

Genesis 29:1-35 and 30:1-24

Overview:

1. 29:1-8 – Jacob Arrives in Padan-Aram
2. 29:9-14 – Jacob Meets Laban's family and enters first contract (one month)
3. 29:15-30 – Second Contract (Bride price) becomes third contract
4. 29:31-35 – Leah's children
5. 30:1-8 – Bilhah's children
6. 30:9-13 – Zilpah's children
7. 30:14-21 – Mandrakes and Leah's Fifth and Sixth Sons
8. 30:22-24 – Rachel's Son

Genesis 29:1-8 -

Then Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the east. 2 As he looked, he saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep lying beside it, for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, 3 and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place over the mouth of the well.

4 Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." 5 He said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" They said, "We know him." 6 He said to them, "Is it well with him?" They said, "It is well; and see, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep!" 7 He said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered together. Water the sheep and go, pasture them." 8 But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

1. "we can not until all the flocks are gathered"
 - a. Based on herding contract
 - b. Contracts guaranteed fair distribution of resources
 - i. Grazing
 - ii. Water
 - c. Legal agreement existed between herdsmen and livestock owners
2. These herds are kept by the crop fields so they are less nomadic and more urban.

Genesis 29:9-14 -

While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. 10 Now as soon as Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, Jacob came near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. 11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept aloud. 12 And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

13 As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he ran to meet him and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things, 14 and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

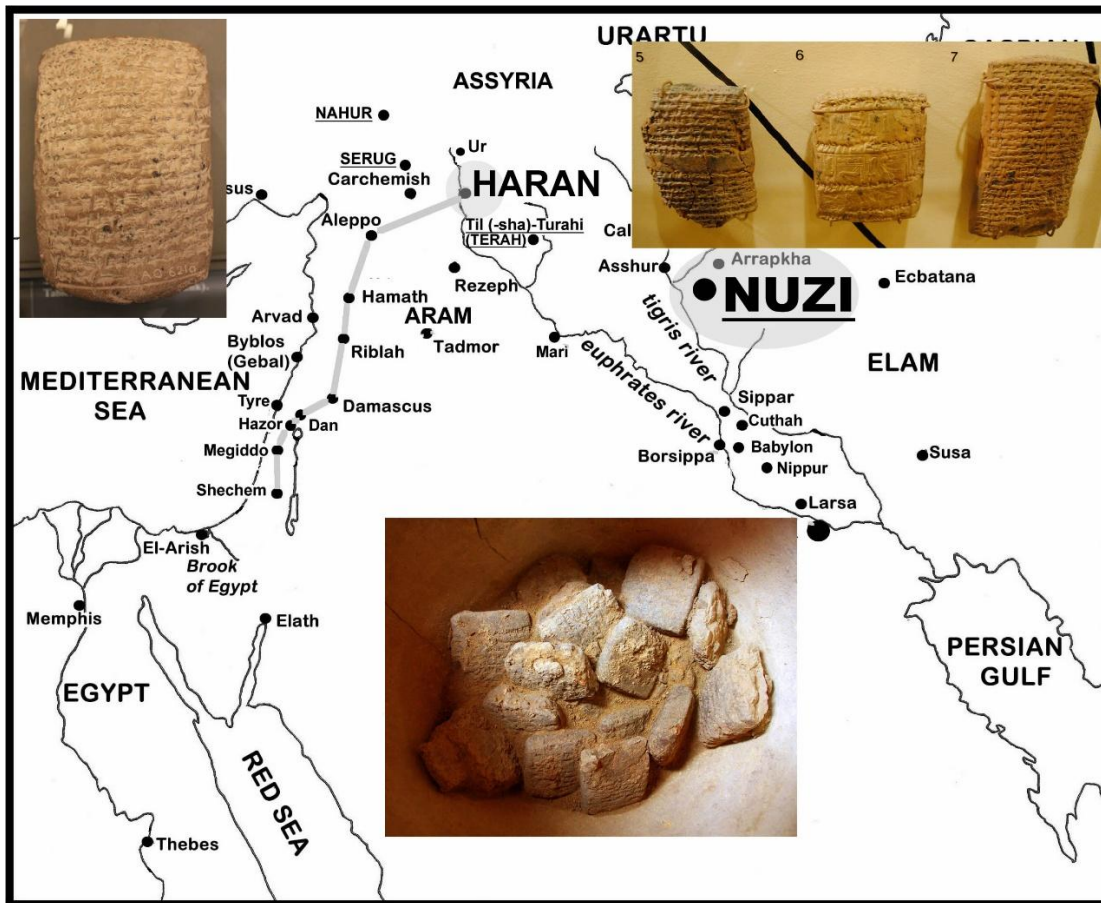
1. "my bone and my flesh" appear to be welcoming Jacob into an adoption agreement where Jacob would become a legal son.
 - a. This terminology would make Jacob a legal adopted son
 - b. As a son Jacob would be an heir and receive an inheritance
2. "a month" – one month later this "kinsman" terminology means nothing.
 - a. Jacob serves one month for free (29:15)
 - b. Laban ignores this first contract and renegotiates a second contract. (29:19-20)

Genesis 29:15-30 -

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" 16 Now Laban had two daughters. The name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful in form and appearance. 18 Jacob loved Rachel. And he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." 19 Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." 22 So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a feast. 23 But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went in to her. 24 (Laban gave his female servant Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her servant.) 25 And in the morning, behold, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" 26 Laban said, "It is not so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. 27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." 28 Jacob did so, and completed her week. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. 29 (Laban gave his female servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her servant.) 30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served Laban for another seven years.

