

Genesis 30:25-43 and 31:1-21

Genesis 30

1. POINT: Jacob knows it is time to leave.
2. Jacob has prospered, but the challenges indicate he is being urged back to the land promised to Abraham and Isaac as the Lord's appearance and command indicate in Gen. 31:1-3.

Genesis 30:25-28 – Jacob asks to leave, but Laban offers wages:

As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you." 27 But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. 28 Name your wages, and I will give it."

1. Jacob has paid the bride price of 14 years and the wives have been paid for.
2. After birth of a son Rachel's status as a wife is now secure
 - a. According to laws and customs of this time it would be inappropriate for Jacob to leave with Rachel because she was not yet "fully" his wife and she needed the security of still being in the same area as her family (her father Laban)
3. "Learned by divination"
 - a. Assuming Laban is being honest
 - b. "Divination" is divided into two categories:
 - i. INSPIRED:
 1. Communication from the divine by way of:
 - a. Prophet
 - b. Prophecy
 - c. Dream
 - ii. DEDUCTIVE:
 1. Communication from the divine by way of:
 - a. Events
 - b. Phenomena
 - i. ACTIVE:
 1. Casting lots
 2. Reading animal intestines
 - ii. PASSIVE:
 1. eclipse
 2. Star movement
 3. Celestial observation
 - c. Laban likely consulted an expert to sacrifice an animal and read its liver to answer a Yes/No question such as, "Has the God of Jacob caused prosperity?"

Genesis 30:29-33 – Jacob names his price and contract:

Jacob said to him, “You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. 30 For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?” 31 He said, “What shall I give you?” Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it: 32 let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and they shall be my wages. 33 So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen.”

1. Shepherds wages in the ANE were normally a percentage of the herd’s byproducts such as:
 - a. milk, wool
 - b. New born
2. The percentage on one ancient Nuzi text states 20%
3. Jacob does not ask for a percent by for the animals born with marks in color:
 - a. The awassi sheep fat tailed sheep was the most common and was white.
 - i. Deviation was uncommon
 - ii. Deviation is less than 20%
 - b. The goats were typically black
4. Jacob’s marked animals were rare and the percentage requested in the contract Jacob offered was well below the going rate for a shepherd
5. The idea for this agreement was a dream from the Lord according to Gen. 31:10-11



Awassi fat tailed sheep

Genesis 30:34-36 – Laban agrees with Jacob’s contract, but then removes certain goats and sheep:

Laban said, “Good! Let it be as you have said.” 35 But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in the charge of his sons. 36 And he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban's flock.

1. Laban attempts to remove any of the herd that had the genetic tendency to create product that would become Jacob’s property.

Genesis 30:37-43 – Jacob counters Laban’s cheating by controlling the breeding:

Then Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks. 38 He set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, 39 the flocks bred in front of the sticks and so the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. 40 And Jacob separated the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban. He put his own droves apart and did not put them with Laban's flock. 41 Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the sticks, 42 but for the feebler of the flock he would not lay them there. So the feebler would be Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. 43 Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

1. Jacob uses some science and some local superstition:
 - a. Superstition → Visual aids during breeding at watering stations
 - i. No modern scientific support for this practice
 - ii. No evidence of this practice, custom, belief or superstition from the ancient near east exists (or, anywhere ancient)
 - b. Science → “like breeds like” this is a genetic principle

Genesis 31

Genesis 31:1-3 – Jacob conflict with brothers-in-law and lost favor with Laban; Lord says, “Leave”:

Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, “Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth.” 2 And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before. 3 Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”

1. Any wealth of Jacob was essentially wealth that was transferred from Laban and his sons.
 - a. As Jacob’s wealth increased it was perceived as a decrease in Laban’s wealth
2. BUT, Jacob was investing and producing new product. Laban’s sons could also have invested, produced and prospered
 - a. It is a false concept accepted by Laban’s sons that there is only a limited amount of wealth to go around. They felt that the wealth was either Jacob’s or Laban’s.
 - b. This false concept led to the exaggerated statement and justified their dishonesty when they said, “Jacob has TAKEN ALL that was our fathers.”
 - i. TAKEN – but instead Jacob invested
 - ii. ALL – they still have their share, but they did not manage it well
3. Deterioration of the relationship meant Jacob needed to act for self-preservation
 - a. Jacob knew it was time to leave in Genesis 30:26 when he asked for Laban’s blessing to leave and before this contract agreement was made.
 - b. Now Jacob has to leave and God says, “Return to the land!”

