

Genesis 28 - 31 → Jacob at Bethel

Genesis 28, Jacob at Bethel;
 Genesis 29, Leah and Rachel;
 Genesis 30, Sons of Jacob; and,
 Genesis 31, Jacob's Flight.

Genesis

#2

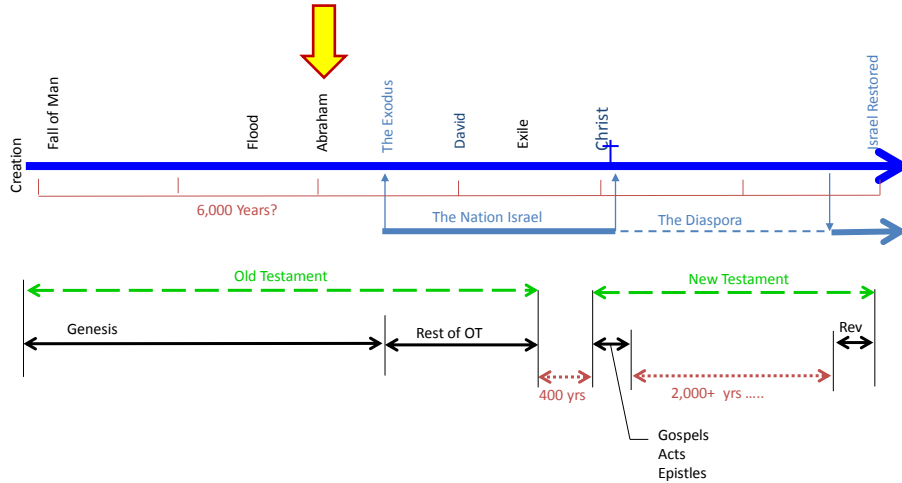
Part 1:

Genesis 1, 2	Creation
Genesis 3	Fall of Man
Genesis 4	Cain & Abel
Genesis 5	Genealogy of Noah
Genesis 6-9	Flood of Noah
Genesis 10-11	Tower of Babel

Part 2:

Genesis 12-20	Abraham
Genesis 21-27	Isaac
Genesis 28-36	Jacob
Genesis 37-48	Joseph
Genesis 49-50	12 Tribes Prophetically

The Panorama of History



Major Topics:

- Genesis 28, Jacob at Bethel;
- Genesis 29, Leah and Rachel;
- Genesis 30, Sons of Jacob; and,
- Genesis 31, Jacob's Flight.

Gen 28:1-4 Jacob is sent away

1] *And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.*

2] *Arise, go to Padan-Aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.*

3] *And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people;*

4] *And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.*

Two factors:

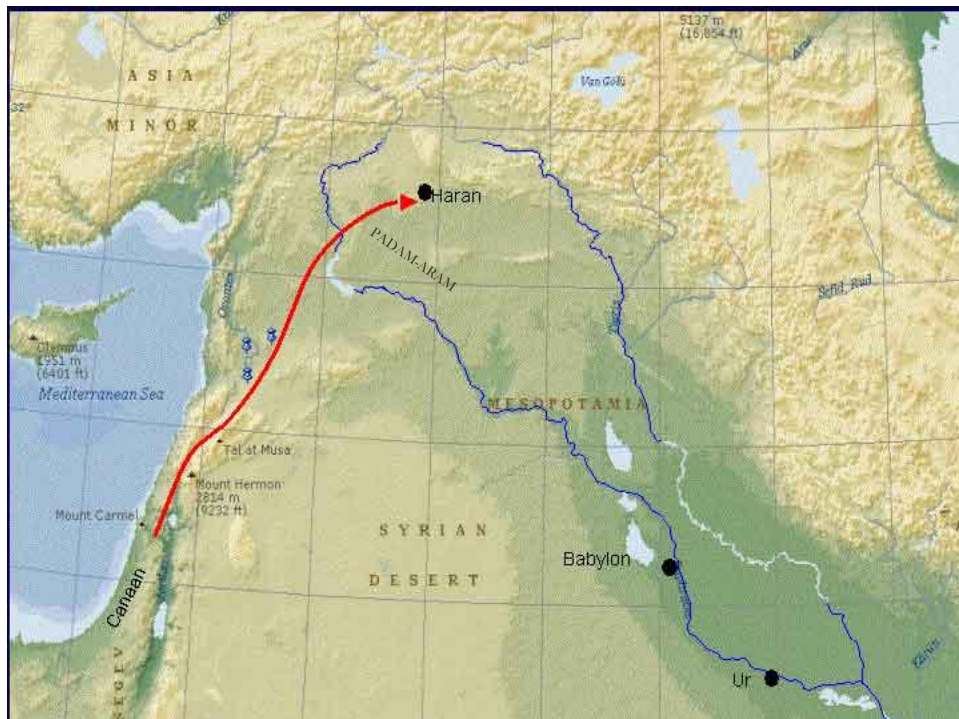
- 1) Maintain purity of the line of descent in general;
- 2) The existence of the Rephaim, et al. (*Gen 6:4*, etc.).

