless, forsaken man; above, stands Jehovah Himself, and upon the ladder of promise which joins earth to heaven, the angels of God, in their silent, never-ceasing ministry, descend, bringing help, and ascend, as to fetch new deliverance. Nay, this "ladder" is Christ,* for by this "ladder" God Himself has come down to us in the Person of His dear Son, Who is, so to speak, the Promise become Reality, as it is written:

"Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51)

* So both Luther and Calvin understood it.

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely Jehovah is in this place, and I knew it not." Quite another fear now came upon him from that of loneliness or of doubt. It was awe at the conscious presence of the ever-watchful, ever-mindful covenant-God which made him feel, as many a wanderer since at such discovery: "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." And early next morning Jacob converted his stony pillow into a memorial pillar, and consecrated it unto God. Henceforth this rocky valley would be to him no more the Canaanitish Luz, but Beth-el, "the house of God;" just as John the Baptist declared that God could of such stones raise up children to Abraham. At the same time Jacob vowed a vow, that when God had fulfilled His promise, and brought him back again "in peace," he would, on his part also, make the place a Beth-el, by dedicating it to God, and offering unto the Lord a tenth of all that He should give him, which also he did. (Genesis 35:6, 7)

No further incident worth recording occurred till Jacob reached the end of his journey in "the land of the people of the East." Here he found himself at a "well," where, contrary to the usual custom, three flocks were already in waiting, long before the usual evening time for watering them. Professor Robinson has made this personal observation, helpful to our understanding of the circumstances: "Over most of the cisterns is laid a broad and thick flat stone, with a round hole cut in the middle, forming the mouth of the cistern. This hole we found in many cases covered with a heavy stone, which it would require two or three men to roll away." We know not whether these flocks were kept waiting till sufficient men had come to roll away the stone, or whether it was the custom to delay till all the flocks had arrived. At any rate, when Jacob had ascertained that the flocks were from Haran, and that the shepherds knew Laban, the brother of Rebekah, and when he saw the fair Rachel, his own cousin, coming with her flock, he rolled away the stone himself, watered his uncle's sheep, and in the warmth of his feelings at finding himself not only at the goal of his journey, but apparently God-directed to her whose very appearance could win his affections, he embraced his cousin. Even in this little trait the attentive observer of Jacob's natural character will not fail to recognize "the haste" with which he always

anticipated God's leadings. When Laban, Rachel's father, came to hear of all the circumstances, he received Jacob as his relative. A month's trial more than confirmed in the mind of that selfish, covetous man the favorable impression of Jacob's possible use to him as a shepherd, which his first energetic interference at the "well" must have produced. With that apparent frankness and show of liberality under which cunning, selfish people so often disguise their dishonest purposes, Laban urged upon Jacob to name his own "wages." Jacob had learned to love Rachel, Laban's younger daughter. Without consulting the mind of God in the matter, he now proposed to serve Laban seven years for her hand. This was just the period during which, among the Hebrews, a Jewish slave had to serve; in short, he proposed becoming a bondsman for Rachel. With the same well-feigned candor as before, Laban agreed: "It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man (to a stranger)." The bargain thus to sell his daughter was not one founded on the customs of the time, and Laban's daughters themselves felt the degradation which they could not resist, as appears from their after statement, when agreeing to flee from their father's home:

"Are we not counted of him strangers? for he has sold us." (Genesis 31:14, 15)

The period of Jacob's servitude seemed to him rapidly to pass, and at the end of the seven years he claimed his bride. But now Jacob was to experience how his sin had found him out. As he had deceived his father, so Laban now deceived him. Taking advantage of the Eastern custom that a bride was always brought to her husband veiled, he substituted for Rachel her elder sister Leah. But, as formerly, God had, all unknown to them, overruled the error and sin of Isaac and of Jacob, so He did now also in the case of Laban and Jacob. For Leah was, so far as we can judge, the one whom God had intended for Jacob, though, for the sake of her beauty, he had preferred Rachel. From Leah sprang Judah, in whose line the promise to Abraham was to be fulfilled. Leah, as we shall see in the sequel, feared and served Jehovah; while Rachel was attached to the superstitions of her father's house; and even the natural character of the elder sister fitted her better for her new calling than that of the somewhat petulant, peevish, and self-willed, though beautiful younger daughter of Laban. As for the author of this deception, Laban, he shielded himself behind the pretense of a national custom, not to give away a younger before a first born sister. But he readily proposed to give to Jacob Rachel also, in return for other seven years of service. Jacob consented, and the second union was celebrated immediately upon the close of Leah's marriage festivities, which in the East generally last for a week. It were an entire mistake to infer from the silence of Scripture that this double marriage of Jacob received Divine approbation. As always, Scripture states facts, but makes no comment. That sufficiently appears from the lifelong sorrow, disgrace, and trials which, in the retributive providence of God, followed as the consequence of this double union.

