

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 1.9%

Weekly Readings will cover: Genesis 25 through 31 & 1 Chronicles 1:28-24

Sunday: Genesis 25 & 1 Chronicles 1:28-34

Monday: Genesis 26

Tuesday: Genesis 27

Wednesday: Genesis 28

Thursday: Genesis 29

Friday: Genesis 30

Saturday: Genesis 31

I hope each of you have had a good study week and are finding tremendous value in each of the days readings.

The group has grown so large that my email program now requires me to send two separate emails each week. We currently have grown to 507 emails in the group with the last several people joining from Nigeria! We welcome all the new individuals to our collective reading group and we are glad that we can all do this study together.

In this week's study we will come to the end of Abraham's life, and we'll quickly cover the life of Isaac and get into some of the life of Jacob. I hope you each have a great week of reading God's precious Word.

### **3 YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 4**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

#### **Day 22 - SUNDAY: November 13<sup>th</sup>**

Genesis 25 & 1 Chronicles 1:28-34

Daily Deep Dive:

Genesis 25:1 – In verse 1 we are told that Abraham took a wife named Keturah.

We don't know a lot about Keturah. Her name in Hebrew means "Incense".

There is a lot of conflicting information out there about Keturah. Several Bible commentary's (Adam Clarke's, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown) speculate that Abraham would have married Keturah during the life of Sarah due to how old he already was and how many children he had with Keturah. This is not my conclusion.

She is also called Abraham's concubine in 1 Chronicles 1:32. This Hebrew word in Chronicles is clearly concubine and is never translated wife. I sat and pondered how both of these can be true (wife & concubine).

Then I saw in traditional Rabbi teaching (Rabbi Yehuda in Midrash Rabbah 61:4 , cited in Zohar 132b, Jerusalem Targum, & Jonathan ben Uzziel), that said Keturah is one and the same as Hagar, who bore Abraham's first son Ishmael. I want to be

clear, the Bible is largely silent on Keturah and this is just a theory, based on this Jewish teaching. If this was true, it would make both Gen 25:1 (wife) and 1 Chr 1:32 (concubine) both true.

The tradition goes on to say, that Hagar never had married or lived with any man during their years apart, and that her name was changed from Hagar meaning “flight” to Keturah, which in Aramaic mean “bound” (from Aramaic “ketur” meaning “knot”). According to this tradition, after Sarah dies, Isaac himself travels to Hagar and brings her back to Abraham and they marry and have additional children. I simply share this as one idea that is out there.

Other Jewish teachers say that this was not Hagar, but was a different woman (Rashbam & Ibn Ezra).

Again, this is extra Biblical material, and therefore must be taken as speculation. Verse 6 – Says that Abraham gave gifts to the his sons from the “concubines”. I just wanted to point out that this word is not plural (meaning, it does not prove he had multiple concubines). It’s often translated “concubine” unless there is indication that more than one was included in the sentence structure.

Verse 7 – Abraham lives to the age of 175 years old. We were initially introduced to Abraham at 75 years old. He lived an additional 100 years after that time. Isaac would be born when Abraham was 100 and he would get to live 75 years with that special son of promise. Sarah would die when Abraham was 137 years old. He would have 38 more years of life. If he married Keturah after Isaac got married, then he would be married to Keturah for his final 35 years of life.

Verse 21 – Rebekah is barren. We’ve already talked about the barren women of the bible, so I just wanted to point this out again. Notice it says “Isaac pleaded with the LORD...and she conceived.” This word for “pleaded” means to “intreat or pray”. It also said that Isaac did this “for his wife”, but this is the only time this word is translated “for”, it means “in front of, in sight of”. I think it’s worth pointing out that Isaac prays to God in front of his wife (maybe even with his wife) and God responds and allows her to get pregnant. How long had they been trying to have children and couldn’t? We are told they got married when Isaac was 40 (verse 20), but he’s 60 before the boys were born (verse 26). Twenty years have passed. It’s my assumption that this was not a short trial that ended quickly after the first prayer to God. Assuming Abraham lived close in proximity to Isaac, he would have known his grandchildren and died when they were about 15 years old.

Verse 31 – We see Jacob ask Esau to “sell me your birthright”. This is the first time we see the NKJV translate the word “birthright” but it’s the second use of this word in the bible. The first time was in Genesis 4:4 when Abel brought the “firstling” of his flock. So we see that this word is about the first to be born, and it becomes known as what we call the “birthright”. This came with honor & authority associated with being next in line of the family (would take over the clan/family once the father died) and a receiver of a double portion of the inheritance (see Deut 21:15-17 for clear instructions of the double portion inheritance). So by selling off his birthright, Esau is turning over the responsibility for leading the family and the double portion. Some believe the birthright also includes a special blessing by the father before he dies, but others say they are two separate things. We’ll explore this more in Genesis 27:33.