After the announcement of *Gen 15:13-16*, Satan had four centuries to lay down a mine field...

Joshua was instructed to wipe out all of certain *tribes*... *Josh 11:20-22*, et al.
Cf. *Deut 3:11*.

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Gen 28:5-7 Jacob obeys Isaac

5] *And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-Aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.*

6] *When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-Aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;*

7] *And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-Aram;*



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Gen 28:8-9 Esau rebels

8] *And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;*

9] *Then went Esau unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife.*

Esau married his cousin: the unchosen Esau joined the unchosen line of Ishmael.

Attempting to please Abraham at the human level;
no spiritual regard evident of the Covenant, etc.

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Gen 28:10-12 Jacob heads toward Haran

10] And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

11] And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

12] And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

This vision at Bethel

- Confirms that the Lord was also the God of Jacob.
- Confirms the covenant God made with Abraham and Isaac would be honored through Jacob's lineage.
- Shows how Jacob's outlook was dramatically changed.

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Gen 28:13-15

God confirms the covenant with Jacob

13] And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14] And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

15] And, behold, 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.

God was present with Jacob wherever he went; explained in words by God and recognized in faith by Jacob.

God confirms to Jacob the covenant made with Abraham and Isaac, promising him the land, descendants as numerous as the dust, and universal blessing through him.

God also promised to protect and be with Jacob while he was out of the land and to see that he returned.

Gen 28:16-22 Jacob at Bethel

16] And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

17] And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

18] And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

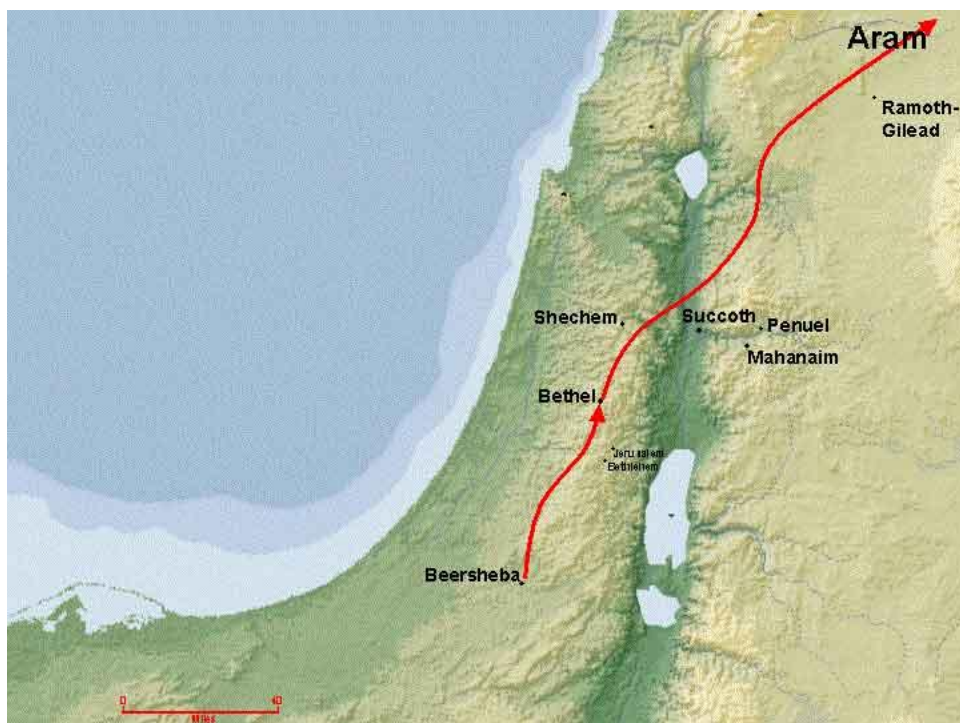
19] And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

20] And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21] So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22] And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

First recorded confession of Jacob: a vow and the tithe.



