

Genesis (2011) 30B

- Jacob, his four wives and eleven sons and one daughter (that we know of) are living in Haran, serving Laban
 - Jacob has been living here 14 years now
 - In that time he's paid the dowry for two wives
 - We remember that the extra seven years was made necessary by Laban's dishonesty
 - In fact, Laban's plan all along has been to hold on to Jacob forever
 - Jacob's knowledge of shepherding has been a tremendous blessing to Laban
 - Before Jacob appeared on the scene, Laban had been forced to use his daughter to help raise the sheep
 - And we saw the operation was nothing to brag about
 - But now as Jacob has reached the end of his 14 years, he is anxious to return home
 - Besides the obvious desire to see his family, Jacob wants to return to his own inheritance
 - He has worked to pay off his debt with Laban, so any further work at this point will simply be building the inheritance of Laban's sons
 - So Jacob is ready to leave, and he announces his intentions to Laban

[Gen. 30:25](#) Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country.

[Gen. 30:26](#) "Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you."

[Gen. 30:27](#) But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, stay with me; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account."

[Gen. 30:28](#) He continued, "Name me your wages, and I will give it."

[Gen. 30:29](#) But he said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me.

[Gen. 30:30](#) “For you had little before I came and it has increased to a multitude, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?”

- Following the birth of the eleventh son, Joseph, Jacob asked Laban to send him away
 - Jacob tells Laban to give him his wives and children and allow Jacob to depart since his fourteen years of service have been completed
 - We might ask why Jacob doesn't just leave on his own initiative
 - Why does Jacob need to ask Laban to let him go?
 - The culture of the day placed tremendous authority in the leader of a tribe or clan
 - Jacob has come under the authority of Laban since the time Jacob was welcomed into Laban's house
 - And since Jacob was bound by his word to work for Laban to pay for his wives, only Laban could release Jacob
 - So Jacob is asking for Laban to honor his agreement and release Jacob according to the terms of the deal
 - Laban still doesn't want Jacob to leave
 - As I said, Laban would prefer that Jacob never leave, so he must find some new angle to play in keeping Jacob in his household
 - Laban makes a counteroffer to Jacob
 - Laban tells Jacob that he knows his household has been blessed to have Jacob in it
 - In fact, Laban says that he has come to know that Jacob is a source of supernatural blessing through divination
 - The Hebrew word for divination is *nachash*, which is the word for satanic sorcery or incantations
 - Laban is a pagan who turns to the occult to find his spiritual direction

- And the enemy has instructed Laban that Jacob is the cause of Laban's blessing and he should remain in Laban's household
- Obviously the enemy is working to keep Jacob away from the promised land
 - The enemy wants to disrupt the Lord's plan, and keeping Jacob in Haran is one way to do that
 - Take note of the way Satan has manipulated Laban in this situation and in the process is trying to control Jacob
 - Satan has told Laban that Jacob is the cause of Laban's wealth, which is a partial truth
 - The full truth is that God's promises working through Jacob are the source of Laban's strength
 - Nevertheless, by showing Laban the means to greater wealth, Satan gains control of Laban, who in turns schemes against Jacob
- So Laban offers to hire Jacob as a permanent employee
 - Laban will pay Jacob to work and he offers Jacob any wage he wants to name
 - This may sound like a very fair and even generous offer
 - Jacob could finally begin to amass his own wealth after years of simply making Laban rich
 - But remember, Laban is the owner of the flocks and the herds
 - And in any business, who gets richer? The employees or the owners?
 - No matter how generous the wages may be to an employee, the owner of a business is always the richer
 - And Jacob knows this too
 - Jacob isn't interested in working for someone else when he has his own flocks and herds waiting him in his father's house
 - So Jacob says to Laban, you know this isn't a good deal...

- You know I've served you for fourteen years and made you rich in the process, because I have the ability to multiply herds
 - In v.30 Jacob says Laban's herds have "increased"
 - In Hebrew the word is *parats*, which means to break forth
 - In Jacob's day, Laban's herds have leaped forward in prosperity
- And Jacob reminds Laban that the source of this blessing is the Lord Who brings success to Jacob at every turn
 - Here we find hopeful evidence that Jacob has been listening to the Lord and the promises
 - Jacob understands that the Lord has been at work to bring about these blessings
- So Jacob asks Laban if he continues working for Laban's household, who will provide for Jacob's household?
 - Laban tries another tactic

[Gen. 30:31](#) So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this one thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flock: [Gen. 30:32](#) let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep and every black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages.

[Gen. 30:33](#) "So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, will be considered stolen."