We might think of this as a shrewd business deal by Jacob, but it’s worth asking, what should Jacob had done? What was right? He should have been there for his brother that was hungry and in need. This is the clear example shown by Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible. We aren’t to take advantage of people when they are in a time of need, we are to be there for them and help them. We will see later in chapter 27 the rest of the story.

I’m going to include the entire UCG reading program for Genesis 25 below:

“This chapter presents a rapid transition from Abraham to Isaac, whose life will be presented very quickly and with little detail. The narrative of Genesis is dominated by Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, with Isaac’s history serving as a brief interlude between the lives of Abraham and Jacob. In fact, the majority of the narrative concerning Isaac serves mainly as a prelude to the life of Jacob. For this reason some have called Isaac a shadowy figure.

The chapter begins with a list of Abraham’s sons and descendants by a later wife, Keturah. The descendants of many of these sons have apparently become peoples of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Then follows the list for the descendants of Ishmael; most of these peoples live in various countries of the Middle East. The list for Isaac begins in verse 19 and moves directly into a narrative about the birth of Isaac’s sons, Esau and Jacob. As can be seen, the purpose of the chapter is to distinguish between the sons of Abraham, with the story line being passed along through Isaac to the father of the Israelites, Jacob. Comparing patriarchal ages, it is interesting to note that in spite of the order of verses, Abraham’s life overlapped that of Esau and Jacob by about 14 years (compare Hebrews 11:9).

The Genesis 25 narrative is continued by relating the events surrounding the births of Esau and Jacob. The fundamental theme in the narrative of these two sons is that of competition for supremacy. Even in the womb of their mother, Esau and Jacob struggled—and this would be continued throughout their lives and on into the histories of the nations descended from them.

It is interesting to note that Esau is described as a “skillful hunter, a man of the field,” while Jacob is called a “mild man, dwelling in tents” (verse 27). These descriptions are intended to draw a maximum contrast between the two brothers. The mention of Jacob dwelling in tents is intended to show him to be a civilized and more refined person than his elder brother. That Jacob dwelt in tents, whereas his brother was a hunter in the field, also seems to imply that he showed more interest in the family’s mercantile and herding business. Moreover, the word translated “mild” (verse 27) is the Hebrew *tam*, which is normally translated “blameless.” Jacob was a blameless man—blameless as far as the letter of the law went. But Jacob was also a *cunning* man, one who would *manipulate* people and events in order to obtain what he wanted. This character trait would cause him years of grief before it was rooted out of him—before he became more truly blameless in his character and motivation.

The purchase of a birthright has been documented in several contracts of the ancient Hurrian people, and thus Jacob’s actions can be seen in the light of cultural precedent. That Esau would so lightly esteem his birthright is just another story element showing the great contrast between the two brothers. At least Jacob rightly appreciated its great value—and his dealings with Esau show him to be the more business-savvy of the two brothers. The Scripture tells us that Esau, in connection with the sale of his birthright, was a *profane* person (Hebrews 12:16), and Paul also makes use of the phrase “whose god is their belly” (Philippians 3:19) when describing those who set their hearts and minds on earthly things—an interesting phrase given Esau’s coveting a mere bowl of stew. The intent is to get us to understand that man often forfeits spiritual realities for the temporary pleasures of physical things, and that such misordered priorities and behavior render a person profane and indicates who that person’s god truly is. The result in such cases is the loss of the spiritual reality, and the inheritance of a curse rather than a blessing.” [END]

Day 23 - MONDAY: November 14<sup>th</sup>

## Genesis 26

### Daily Deep Dive:

We'll start today with some of the UCG Bible Reading plan:

“As in the days of Abraham, the land of Canaan experienced another drought and famine—and, having the example of his father before him, Isaac journeyed south with the probable intent of going into Egypt where food would be more likely available, that country being sustained by the annual inundation of the Nile. His journey took him to the southern Philistine city of Gerar, whose king bore the hereditary title Abimelech (meaning “Father King” or “My Father Is King”). That several kings bore the title of Abimelech is amply proven by archaeological discoveries.

Verse 2 records that God told Isaac, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.” This implies that God generally directed Isaac’s movements, for if God had merely wanted Isaac to remain in Canaan, He would have simply said, “Live in the land,” omitting “of which I shall tell you.” The latter phrase implies continued guidance. This is interesting because we are told that Abraham, although going into Canaan, went “not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8), and that God had said, “Get out of your country...to a land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1), implying that although Abraham knew he was heading toward Canaan, he did not know whether he would remain there or if God would lead him elsewhere. Isaac’s movement toward Egypt was stopped by God’s directly intervening to guide his movements within Canaan. For the moment, God gave no further direction than to remain in the land of Canaan (verse 3).” [END”

Verse 4 – We see God extend this Covenant promise that was made to Abraham down to Isaac: “in your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.”