Gen 29:1-3 Leah and Rachel

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

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.

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.

Jacob came to Haran and his adventures with Laban begin...

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Gen 29:4-9 Jacob arrives, Rachel appears

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

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Gen 29:10-12 Leah and Rachel

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.

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

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.

When Jacob was present tending Laban's flocks, Laban and his flocks prospered while under Jacob's care.

Laban's shepherds, left to themselves were lazy and carelessly.

Jacob was generous, zealous, and industrious.

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Gen 29:13-15 How can I repay you ??

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.

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

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

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Gen 29:16-18 Love at first sight ...

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

17] Leah was tender [weak] eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.

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

Leah, the eldest daughter, wasn't the prettiest of the two and she had bad eyesight.

Rachel was, the younger, was the one Jacob saw and met first.

It was love at first sight...

The wives of each of the first three patriarchs were beautiful:

Sarah (12:11), Rebekah (24:15-16), and Rachel (29:17)

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Gen 29:16-21 Times up – Pay up ...

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.

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

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

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.

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Gen 29:22-24 The Bachelor Party

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

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.

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

What a man sows he reaps (Gal 6:7).

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Gen 29:25-26 Good morning, dear...

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?

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

Jacob's anger was to no avail.

Now, being on the other side of a deception, Jacob would understand how Esau felt.

Laban offered a technicality of local custom as an excuse:

the younger must not come before the firstborn.

Those words must have pierced Jacob!

In his earlier days he, the younger, had deceived his father pretending to be the older brother.

Now he had been deceived himself by the older pretending to be the younger...

Gen 29:27-30 Same deal, second daughter

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

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

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

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

Jacob and his mother had deceived his own brother and father.
Now had been deceived by his mother's brother!

20 years of drudgery, affliction, and deception lay ahead.

Through Laban he received his own medicine of duplicity.

Jacob's tenacity shows that he counted these as minor setbacks.

Through these circumstances, God developed his character, turned the fruits of his deception into blessing, and built the promised seed, the nation of Israel.

"Week" of years: important to note; re. *Daniel 9:24-27*.

Gen 29:31-32 Favoritism again...God's watching

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

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.

Leah named her firstborn Reuben (re'uben), indicating that the Lord had seen her misery (ra'ah be'oniyi).

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*)

Gen 29:33-34 Not completely ignored...

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.

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.

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.

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Gen 29:35 Third time's the charm...

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,

Judah means “let Him be praised.”

Leah exhibited genuine faith during her great affliction.

She realized it was God's favor and blessing and not her husband's favor that was the important thing to desire.

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Gen 30:1-3 Here take my handmaid

1] And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

2] And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

3] And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

Rachel's sons through Bilhah do not reflect the faith Leah had.

Rachel felt wronged over her barrenness.

She demanded that Jacob do for her what he did for Leah.

Jacob reminds her, I can only do my part – the rest is up to God, not me.

Her effort to have children through her maidservant reflects Sarah's similar attempt with Hagar.

Another human effort to 'fix' what God has not determined...

Gen 30:4-6 Here take my handmaid

4] And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.

5] And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.

6] And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan.

The names of the two sons born to Bilhah reflected Rachel's bitter struggle and feeling of victory.

The name Dan is explained by the word dananni, God has vindicated me, that is, He now had corrected Rachel's wrong, her barrenness.

Dan: that is, "Judging."

It is through Dan that idolatry would be introduced to Israel ...

Idolatry: Replacing God the creator with things man makes himself...

Gen 30:7-8 Let's do it again

7] And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.

8] And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

In Rachel's mind she was in a competition with Leah.

Both thought they were in second place with Jacob...

The name Naphtali reflected her great struggle (naptule) which, she said, "I fought" (niptalti) with my sister (30:8).

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Gen 30:9-11 Up the anty

9] When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

10] And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.

11] And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.

Leah responded by offering Jacob her maidservant Zilpah, to whom Gad (fortune) was born.

Gad: "a troop, or, company."

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Gen 30:12-13 On a roll ...

12] And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.

13] And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

Asher ("happy; blessing"):

Leah saw that with God's help she was prospering.

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Gen 30:14-15 A Little Help ...

14] And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.

15] And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, found some mandrake plants for his mother Leah.

Supposedly aphrodisiacs, Rachel felt they would work for her so she asked Leah for some of them.

Leah answers Rachel, 'You took my husband, now you want my son's mandrakes too?'

They strike a bargain ... You give me the mandrakes and you can have Jacob tonight.' They were trading fruit for Jacob...