[Gen. 30:34](#) Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word."

- Laban offers to give Jacob some of Laban's household as Jacob's inheritance
 - This is a sign of Laban's desperation
 - He is basically willing to adopt Jacob as if he were a son and include him in the inheritance over Laban's own sons
 - Jacob can build wealth for his family in this home rather than returning to the land of Abraham and Isaac
 - In hearing Laban's offer, Jacob makes a counterproposal of his own
 - He first states that he will not take anything from Laban

- Jacob means he is not interested in becoming party to Laban's inheritance
 - Jacob still wants to return to Canaan and to his family, so he has no interest in waiting for Laban's death and for the inheritance to be split
 - Plus, Jacob is following in the footsteps of his grandfather who did not wish to be enriched from the largess of pagan benefactors
 - Jacob knew the Lord was blessing him and would depend on the Lord
- So knowing that the Lord was working with Jacob, Jacob enacted a plan to outsmart Laban
 - Jacob tells Laban that he is willing to continue to keep Laban's flocks if Laban will allow Jacob the opportunity to build up a herd for himself
 - Jacob says he will take only the spotted and speckled lambs, the black lambs and the speckled and spotted goats
 - In this region, the lambs were generally white and the goats were solid black or brown
 - Speckled goats and lambs were few in number and black sheep were very rare
 - So Jacob is asking to keep a minimal number of animals from the herd as a way of obtaining a herd for himself
 - Jacob emphasized that this plan would also make it easy for Laban to know which animals were Jacob's property and which were Laban's
 - Otherwise, it would be nearly impossible for Laban to know whether Jacob was building his flock honestly or stealing from Laban's herds
- Jacob's plan is built on two assumptions
 - First, Jacob is assuming that his knowledge of animal husbandry will allow him to multiply the herds to his advantage
 - Secondly, Jacob is expecting the Lord to continue blessing him in these efforts

- Notice this plan has no timeline
 - Jacob is agreeing to work under these terms indefinitely
 - Both parties assume they will get the better end of the bargain
 - Laban assumes he will have Jacob employed forever, since it would be very hard to build a meaningful herd by only collecting the odd colored animal here and there
 - Jacob is assuming this plan will not last long because as his own herd grows quickly, it will become a threat to Laban's household
- So Jacob embarks on at least several more years of working for Laban, but Laban still has a few tricks up his sleeve

[Gen. 30:35](#) So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons.

[Gen. 30:36](#) And he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

- In v.35 we're told that Laban pulls a fast one on Jacob
 - On the day this bargain is struck, Laban immediately orders that all the speckled and spotted and black animals be removed from among the main herd
 - These animals were assigned to the care of Laban's sons
 - Then the sons traveled three-day's journey away from the main herd and shepherded the flock there
 - The point of this maneuver was to make Jacob's task as hard as humanly possible
 - Laban removed the "stock" that Jacob would have used to begin breeding more speckled and spotted animals
 - Laban assumes that Jacob will now have to work many decades to produce a sizable flock
 - Clearly, this is a devious trick, yet nothing in their agreement prohibited this action
 - So Laban was taking every advantage he could

- But Jacob had a few tricks of his own

[Gen. 30:37](#) Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which was in the rods.

[Gen. 30:38](#) He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink.

[Gen. 30:39](#) So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.

[Gen. 30:40](#) Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

[Gen. 30:41](#) Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods;

[Gen. 30:42](#) but when the flock was feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

[Gen. 30:43](#) So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

- As Jacob cares for Laban's flock of white lambs and solid colored goats, he begins to employ careful techniques for selective mating
 - First, Jacob takes fresh rods or sticks of poplar and almond trees
 - He peeled the bark back on these rods
 - And he placed the rods in the watering troughs where the animals drank
 - Then in v. 39 we're told the flocks mated by the rods, and in the process of mating the animals brought forth striped and spotted animals
 - Then as the spotted and speckled lambs and goats grew older and were ready to mate, Jacob positioned the animals in a certain way
 - He faced the black and striped animals toward each other, but the solid animals he set apart, since they were Laban's flock
 - Furthermore, when the stronger animals were in mating season, Jacob placed the rods in their water but the feeble animals he didn't give the rods
 - So over time, Jacob built a flock of speckled, striped and black animals that were very strong and healthy