Verse 5 – Begins with “because”, but this word contains the deep meaning that “As a consequence of” Abraham’s obedience and keeping My commandments/statutes/laws, it’s for that reason, that I’m extending the blessings of this covenant now to you (Isaac).

Our blessings (& cursings for that matter) are not always because of what we ourselves have done. I have received many blessings in my life due to the choices of my (& my wife’s) parents & grandparents, etc... Some will look at blessings in

their lives as proof that God is happy with their choices, but this can be faulty as one who strays away from God could conclude falsely that God is pleased with them due to their “blessed” lives, but they may still be reaping blessings from parents/grandparents who obeyed faithfully. (Compare Exodus 20:4-5). We see again in verse 24 that the blessings are “for Abraham’s sake”.

Notice also that long before Mt. Sinai and the laws that were given to Moses at that time, notice that there are already commandments, statutes and laws of God that Abraham was obedient to. While in previous weeks, we looked at how the Sabbath and clean food laws were already clearly established, here in this verse is the first place we see the word used for “commandments” (*mitsvah*). This is of course the same word that will later be used for the 10 Commandments of God. This is also the first place in the Bible the Hebrew words for statutes (*chuqqah*) and laws (*torah*) are used also. These words describe distinctions in the way God’s instructions are viewed rather than their validity or importance. Each of these were to be honored, respected and followed. The word commandment (*mitsvah*)

An article on [ucg.org](http://ucg.org) entitled “God’s Laws, Statutes and Judgements” states the following for the word law and statutes.

“The Hebrew word translated “law” is *torah*. When used with the definite article (*the law*), it refers either to law in general or to some specific aspect of law. It often refers to the entire body of law that God gave to the people of Israel.

*Torah* also carries the broader meaning of “teachings,” especially when used without the definite article. Sometimes, when used so broadly, the word even appears to imply the entire body of revealed instruction contained in the Old Testament scriptures.

The word “statutes” refers to a specific type of laws. As the English translation of the Hebrew words *choq* or *chuqqah*, the word “statute” refers to an authoritative enactment, decree or ordinance.

Biblical statutes may set appointed times, such as sacred festivals, define important customs and even establish the manner or procedure by which certain vital matters are to be handled. Because they reveal God’s thinking and reflect His

priorities, they are crucially instructive as divine guidelines for righteous behavior.” [END]

Verse 7 – Again from the UCG reading program:

“Notice also that in both Genesis 12 and 26 we have the repeated pattern of God commanding his servant (Abraham or Isaac, respectively) to go to a land that He would show him, followed immediately by a giving or reaffirming of what has come to be called the Abrahamic Covenant. Genesis contains several examples of this kind of couplet—as you read through the book, you should keep your eyes open for them. One of the couplets is Abraham and Isaac’s denial of their wives, in each case to a king titled Abimelech (Abraham also did so to Pharaoh, Genesis 12). These couplets have led some to suggest that the book of Genesis was stitched together from several different and contradictory traditions—in this case, one tradition having Abraham denying his wife, and another tradition having Isaac denying his wife. The truth is that there are no contradicting traditions. Abraham and Isaac both did the same things, the son imitating the father, perhaps for the same reasons.”

Though the incidents with Abraham occurred before Isaac was born, Isaac probably heard about them, perhaps viewing such an approach as acceptable.” [END]

Verse 34 – At the age of 40, same age that Isaac had married, Esau gets married two Hittite women. Remember the great care Abraham took to ensure that Isaac married someone from their own family. Hittite’s were descendants of Heth of the line of Ham, through Canaan (Gen 10:15). We’ve already spent a lot of time detailing how this family line of Ham departed from obedience to God quickly and through time continued to not be faithful to God.

Josephus records this about the father’s of these two Hittite women: “were great lords among the Canaanites: thereby taking upon himself the authority, and pretending to have dominion over his own marriages, without so much as asking the advice of his father; for had Isaac been the arbitrator, he had not given him leave to marry thus, for he was not pleased with contracting any alliance with the people of that country; but not caring to be uneasy to his son by commanding him to put away these wives, he resolved to be silent.”

Adam Clarke's commentary says "It is very likely that the wives taken by Esau were daughters of chiefs among the Hittites, and by this union he sought to increase and strengthen his secular power and influence."