Gen 30:16-18 I pay, you play...

16] And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.

17] And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.

18] And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

Thus Leah hired Jacob with the plants and had a son Issachar.
Issachar is explained by siekartika ("my hire," KJV).

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Gen 30:19-20 On a roll...

19] And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.

20] And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun.

The name of Leah's sixth son Zebulun, has the double significance of
dowry or "gift" as well as "honor";

Leah said God gave her Zebulun as a gift and her husband would treat her with honor.

Thus Leah's hopes never left her.

Zebulun: that is, "dwelling": Gr. Zabulon

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Gen 30:21 10 brothers, 1 daughter

21] And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Then Dinah, a daughter, was born to Leah.
Dinah = Judgment

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Gen 30:22-24 Rachel rallies

22] And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

23] And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

24] And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

Rachel finally gave birth to Joseph (yosep) but not because of the mandrakes.

Births are given by God, not manipulated by people – even today...

God has a plan for each child conceived.

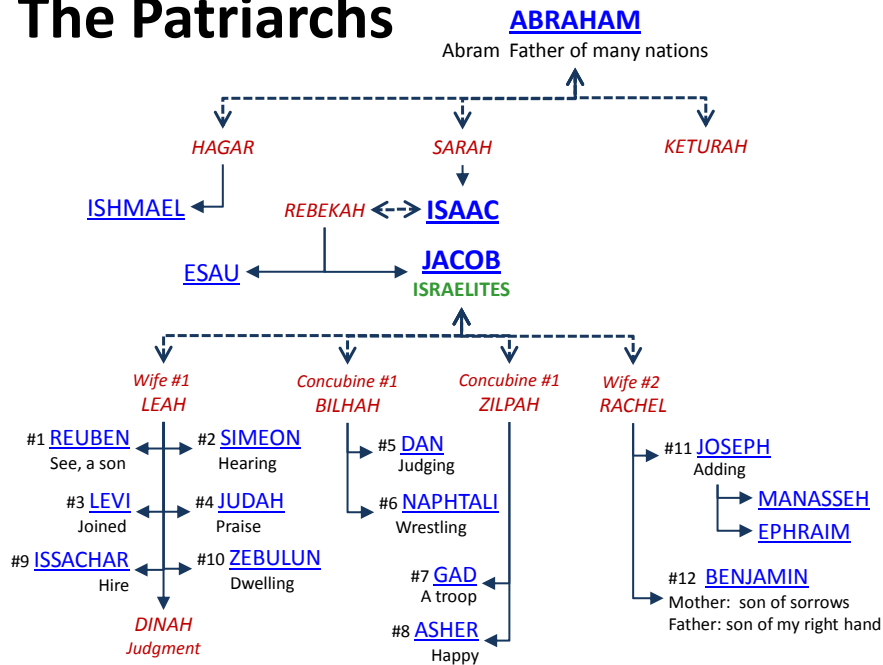
Joseph's name, like Zebulun's, had a double meaning:

- God has taken away ('asap) my disgrace; and
- God will add (yosep) another son.

Rachel was jubilant, looking in faith for a second child from God.

Joseph = Adding

The Patriarchs



Israel in Egypt?

Moses: Ex 2:25

Reuben	Looked, affliction	looked..affliction 3:7
Simeon	Hearing; Heard	"Heard my cry" Ex 3:7
Levi	Husband; joined	When was YHWH "joined?" Passover, Jer 31:31,32
Judah	Praise	Ex 5:11; Ps 106:11,12

Israel in Wilderness?

Dan	Judged; judgment	Wilderness: Meribah
Naphtali	Wrestlings; prevailed	At Amalek Ex 17:11

Israel in the Land?

Gad	Troop cometh	Nations oppose Israel
Asher	Happy	Overthrow
Issachar	Hire; service	Occupation
Zebulun	Dwelling	Occupation

Israel in the Kingdom?

Joseph	Adding
Benjamin	Son of my right hand

The Patriarchs

Gen 30:25-30 Time to go ...

25] And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

26] Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

27] And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

28] And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

29] And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

30] For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

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Gen 30:31-33 I have a plan...

31] And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock:

32] I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and of such shall be my hire.

33] So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

Jacob proposed a plan by which it would seem that he would gain little.

Jacob's plan was risky.

Nevertheless, the consummate schemer, he was looking out for his own interests, hoping to prosper from this.

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Gen 30:34-36 Sounds good to me

34] And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

35] And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

36] And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Laban thought this over and quickly closed the deal.