Genesis 31:4-13 – Jacob confers with Rachel and Leah:

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was 5 and said to them, “I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. 6 You know that I have served your father with all my strength, 7 yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me. 8 If he said, ‘The spotted shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore striped. 9 Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. 10 In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled. 11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’ 12 And he said, ‘Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. 13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.”

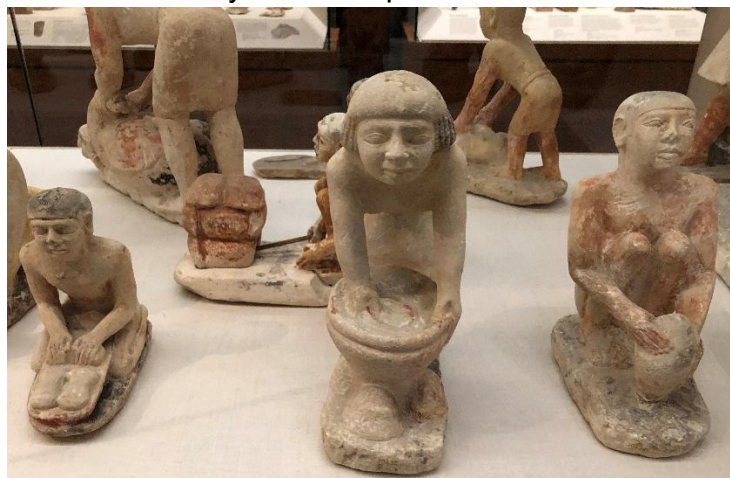
1. Jacob now presents his case, the situation and the Word of the Lord to his wives.
(Notice Bilhah and Zilpah are not mentioned.)
2. God identifies himself as the same God who had appeared to Jacob at night on the stairway at Bethel.
 - a. God had protected and provided
 - b. Not it is time for Jacob to listen to his God and return to the land

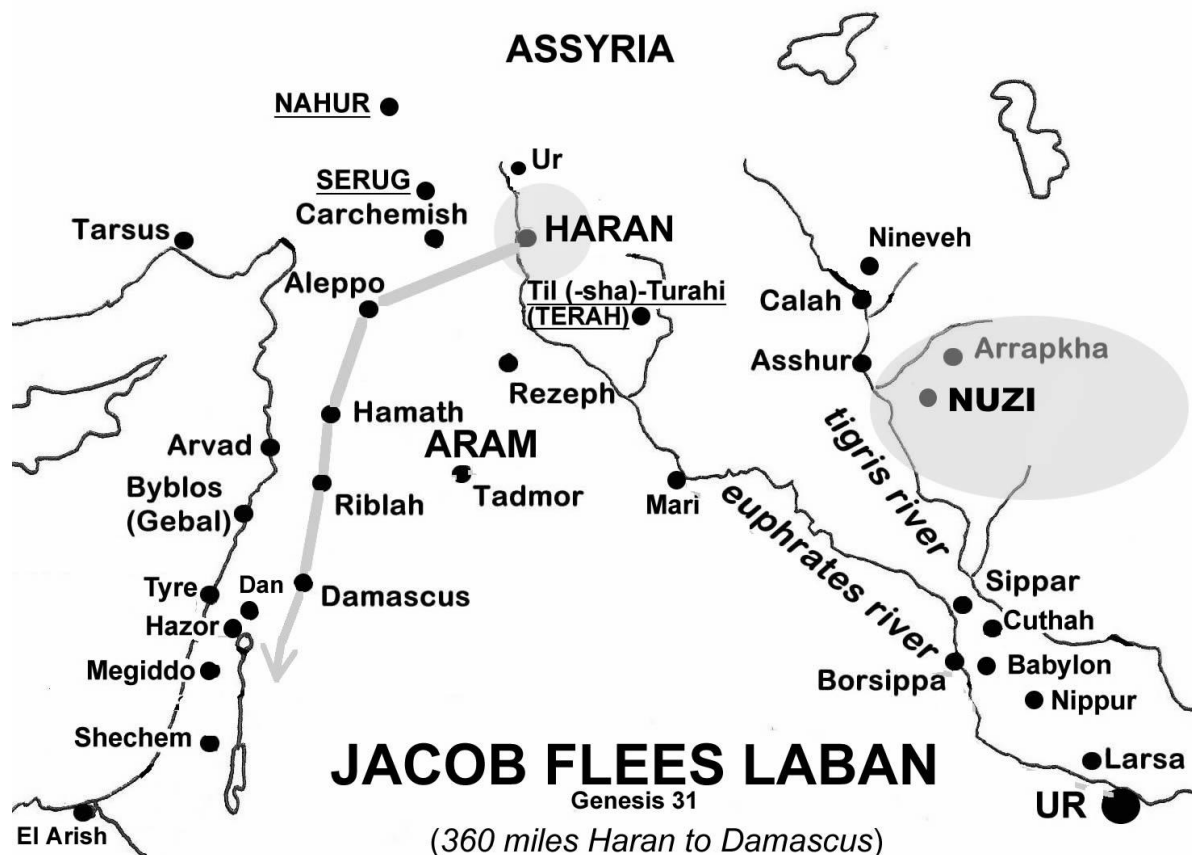
3. Here we find out God was the one to tell Jacob the basis for his final labor contract with Laban