Verse 35 – We are told that Esau and his wives "were a grief of mind" to Isaac and Rebekah. We aren't told why, but we can assume that marrying women from a culture of pagan idol worship and not cultures built on obeying the True God would lead to problems. John Gill's commentary states: "he took for wives were very disagreeable on all accounts, partly because of their religion, being idolaters, and partly by reason of their temper and behaviour, being proud, haughty, and disobedient; as all the three Targums intimate."

#### Day 24 - TUESDAY: November 15<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 27

Daily Deep Dive:

The beginning of this chapter I believe reads in a straightforward manner.

Verse 8 – Notice it's Rebekah who initiates this plan, but Jacob went along with it. Each of us bare our own guilt. We aren't responsible for others, but we are responsible for our own actions and response to the actions of others.

Galatians 6:7 – "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." This word for "mocked" means "to turn up the nose or sneer at". This doesn't happen to God. When someone behaves in such a way, they will ultimately receive the same. This is a principle all of us should remember in life. God is in full control. Never think we can behave in some wrong way and think we are going to still reap blessings. Eventually, we will see the results in our lives of the choices we make. When we see difficult things in our lives, we should be wise to step back and examine, could I be reaping something I sowed. This shouldn't be taken too far as to say that all trials are due to disobedience or as punishment by God. I'm not saying that. God certainly allows trials in our lives to help us grow and to refine us, however, I'm saying a Christian should always be evaluating their lives and trying to align their lives to God.

Rebekah comes up with an elaborate plan to deceive her husband Isaac who is nearing death. This is deception and out right lies at its worst.

Let's now look at the impact to both Jacob and Rebekah as a result of their actions.

Here is what the UCG bible reading program brings out about the results of their deception:

“Recall that Jacob obtained the birthright through a cunning business transaction. Later, however, Jacob meets his match when he becomes entangled with the even more cunning Laban, who outwits or takes advantage of Jacob at every turn for the better part of 20 years. Here, Jacob deceives his blind father with a slain goat and a special coat. Later, Jacob is deceived by Laban when he is “blinded” by the darkness of his wedding tent, and by his own sons who counterfeit the death of Jacob’s beloved Joseph by using the blood of a slain goat and Joseph’s special coat. Indeed, for more than 20 years, Jacob will believe the terrible lie concocted by his own sons—that his dearly loved son is dead. Notice also Rebekah’s fateful words: “Let your curse be on me.” Indeed, she *would* be cursed—for just as Isaac could not see his son, so Rebekah would never again see her beloved Jacob after he left for Padan Aram. For before Jacob’s return some 20 years later, Rebekah would die.

Beware: Reaping what you sow is a very real spiritual principle. And just as God did not completely remove the bitterness of the crop Jacob was to reap—even though Jacob finally repented and became converted—so God will not completely remove the bitterness of the crop *you* sow. The spiritual effects of your bad actions may be forgiven, but in the flesh there will still be consequences.

“Behold...the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22, KJV). Just as God allowed Jacob to reap hardship and live a bitter life in order to help purge his character, so God will do with *you* in many respects. God is *not* mocked. Sow good seed—and reap the same. Sow bad seed—and reap the same as well!” [END]

Verse 33 – Esau knew that he had sold his birthright containing with it the double portion of inheritance and responsibility over the clan/family. Does he think he can still get the blessing from his father as the firstborn? Does he think he can get it all still, even though he sold it? After realizing he had been tricked, Isaac informs Esau that “he has blessed him [Jacob] and he indeed now is blessed.” In Hebrews 12:16 – 17 it states: “lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

It's interesting to me that the Greek for "fornicator" here is " pornos " and it comes from a root word meaning "to sell" and it means at "one who sells himself to others for prostitution". Then the author of Hebrews uses "profane person". This word in Greek is used for who can not cross over the threshold of a temple or Holy place. They were to be denied access due to a state of being unacceptable. Esau sold his future, and his families future, for a meal. Gave it all up and away. Genesis 25:34 tells us that Esau "despised his birthright." He didn't value you it at that moment in life the way he should have. He lived for the moment instead of wisely considering the future. Then later, afterward, he wanted the blessing, he was rejected and denied what he wanted. There is an incredible spiritual lesson here for all of us. We can give up our inheritance that God has promised us, by "selling ourselves" to this world and the things of this world. If we do that, there comes a point that at the end, we may really want the spiritual inheritance again, but at that point, it's too late, and we can be denied. Today is the day to valuing and prioritizing that spiritual inheritance and making whatever changes are necessary so that we aren't crying like Esau in the end with no hope (Luke 13:27-28).

#### Day 25 - WEDNESDAY: November 16<sup>th</sup>

##### Genesis 28

##### Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 1 – Unlike Esau, who married foreign women, it remains the consistent theme that the parents, in alignment with God and His consistent teachings, want Jacob to not take a foreign wife who could turn his heart away from following God. This plan also gets Jacob away from vengeful Esau. Isaac blesses Jacob again, this time knowing full well who he was talking to.