He could see only advantages for himself.

But just to be sure, Laban immediately removed all the animals of abnormal color, giving them to his sons as theirs.

As an additional precaution he placed a 3-day journey between his sons flocks and his own.

He was ensuring that Jacob would have a difficult time acquiring a large herd.

Gen 30:37-39 You are what you eat

37] And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods.

38] And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

39] And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

God blessed Jacob in an unusual way.

There is a wordplay on the name Laban

As Jacob peeled back the bark on the sticks, he exposed the white (laban) among the dark bark peels...

He played the Laban game and won — he outwitted “whitey” whose flocks were to be made up of the white stock.

Pay attention, timing is everything

God intervened to fulfill the expectations Jacob had in the branches. The peeled branches, placed in the watering troughs, appeared to make his animals reproduce spotted and speckled offspring when they mated in front of reeds in the troughs.

- It is reported that especially in the case of sheep, whatever fixes their attention in copulation is marked upon the young.
- Also, lambs conceived in the spring and born in the autumn were stronger than those born in the spring.

[For authorities that suggest support of these practices (including Bochart, Pliny, Columella, et al) see C. F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol 1, p.293-4].

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Gen 30:40-41 Strong → stronger

40] And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.

41] And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

Jacob also used selective breeding by mating the stronger animals for himself and the mating the weak female goats and sheep for Laban.

This was not the only time God's part in Jacob's success was much greater than it seemed to an observer.

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Gen 30:42-43 Weak → weaker

42] But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.

Jacob separated the strong stock from the feeble.

When the strong breeding stock were at the trough, he used the rods and the percentage of strong, speckled and spotted offspring resulted.

When the weak and feeble breeding stock were at the trough, Jacob withheld the rods from the trough. A higher percentage of solid colored non-speckled and unspotted but weaker offspring were born.

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Gen 30:43 A plan comes together

43] And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

So Jacob was greatly prospered in fulfillment of God's promise at Bethel, at the expense of Laban, who was now receiving at least in part the recompense due him for his own schemes and deceit.

A fascinating struggle developed between Jacob and Laban.

Laban's injustice and schemes preceded Jacob's plan just as Isaac's attempt to bless Esau had earlier prompted Jacob's deception.

In both cases the attempt to defraud Jacob was actually overcome by Jacob.

Later Jacob recognized his gain was really the result of divine blessing

Still he had to accept the fear and danger that resulted from his own craftiness.

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Gen 31:1-3 Get outta' town

1] *And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.*

2] *And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.*

{as before: Heb. as yesterday and the day before}

3] *And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.*

Jacob left for Canaan for two interrelated reasons:

1) Animosity by Laban's sons was growing against Jacob, and Laban's mood was dangerous;

Perhaps God stirred up the nest.

2) God told Jacob to return to his own land: a divine call to leave for the land of promise.

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Gen 31:4-9 Time for a family meeting

4] *And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,*

5] *And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.*

6] *And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.*

7] *And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.*

8] *If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.*

9] *Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.*

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Gen 31:10-13 Jacob's Flight from Haran

10] And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

11] And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

12] And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

13] I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

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Gen 31:14-16 Jacob's Flight from Haran

14] And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

15] Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

16] For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

The response of both women was in faith as well.

Laban had exploited his daughters' wealth
and had lost their good will.

So they were willing to leave their father.

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Gen 31:17-18 We're leaving early, early...

17] Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

18] And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

Jacob was headed back to Isaac.

He'd been gone a long time and had changed – he wanted to settle accounts...

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Gen 31:19 Jacob's Flight from Haran

19] And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's.

Rachel stole Laban's household "teraphim," figurines of deities – the house idols.

This shows the pagan influence in Laban's family.

She may have told herself she deserved them since Laban had turned the tables on her in the name of custom and had deprived her of her right to marry first.

Perhaps she was just 'getting back' at Laban by taking his precious idols.

Her hardheaded self-interest almost brought disaster.

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The Nuzi Tablets

Excavations 1925-1931, Schools of Oriental Research with Harvard University Museum found written documents East of Haran dating to 1500 BC yielding detailed insights into the life and culture of the region.

- “Teraphim” could be used as proof of property ownership and a superior claim to an inheritance.
 - that’s why Laban insisted on a boundary stone at Mizpah that neither he nor Jacob would ever cross again
 - needed to assure his property would pass to his sons;
- “Sisterhood” could be elevated to a superior position, even over that of a wife;
 - a Hurrian custom that was known to Abimelech and Pharaoh...
- “Surrogate motherhood” by handmaidens and maidservants

Gen 31:20 I’ll be gone before you know it

20] And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

21] So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.