1. Laban has forgotten or nullified the original agreement and the contract is restructured as a bride-price agreement.
2. The groom and his family would normally bring a bride price to purchase the woman from her family, but Jacob has nothing
3. Since Jacob has nothing and his family is not available, Jacob's new (second) contract is a bride price of seven years of labor.



4. Bride price at this time according to Nuzi contracts was 30-40 shekels.
5. Jacob's work produced one shekel per month.
 - a. 12 shekels/yr
 - b. $12 \times 7 = 84$ shekels in 7 yrs
 - c. Jacob would be paying more than double the bride price.
6. Marriage was a joyful business transaction.
 - a. Not religious
 - b. Not civil
 - c. No priest
 - d. No sanctuary



These Nuzi tablets from 1300-1500 BC.

- They explain the custom of a servant becoming an heir.
- A slave girl was given as a wedding gift to a new bride.
- An upper-class wife who was childless had to provide her husband with a slave girl to bear him children.
- A father could name any one of his sons as his heir, not necessarily the first-born.
- The "household gods" (teraphim) were images of dead relatives and possession of them implied the family headship.
- If a wife processed the teraphim, she could give her husband the ownership of her family's property.
- The bride price was 30-40 shekels.

(<https://www.thebibleseminary.edu/post/thenuzitablesinsightsongenesis>)

7. Personal love was not first and foremost in marriage.
8. Marriage was a legal, economic, social issue that could result from an agreement made years before.
9. Hammurabi's Law #160 identifies a penalty for NOT delivering the bride for whom the bride price had been paid.
 - a. This means that at Hammurabi's time (1792-1750 BC) fathers had to have a law to force them to keep the marriage contract.
10. Weddings were one-week long celebrations. The bride was given to the husband the first night of the week.
11. Contrary to Laban's claim, there is NO custom recorded from this time of marrying sister's off in accordance with their birth order.



Genesis 29:31-35 -

When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 32 And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me." 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. 35 And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing.

1. Reuben means "See, a son"
2. Simeon sounds like the Hebrew for "heard"
3. Levi sounds like the Hebrew for "attached"
4. Judah sounds like the Hebrew for "praise"

Genesis 30:1-8 -

When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" 2 Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" 3 Then she said, "Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her." 4 So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob

went in to her. 5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, “God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she called his name Dan. 7 Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed.” So she called his name Naphtali.

1. Dan sounds like the Hebrew for “judged”
2. Naphtali sounds like the Hebrew for “wrestling”

Genesis 30:9-13 -

When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. 10 Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 And Leah said, “Good fortune has come!” so she called his name Gad. 12 Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 And Leah said, “Happy am I! For women have called me happy.” So she called his name Asher.

1. Gad sounds like the Hebrew for “good fortune”
2. Asher sounds like the Hebrew for “happy”

Genesis 30:14-21 -

In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, “Please give me some of your son's mandrakes.” 15 But she said to her, “Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?” Rachel said, “Then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son's mandrakes.” 16 When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes.” So he lay with her that night. 17 And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Leah said, “God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband.” So she called his name Issachar.

19 And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons.” So she called his name Zebulun. 21 Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah.

1. Gad sounds like the Hebrew for “good fortune”
2. Asher sounds like the Hebrew for “happy”
3. Reuben would be 8-14 years old.
4. “Mandrake” plant is Mandragora believed in the ancient world and classical world to have
5. magic powers.

- a. It was considered to be aphrodisiac /a-fruh-DEE-zee-ak/ which is “a substance that is believed to increase sexual desire or enhance sexual pleasure.”
- b. Song of Solomon 7:11-13 – ***“Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages...There I will give you my love. The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.”***
- c. Believed to make barren women conceive
- d. Egypt believed it was the aroma that had erotic powers
- e. Modern science says:
 - i. Sedative - a medication or substance that reduces excitability and calms the central nervous system, leading to relaxation and drowsiness
 - ii. Narcotic - a class of drugs that interact with the nervous system to relieve pain and induce pleasure.
 - iii. Laxative
 - iv. Unusual shape resembling a human form
 - v. Shines in the dark



Genesis 30:22-24 -

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. 23 She conceived and bore a son and said, “God has taken away my reproach.” 24 And she called his name Joseph, saying, “May the Lord add to me another son!”

1. Joseph means “may he add”
2. A woman’s status in marriage was not full until she bore a child.
3. In this culture a wife could be returned if she is barren. Making Rachel very vulnerable if Jacob left Padan-Aram with her still barren.
4. Before Rachel bore Joseph it would be inappropriate for Jacob to leave with a barren wife since here security would still be with her family (house of Laban) and not with a husband (Jacob) whom she had failed.

Jacob's Wives and Children

Leah	Rachel	Bilhah (Rachel)	Zilpah (Leah)
1. Reuben 2. Simeon 3. Levi 4. Judah 9. Issachar 10. Zebulun - Dinah	11. <u>Joseph</u> 12. Benjamin (Joseph with Asenath: - Manasseh - <u>Ephraim</u>)	5. Dan 6. Naphtali	7. Gad 8. Asher

1 Chronicles 5:1-2 - "The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel (for he was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's couch, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel, so that he could not be enrolled as the oldest son; though Judah became strong among his brothers and a chief came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph")"

Jeremiah 31:9 - "With weeping they shall come, and with pleas for mercy I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble, for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

Genesis 48:13-20 - And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn). And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. 18 And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." 19 But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations." 20 So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.