Verses 6 – 9: Esau observes and overhears the guidance and direction of Isaac to Jacob to take a wife from his own people and not from foreigners, and he sees Jacob's obedience to leave home and follow this advice. Esau also could clearly see that his actions had not pleased his parents and in verse 9, it appears at some level this hits home. Some people will say that verse 9 is another rebellious action of Esau, but that's not my conclusion. Jacob would end up marrying his mother's niece (Laban's daughter) while Esau would end up marrying his father's niece. Likely by this time, as most commentaries conclude, Ishmael has been dead for about 14 years.

Verse 14 – We see God now extend this same promise that was given to Abraham (Gen 12:3), then Isaac (Gen 26:4), now to Jacob.

Here's what the UCG reading states about verse 10 through 22:

“Journeying to Haran, Jacob stopped in the place called Luz, later renamed Bethel. There Jacob slept on the ground with a stone at his head (Genesis 28:11). In his sleep he dreamed, and in his dream God assured Jacob that He would be with him and return him to Canaan. The Abrahamic Covenant, moreover, was confirmed to Jacob. When Jacob awoke, he took the stone at which his head rested and anointed it, setting it up for a “pillar” or sacred stone. It appears that Jacob took this stone with him on his journeys, especially since he mentions the stone in the context of returning to Isaac (verses 20-22), apparently set it up and anointed it again in Bethel later (Genesis 35:14-15), and still later, at the end of his life, he seems to have prophesied that it would be with the descendants of Joseph in the end time (Genesis 49:24). If Jacob did take the stone with him, as would be likely, there would have been a physical, typical stone going with Jacob, paralleling the spiritual, antitypical Stone (i.e., God) who had promised that He would be with Jacob and not leave him (Genesis 28:15).

Jacob also promised that if God would return him to his father Isaac, then God would be Jacob's God and Jacob would faithfully tithe. These statements appear perplexing, but a careful attention to the development of Jacob's character would seem to resolve the apparent difficulty. Jacob surely knew of God. Isaac had never worshiped any other but God, and he had learned this from Abraham. But it appears that Jacob, although certainly worshiping God, likely did so mainly because he believed it to be materially advantageous. Jacob, as we've seen, had a grasping personality; he was someone who used others to further his own ends, and perhaps God was no different to him. Jacob, it appears, served God for selfish advantage. The story of Jacob will show that over time Jacob was transformed from being a manipulator into being one who sought righteousness through his actions, and finally into one who became wholly submissive to God and served God out of love and devotion. Jacob's statement that God would be his God is another way of saying that Jacob would rely on Him alone; his promise to tithe is another way of honoring God by recognizing His sovereign lordship. Thus, the promises essentially boil down to exclusive devotion to God.

In many ways, Jacob is every man. Or, to be more precise, every man is like Jacob. We all start out grasping, self-oriented, concerned with our needs. As we grow, we become less self-centered and more motivated by principle. But as we become mature, we learn to love God and act out of devotion to Him. We must learn to live with God, and along the way our character is changed, shaped and molded, going through various phases as we become more and more like God Himself. For this reason, the character development of Jacob is one of the most interesting studies of the book of Genesis.” [STOP]

### Day 26 - THURSDAY: November 17<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 29

Daily Deep Dive:

I believe this chapter reads pretty clearly, but I’ll make just a few quick comments and then we will read the UCG reading program on this chapter:

Verse 11 – We shouldn’t read this “kiss” as something passionate and improper. This was an expression of affection and friendship. We see Jacob kissed by Laban in verse 13.

Verse 14 – Sometimes it’s easy to miss passages of time in the bible. Jacob works for Laban as free labor for a month before asking to marry his daughter.

Verse 27 - When I was a kid, I thought Jacob worked 7 years and was tricked into marrying Leah and then worked another 7 years to be able to marry Rachel. This is not the case. Jacob got to marry Rachel at the end of one week (marriage feast/week). Then after marrying Rachel continued to work an additional 7 years for her.

Verse 31 – 35: We’ve previously discussed the great difficulty of barrenness but also how Leah viewed the love that children would gain her with Jacob. Both women’s trials are sad and difficult.