22] And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.

Gen 31:23-25 Take a few days, cool off

23] And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

24] And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

25] Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

Laban was hot ... he chased Jacob for 7 days before catching up with him.

The night before the confrontation, God tells Laban to be cool...watch that you don't say something you'll regret.

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Gen 31:23-25

How could you leave without saying good-bye ??

26] And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword?

27] Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

28] And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing.

In the controversy between Jacob and Laban, legal jargon was used to describe their civil suit.

In the first "strife" (rib; cf. v. 36) or accusation Laban claimed that Jacob had robbed him (vv. 26-27, 30) — but having been warned by God, he presented himself as a hurt father (v. 28) and a baffled avenger (v. 29).

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Gen 31:29-30

I could take you, but God said, 'Don't'

29] It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

30] And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

This is why Laban pursued Jacob.

It was one thing for Jacob to take his flocks and family;
but his gods too?

Laban must have thought that perhaps Jacob had a plan to come back to Haran someday and claim all of Laban's estate.

Failing to find the gods, Laban later, vv. 43-53, made a treaty to keep this troublesome man out of his territory.

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Gen 31:31-32 Jacob's foolish pledge...

31] And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

32] With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

Jacob, unaware that Rachel had the idols, promises that Laban could kill the anyone among Jacob's people that was found to have the idols in their possession.

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Gen 31:33-35 Search everywhere, almost...

33] And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

34] Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

35] And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

Rachel deceived Laban.

Rachel put the idols in her camel's saddle and sat on the saddle in her tent claiming that she was menstruating...

Laban never dreamed that a woman of his household would dare contaminate the household idols — the teraphim.

Lev 15:20 And every thing that she lieth upon in her separation shall be unclean: every thing also that she sitteth upon shall be unclean.

Gen 31:36-39 Put up or shut up

36] And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

37] Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

38] This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

39] That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

Laban, the prosecutor, now became the accused.

Ignorant of Rachel's theft of the idols, Jacob angrily made a devastating counterattack.

Gen 31:40-42 Jacob's answer

40] Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

41] Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

42] Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

Jacob is indignant not knowing he was technically guilty – Rachel, his wife, had just not been caught...

Jacob uses God's appearance to Laban as added proof, certain that Laban, the more powerful in this confrontation, would have left Jacob penniless and barren had God not warned Laban off...

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Gen 31:43-46

Let's set a boundry between us

43] And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?

44] Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

45] And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar.

46] And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

Laban suggested they make a covenant for a boundary between them.

Laban instigated it, for Jacob neither needed it nor cared for it!

Jacob set up a tall stone and then piled a heap of stones around it.

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Gen 31:47-49 A Border is established

47] And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

48] And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

49] And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

Verse 49. meant to be a border that God would defend has been changed to a prayer of benediction today – a prayer of protection...

Mizpah = beacon, or, watchtower.

Laban called them by the Aramaic name Jegar Sahadutha

Jacob called them the Hebrew Galeed.

Laban explained that the name means a heap of witness but he added the Hebrew name Mizpah (“watchtower”), entrusting God to watch over them and defend the border...

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Gen 31:50-53 A long range treaty

50] If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

51] And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

52] This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53] The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.

The boundary settlement and the wives' rights show that Laban and Jacob wanted to confirm the status quo.

The treaty also marked a break with the East for the family of Israel. This border treaty marked out the frontier in the hill country of Gilead.

All this became important for later Israelite-Aramean relations

Laban was an Aramean, or Syrian, 25:20

Gen 31:54-55 Laban leaves for home

54] Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

55] And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

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Study Questions

- 1) Trace the reconfirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant through the sons of Abraham.
Why is this important?
- 2) How was there ironic retribution in Laban's deceiving Isaac?
- 3) Explain the significance of the Teraphim and why were they important to Laban.

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Discussion Questions

“Where two people agree, one is redundant.”

- 1) Explain who the Rephaim were.
Why were they a danger to God’s plan?
- 2) Are there teraphims in our lives?
- 3) Review the ways that the Land Covenant to Israel is being challenged in today’s current events.
- 4) Review the ancient tribal hatreds and why there will not be any real peace in the Middle East until the Prince of Peace comes.

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Research Projects

Trace the listings of the Tribes of Israel in the Bible and their distinctives.

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