Genesis 31:14-16 – Rachel and Leah feel betrayed by Laban; They agree to follow God and Jacob:

Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house? 15 Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. 16 All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.”

1. The bride price was often set aside and transferred to the wife as a dowry. This served as an ancient life insurance policy for the bride.
2. Leah and Rachel’s “dowry” (life insurance policy) had been cashed in and spent by Laban.
3. Leah and Rachel had no security now but their husband Jacob
4. Leah and Rachel had no security in the region or in their father’s family
5. Leah and Rachel had been sold by Laban to profit Laban.





Genesis 31:17-21 – Jacob flees with family, herds and possessions:

So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. 18 He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. 19 Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household gods. 20 And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee. 21 He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

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| 1 [e] | 834 [e] | 8655 [e] | 853 [e] | 7354 [e] | 1589 [e] | 6629 [e] | 853 [e] | 1494 [e] | 1980 [e] | 3837 [e] |
| le'a bi'hā. | 'ā ser | hat ta-rā pīm | 'et- | rā hēl, | wat tiḡ nōb | sō nōw, | 'et- | liḡ zōz | hā lak, | we-lā-bān |
| לְאִבִּיהָ: | אֲשֶׁר | הַתְּרָפִים | אֶת- | רָחֵל | וַתִּגְנֹב | צֹאנִי | אֶת- | לִגְזִי | הָלַךְ | וְלָבָן |
| unto her father | that were | the household idols | - | Rachel | and had stolen | his sheep | - | to shear | had gone | Now Laban |
| Prep-I N-msc 3fs | Pro-I | Art N-mp | DirObjM | N-proper-fs | Conj-w V-Qal-ConseImpf-3fs | N-fsc 3ms | DirObjM | Prep-I V-Qal-Inf | V-Qal-Perf-3ms | Conj-w N-proper-ms |

1. Shearing was done in April/May with a lot of man power and celebration.
2. “household gods” (**teraphim**) were images representing deceased ancestors. They’re used for:
 - a. Care of the dead
 - b. Divination
 - c. Several Nuzi texts say the primary heir received the teraphim. One Nuzi text states the teraphim were NOT to go to a man outside the family.
 - d. The teraphim connected the family unit to the property and the heart of the family
 - e. Rachel’s interest in the teraphim has to do with inheritance and family headship, but not worship or idolatry
 - f. Teraphim were not worshipped and were not gods, but they could become tools for divination and eventually are forbidden

- g. Women were bound to the gods of their husband and left their father's gods. But, obviously in most cases the gods of the father were also the gods his son-in-law.
- h. Rachel was declaring Jacob, not Laban, as the head of her family's household. She transferred the family headship.