The UCG reading program:

“Jacob’s arrival in Padan Aram gives us a revealing look at him. From his conversation with the shepherds gathered at the well, we may observe that Jacob was polite, sociable and knowledgeable of the business of herding. Jacob’s life “in tents” was not cloistered—he was, as previously stated, civilized and refined, and most likely skilled in the family business. Moreover, Jacob was no pampered weakling. For when he saw Rachel, he went and rolled the stone off of the mouth of the well—and well stones were massive circular stones of considerable weight. Also, notice verse 10’s triple reference to “Laban, his mother’s brother.” Some commentators have taken this pointed emphasis to indicate that Jacob’s mind at

this point may have been more on attempting to ingratiate himself into the favor of Laban through a favorable report from Rachel, and less on the woman herself. Of course, the tenderness of verse 11 should demonstrate a genuineness of feeling regarding his meeting up with close relatives. That is only natural. Still, putting all the evidence together, it would appear that Jacob is a cultured, sociable, business-savvy and physically imposing man who, though at least sometimes genuine in feeling, is not always genuine in his dealings with others—that he is often looking for a way to further his own ends.

God is about to embark on a long course of knocking Jacob down to a more humble self-appraisal—using Laban as a significant tool in the process. Jacob may have been a smooth operator in Canaan, able to run the family business and outwit his elder brother, but he can in no way compare to the devious Laban. Jacob has unknowingly met his match. When Rachel brought her father the news of Jacob’s arrival, Laban ran to meet him—perhaps naturally happy to see a visiting relative (verses 13-14) but also, knowing the type of person Laban is, surely thinking back on the gifts that were given for his sister Rebekah (Genesis 24:30). Jacob stayed with Laban for a month, and during that month two things happened: Jacob fell in love with the beautiful Rachel, and Laban observed it. Now Laban had a way to get Jacob into his service; he may have even begun planning something when Jacob “told Laban all these things” (verse 13), which no doubt included the reason for his journey to Haran.

Sensing his opportunity, Laban asked an apparently magnanimous question: “Shall you serve me for nothing because you are family? Name your wages” (compare verse 15). Jacob asked for Rachel, as Laban had no doubt anticipated. Laban set Rachel’s price at seven years’ service, which Jacob happily rendered. But on the wedding night, Laban substituted Leah for Rachel. Jacob’s senses and wits may have been dulled by festive drinking (perhaps urged on all the more by Laban). Jacob was further blinded by the darkness of the nuptial tent—darkness probably arranged as part of Laban’s conspiracy, which appears to have involved Zilpah (verse 24). Leah herself must have kept silent, probably on orders from her father. In any event it is clear that Jacob did not realize he had slept with the wrong woman until the morning (verse 25). Laban’s reply when an angry Jacob confronted him: “It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.” *Firstborn*—the word must have been like a dagger in Jacob’s ears, for in his own family, as we earlier read, Jacob had contrived to gain for

himself the birthright and blessings that normally would have gone to his own fraternal twin brother, Esau, the firstborn. Jacob's deviousness was now coming back to haunt him. For committing to another seven years' service Jacob obtained Rachel the following week, but the die was now cast for a divided, unhappy household. Jacob was reaping what he had sown." [END]

### Day 27 - FRIDAY: November 18<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 30

Daily Deep Dive:

In this chapter, we continue to see the children born to both Rachel and Leah, as well as through their maids Bilhah & Zilpah.

Verse 14 – The first harvest of the early spring was barley and then in later spring wheat was harvested. Other crops were harvested in the later fall harvest.

What were mandrakes? The Hebrew word is "Duday" and John Gill's commentary says =which seem to have their name "dudaim" from love". It's used 7 times in the Bible (5 of which occur in this chapter). The Brown-Driver-Brigg's dictionary says this word means "mandrake or love-apple" and continues with "as exciting sexual desire, and favouring procreation". Strong's dictionary says it was an "aphrodisiac".

To obtain these mandrakes from Leah's young son, Rachel gives Leah a night with Jacob.

The UCG reading program talks more about the relationship between Rachel & Leah:

"Jacob's competition with Esau had brought near-open warfare to Isaac's household. Now Jacob would live the remainder of his life eating the bitter fruits of his ways. Leah and Rachel vied with each other for the affection of Jacob. Jacob loved Rachel deeply but he lacked love for Leah. Where the New King James Version says Leah was "unloved" (Genesis 29:31), the old King James Version has "hated." *The Nelson Study Bible* says that "hated" is the literal translation.

According to *New Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, the Hebrew word here "sometimes means only a less degree of love and regard; to be cold and indifferent to, to show less favor to" (p. 209). In any case Leah was second-rate in Jacob's eyes, a very difficult position for any woman. Because Jacob treated Leah this way, God blessed her with children (which would seem to indicate that, in God's eyes, Leah was not principally at fault in the whole mess—her father having forced her into it). In the meantime Rachel was barren and very frustrated in

general. She felt betrayed by her father and resentful of her sister, whom she no doubt viewed as an unwelcome interloper in her marriage. Between these two squabbling women, and their maids, Jacob would father 12 sons and a daughter. The sons of the various wives and concubines would likewise squabble and fight. Jacob's house was in constant turmoil—a classic picture of the dysfunctional family.