The sinful weakness of Jacob appeared also in his married life, in an unkind and unjust preference for Rachel, and God's reproofing dealings in that He blessed the "hated" wife with children, while he withheld from Rachel a boon so much desired in a family where all that was precious stood connected with an heir to the promises. At the same time, this might also serve to teach again the lesson, given first to Abraham and then to Isaac, how

especially in the patriarchal family this blessing was to be a direct gift from the Lord. (See also Psalm 127:3) Leah bore in rapid succession four sons, whom she significantly named Reuben (" behold! a son"), saying, "Surely Jehovah hath looked upon my affliction;" Simeon ("hearing"), "Because Jehovah hath heard that I was hated;" Levi ("cleaving," or "joined"), in the hope "Now this time will my husband cleave to me;" and Judah ("praised," viz., be Jehovah), since she said: "Now will I praise Jehovah." It deserves special notice, that in the birth of at least three of these sons, Leah not only recognized God, but specially acknowledged Him as Jehovah, the covenant-God.⁷⁵

Book of Jasher:

CHAPTER 30

1 And Jacob went forth continuing his road to Haran, and he came as far as mount Moriah, and he tarried there all night near the city of Luz; and the Lord appeared there unto Jacob on that night, and he said unto him, I am the Lord God of Abraham and the God of Isaac thy father; the land upon which thou liest I will give unto thee and thy seed.

2 And behold I am with thee and will keep thee wherever thou goest, and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of Heaven, and I will cause all thine enemies to fall before thee; and when they shall make war with thee they shall not prevail over thee, and I will bring thee again unto this land with joy, with children, and with great riches.

3 And Jacob awoke from his sleep and he rejoiced greatly at the vision which he had seen; and he called the name of that place Bethel.

4 And Jacob rose up from that place quite rejoiced, and when he walked his feet felt light to him for joy, and he went from there to the land of the children of the East, and he returned to Haran and he set by the shepherd's well.

5 And he there found some men; going from Haran to feed their flocks, and Jacob made inquiries of them, and they said, We are from Haran.

6 And he said unto them, Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor? and they said, We know him, and behold his daughter Rachel is coming along to feed her father's flock.

7 Whilst he was yet speaking with them, Rachel the daughter of Laban came to feed her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

8 And when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, he ran and kissed her, and lifted up his voice and wept.

9 And Jacob told Rachel that he was the son of Rebecca, her father's sister, and Rachel ran and told her father, and Jacob continued to cry because he had nothing with him to bring to the house of Laban.

10 And when Laban heard that his sister's son Jacob had come, he ran and kissed him and embraced him and brought him into the house and gave him bread, and he ate.

11 And Jacob related to Laban what his brother Esau had done to him, and what his son Eliphaz had done to him in the road.

⁷⁵ Alfred Edersheim, Bible History, Old Testament, studylight.org

12 And Jacob resided in Laban's house for one month, and Jacob ate and drank in the house of Laban, and afterward Laban said unto Jacob, Tell me what shall be thy wages, for how canst thou serve me for nought?

13 And Laban had no sons but only daughters, and his other wives and handmaids were still barren in those days; and these are the names of Laban's daughters which his wife Adinah had borne unto him; the name of the elder was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel; and Leah was tender-eyed, but Rachel was beautiful and well favored, and Jacob loved her.

14 And Jacob said unto Laban, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter; and Laban consented to this and Jacob served Laban seven years for his daughter Rachel.

15 And in the second year of Jacob's dwelling in Haran, that is in the seventy ninth year of the life of Jacob, in that year died Eber the son of Shem, he was four hundred and sixty-four years old at his death.

16 And when Jacob heard that Eber was dead he grieved exceedingly, and he lamented and mourned over him many days.

17 And in the third year of Jacob's dwelling in Haran, Bosmath, the daughter of Ishmael, the wife of Esau, bare unto him a son, and Esau called his name Reuel.