- And he left Laban a weak and sickly flock of solid color animals
- So what's going on here?
 - You can find many views in the commentaries, and most of them provoke more humor than insight
 - You'll see every explanation from superstition to supernatural causes
 - Most draw a connection between the appearance of the animals and the appearance of the rods themselves
 - As if the animals' reproductive process was changed in some way by what their eyes saw in the water
 - Remember our review of Evolution's claims which we completed after we finished Chapter 2 of Genesis?
 - We noted that the early naturalist and evolutionist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck proposed a theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics
 - He said that an animal that acquires physical changes brought about by environmental factors can pass those changes along to offspring
 - Example: if you cut off the tail of the mouse, then the mouse's offspring would have shorter tails
 - Or if you wanted taller children, you should stretch yourself every day
 - Later scientists disproved this theory, and our present day knowledge of genetics tells us exactly how parents' genes pass along characteristics to children
 - So clearly the sight of these rods could not possibly explain how Jacob produced a flock of speckled and spotted and black animals
 - Nevertheless, we know precisely what Jacob was doing here, since farmers do it all the time today
- Jacob was simply applying Mendelian genetics to perform selective breeding
 - In the DNA of these animals was all the genetic information required to produce all the color variations of the herd

- A solid white sheep or solid brown goat has in its DNA recessive genes for speckled or spotted coats
 - In fact, you can breed a black sheep from two solid white sheep
 - In sheep, the color white is the dominant gene and black is the recessive gene
 - If you mate sheep and goats carefully, you can select for the kind of color you want
 - The key to your success is ensuring that you can control which animals mate with each other
 - If you allow the animals to mate in any way they want, then the expression of color will follow Mendelian probabilities
 - Simply put, you'll end up with a lot of solid colored animals but very few of the speckled and spotted variety
 - On the other hand, if the animals with recessive color genes mate exclusively with each other, then you will reliably produce offspring that share the parent's colors
 - So how does Jacob get these animals to mate on cue?
 - He can't set a romantic table and play soft music...
 - As we'll see in later chapters, Jacob can't even get his sons to date the right women
- Jacob used the sticks or rods of poplar and almond trees to control the mating
 - Notice in v.38 it says that the flocks mated when they came to drink
 - The word for mated is *chamam*, which is the Hebrew word get hot or to heat up
 - So literally, it says that when the animals drank the water with the bark in the water, they became hot
 - Or as we would say today, they went into heat
 - The female animals entered a time of fertility and attracted the attention of the male animals

- Jacob must have learned that these barks contained chemicals that caused the animals to go into heat
 - So this was Jacob's catalyst
 - Rather than waiting for the female animals to go into heat on a random basis, Jacob forced them to become fertile at certain moments
 - Then he carefully arranged which animals were present in that moment
- Notice in vs.40-41 Jacob peels back the bark and places the rods in the water but only for certain animals
 - First, Jacob only placed the rods in the water when the speckled or spotted animals were drinking
 - Later, Jacob only placed the rods in the water for the strong offspring of these animals
- Then once Jacob had the right females in heat, he turned his attention to the male animals
 - Notice in v.40 Jacob separated the male animals so that only the speckled and striped and black males were faced toward the fertile female animals
 - The rest were separated so they couldn't mate with the female animals
 - The Hebrew word for face toward means to gain the attention of another
 - Jacob basically introduced the males of his choosing to the females of his choosing to produce ideal mates
 - Jacob was running an eHarmony for sheep and goats
- This process had two striking outcomes
 - First, it would have resulted in a rapid growth in the herd
 - Sheep can begin to reproduce at six months old and give birth in five months

- That means a lamb can become a mother before its first birthday and average better than two births a year
 - And they can have multiple offspring per pregnancy
 - So if Jacob is inducing fertility at will, then he would have been running a serious breeding operation
 - Despite Laban's trick of removing the spotted and speckled animals at the outset, Jacob could have produced a sizable flock of these animals in only a few years
 - Secondly, by isolating the stronger animals for himself and leaving only the runts for Laban, Jacob would have quickly altered the nature of the two flocks
 - Laban's flock would have quickly turned weak and unproductive
 - Many would have been infertile or sickly or unable to produce milk
 - Meanwhile, Jacob's flock would have been awarded FFA blue ribbons
- In v.43 we see that result
 - Jacob became exceedingly prosperous
 - In fact, Jacob earns so much wealth at Laban's expense that he can afford to purchase servants, donkeys and even camels, which was a sign of immense wealth in that day
 - Remember, Jacob's grandfather Abraham once left the land for Egypt
 - This was a journey that began with Abraham's sin but resulted in a great blessing from God as Abraham returned enriched at the expense of the Egyptians
 - Here again Jacob leaves the land on the basis of a sin, but he is preparing to return a blessed and rich man