Part of the dysfunction in Jacob's family may have had its roots a generation earlier in Isaac and Rebekah, who fell into a devastating pitfall in parenting—favoritism within the family. Isaac greatly favored Esau; Rebekah favored Jacob. This divided affection produced an unhealthy atmosphere of competition, mistrust, double-dealing, disrespect and lingering resentment. The two sons of Isaac and Rebekah were the unwitting victims, and Jacob likewise repeated the error in his own family: Rachel was favored over Leah, Joseph over his brethren, then later Benjamin over his brethren. Of course this is a lot more understandable in Jacob's case, since he had not wanted to marry Leah in the first place. Still, she was his wife and they had children together—so he should have done his best to show them all love and affection.

God later gave the following law to Israel: “Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive” (Leviticus 18:18). It does not appear that God had revealed this to be sin to those of Jacob's day. But Jacob's life demonstrated the great need for the revelation of this law.” [END]

Now pay special attention to what the UCG Reading Program brings out on the rest of this chapter, as this is commonly misunderstood:

“Verse 25 of chapter 30 begins a peculiar story that very few seem to understand. But understanding Jacob's reasoning in his strange deal with Laban can help us to better see Jacob's character development.

Jacob had served Laban 14 years. Now he wished to depart and return to his father in Canaan. Laban, however, was eager to have Jacob remain, for God had blessed everything Jacob did while in Laban's household, and Laban had grown rich. “Name me your wages, and I will give it,” Laban said (verse 28), hoping to entice Jacob to stay. “You shall not give me anything,” Jacob replied. This is essential to understand, for an inattentive reading of the story can make it seem as if Jacob separated the colored and spotted sheep from Laban's flock and took

them for his payment. He most emphatically did not. Jacob took out the colored and spotted sheep and gave them to Laban, whose sons took them away a distance of three days' journey (verse 36). This left Jacob with only the pure white sheep.

The last clause of verse 32, "and these shall be my wages," is a little confusing. The Hebrew literally says, "it shall be [i.e., in the future] my wages." Jacob was not saying that the spotted and colored sheep he removed from the flock would be his wages. Instead, "You shall not give me anything," were Jacob's words. The spotted and colored sheep were given to the sons of Laban, who drove them three days' journey away. Instead, Jacob was saying that *in the future* any spotted or colored sheep born in the flock that Jacob would tend would be his wages. But this seemed *impossible* to Laban—Jacob was left with only the white sheep! How could white sheep bear spotted and colored sheep? That is why Laban so hastily agreed to the deal: "Oh, that it were according to your word!" (verse 34).

Now, the beginning of verse 33 is most important. "So my righteousness will answer for me in the time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you...." This telling declaration marks a profound advancement in Jacob's character development. When Jacob arrived in Padan Aram he was a grasping manipulator who relied upon his own innate abilities and craft to obtain what he wanted. But 14 years of service for Laban—during which Laban consistently outwitted him, and during which God blessed him in all that he did—had produced a change in Jacob. He had now progressed to the point where he relied upon his righteous conduct to secure blessings and prosperity from God. That is a dramatic change of heart, a major development in right character!

Verse 37 begins the equally odd business of the poplar, almond and chestnut branches. Many commentators suggest some kind of magic practice, or that the peeled rods were intended to cause the sheep to imitate the partly colored rods by bringing forth partly colored sheep. Yet this is certainly *not* what Jacob was engaged in here. Notice verse 38: "And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink." The word "conceive" is translated from the Hebrew *yacham*, literally meaning "to be hot," and which, when speaking of animals, can mean "to be in heat." By peeling the *fresh cut* rods (verse 37), Jacob caused the sap-filled meat of the rods to be

exposed, thus possibly allowing the sap of the rods to mingle with the water in the watering troughs. Perhaps he believed this additive in the water would help to bring the animals to heat. It has also been suggested that the peeled rods were used as a sort of corralling fence, set up when the flocks came to drink to keep them together longer for mating. Verses 41-42 also inform us that Jacob practiced selective breeding, ensuring that the best of the flock would be subject to his treatment of the water.

But all this *did not* produce the spotted and colored sheep. These actions only aided Jacob in selecting which sheep would breed at what time. *God caused the unusual coloration of the sheep.* As Jacob said: “My righteousness will answer for me.” The production of colored sheep was God’s response to Jacob’s righteousness. Indeed, we later find out that Laban, seeing the results, kept changing the deal about which sheep Jacob would get—and, in every case, God followed suit with the coloration of sheep produced. Jacob explained to his wives: “God did not allow [Laban] to hurt me. If he said thus: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: ‘The streaked shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore streaked. So *God* has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me” (Genesis 31:7-9).

Jacob had matured tremendously while in service to Laban. He had moved away from his grasping, manipulative ways and had come to the point where he understood that prosperity and protection are dependent on righteous conduct before God. And for that, God rewarded and prospered him. Jacob’s character, however, was to be further developed.” [END]

### Day 28 - SATURDAY: November 19<sup>th</sup>

Genesis 31

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 3 – God is leading and directing.

Verse 41 – 20 years have passed since Jacob arrived at Laban’s house and since he had seen his parents or his brother Esau.

Let’s finish this week with the The UCG reading program:

“Jacob prospered with God’s blessing and his own clever management of the flocks. But as Jacob increased, Laban decreased. This irritated Laban, especially since he thought his deal with Jacob to be overwhelmingly to his advantage. It also appears that Laban had gotten into the habit of living high while God blessed him because of Jacob, and the decrease in revenue meant an uncomfortable tightening of the belt. Indeed, Laban had wasted the bridal price of 14 years’ labor Jacob had paid for his two wives (verses 15-16). In those days the bridal price was kept by the father in behalf of the daughters as a trust, but Laban had improperly consumed the money. Finally, seeing their father’s fortune decline, Laban’s sons became concerned that they would inherit nothing if something was not done soon.

With increasing hostility between Laban and Jacob and the possibility that Laban’s sons might take some action against Jacob and his family, it was time to leave. Jacob’s speech to his wives prior to departure reveals the duplicity of Laban, the faith of Jacob and the providence of God. During the six years that Jacob tended Laban’s flocks (verse 41), Laban changed the terms of the deal between himself and Jacob many times. But with each change Jacob faithfully relied on God for continued blessing. And with each change, God provided that blessing. Finally, God commanded Jacob to leave. So Jacob left, but without telling Laban, attempting to avoid a confrontation.

Before he left, though, Rachel stole Laban’s household idols. It is possible that she took the idols because it was commonly believed that the possessor of the idols would enjoy the blessing of the gods; Rachel, according to the paganism in which she was raised, may have attempted to “secure” her husband’s good fortune. Yet she and Leah had apparently both come to worship the true God, seeing Him as the one who had blessed them with children and wealth and the one from whom to seek direction (see Genesis 29:32; Genesis 30:22-23; Genesis 31:16). Why, then, did Rachel take the idols? A number of commentators point out that the most likely explanation is that she stole them because they represented ownership of Laban’s possessions. The one who had the idols could thereby prove himself or herself to be the legitimate owner or heir to the property. For instance, the *Broadman Bible Commentary* states: “The possession of household gods was legal proof of the right to inheritance. Since Rachel believed that the property should be theirs, she ‘appropriated’ what she considered to be hers by right. This did not make the act any less wrong” (vol. 1, p. 220).

Laban, of course, pursued, angered not only by Jacob's fortune, but also Jacob's sudden departure and the disappearance of Laban's household idols. However, God warned him in a dream not to speak "good or bad" to Jacob. Nevertheless, Laban upbraided Jacob for leaving, feigning that he would have sent them away with a great feast. Since he could not compel Jacob's return, Laban turned his attention to the household idols. After an unsuccessful search of Jacob's goods—Rachel having hidden the idols—Jacob upbraided Laban. Take note of how Jacob attributes his success to God and portrays God as having judged Jacob's cause as righteous. Again, this is more evidence of the character development of Jacob.

In parting, Jacob and Laban erected a pillar stone. This stone, however, was different from the stone that Jacob erected in Bethel. This stone was not a sacred stone, but a memorial stone. It stood in that place as a reminder to all who passed by of the covenant made there between Laban and Jacob.

It should perhaps be mentioned that in spite of Laban's chicanery and double-dealing, he may have been expressing genuine fatherly concern in the end (see Genesis 31:49-50, Genesis 31:53, Genesis 31:55). He didn't have to make it part of the agreement that Jacob take no other wives. (It is interesting in verse 50 that Laban does not regard the *maidservants* as wives, as these concubines were looked upon as "surrogate mothers" for his daughters). And it is interesting to note his repeated references to the true God. While he was shaken by his dream to be sure, there would seem to be more to it than that. God had used Laban to bring about a dramatic change in Jacob's character over the course of 20 years. Yet in all that time, Jacob had in turn served as quite a witness to *Laban*—there were certainly lessons in it for him too. Perhaps here at the end—broke, losing his family and seeing everything he had plotted and schemed after for so long now slipping away—Laban had finally gotten the point." [END]