18 And in the fourth year of Jacob's residence in the house of Laban, the Lord visited Laban and remembered him on account of Jacob, and sons were born unto him, and his first born was Beor, his second was Alib, and the third was Chorash.

19 And the Lord gave Laban riches and honor, sons and daughters, and the man increased greatly on account of Jacob.

20 And Jacob in those days served Laban in all manner of work, in the house and in the field, and the blessing of the Lord was in all that belonged to Laban in the house and in the field.

21 And in the fifth year died Jehudith, the daughter of Beeri, the wife of Esau, in the land of Canaan, and she had no sons but daughters only.

22 And these are the names of her daughters which she bare to Esau, the name of the elder was Marzith, and the name of the younger was Puith.

23 And when Jehudith died, Esau rose up and went to Seir to hunt in the field, as usual, and Esau dwelt in the land of Seir for a long time.

24 And in the sixth year Esau took for a wife, in addition to his other wives, Ahlibamah, the daughter of Zebeon the Hivite, and Esau brought her to the land of Canaan.

25 And Ahlibamah conceived and bare unto Esau three sons, Yeush, Yaalan, and Korah.

26 And in those days, in the land of Canaan, there was a quarrel between the herdsmen of Esau and the herdsmen of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, for Esau's cattle and goods were too abundant for him to remain in the land of Canaan, in his father's house, and the land of Canaan could not bear him on account of his cattle.

27 And when Esau saw that his quarreling increased with the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, he rose up and took his wives and his sons and his daughters, and all belonging to him, and the cattle which he possessed, and all his property that he had acquired in the land of Canaan, and he went away from the inhabitants of the land to the land of Seir, and Esau and all belonging to him dwelt in the land of Seir.

28 But from time to time Esau would go and see his father and mother in the land of Canaan, and Esau intermarried with the Horites, and he gave his daughters to the sons of Seir, the Horite.

29 And he gave his elder daughter Marzith to Anah, the son of Zebeon, his wife's brother, and Puith he gave to Azar, the son of Bilhan the Horite; and Esau dwelt in the mountain, he and his children, and they were fruitful and multiplied.

CHAPTER 31

1 And in the seventh year, Jacob's service which he served Laban was completed, and Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for the days of my service are fulfilled; and Laban did so, and Laban and Jacob assembled all the people of that place and they made a feast.

2 And in the evening Laban came to the house, and afterward Jacob came there with the people of the feast, and Laban extinguished all the lights that were there in the house.

3 And Jacob said unto Laban, Wherefore dost thou do this thing unto us? and Laban answered, Such is our custom to act in this land.

4 And afterward Laban took his daughter Leah, and he brought her to Jacob, and he came to her and Jacob did not know that she was Leah.

5 And Laban gave his daughter Leah his maid Zilpah for a handmaid.

6 And all the people at the feast knew what Laban had done to Jacob, but they did not tell the thing to Jacob.

7 And all the neighbors came that night to Jacob's house, and they ate and drank and rejoiced, and played before Leah upon timbrels, and with dances, and they responded before Jacob, Heleah, Heleah.

8 And Jacob heard their words but did not understand their meaning, but he thought such might be their custom in this land.

9 And the neighbors spoke these words before Jacob during the night, and all the lights that were in the house Laban had that night extinguished.

10 And in the morning, when daylight appeared, Jacob turned to his wife and he saw, and behold it was Leah that had been lying in his bosom, and Jacob said, Behold now I know what the neighbors said last night, Heleah, they said, and I knew it not.

11 And Jacob called unto Laban, and said unto him, What is this that thou didst unto me? Surely I served thee for Rachel, and why didst thou deceive me and didst give me Leah?

12 And Laban answered Jacob, saying, Not so is it done in our place to give the younger before the elder now therefore if thou desirest to take her sister likewise, take her unto thee for the service which thou wilt serve me for another seven years.

13 And Jacob did so, and he also took Rachel for a wife, and he served Laban seven years more, and Jacob also came to Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and Laban gave her his maid Bilhah for a handmaid.

14 And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, the Lord opened her womb, and she conceived and bare Jacob four sons in those days.

15 And these are their names, Reuben Simeon, Levi, and Judah, and she afterward left bearing.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT

