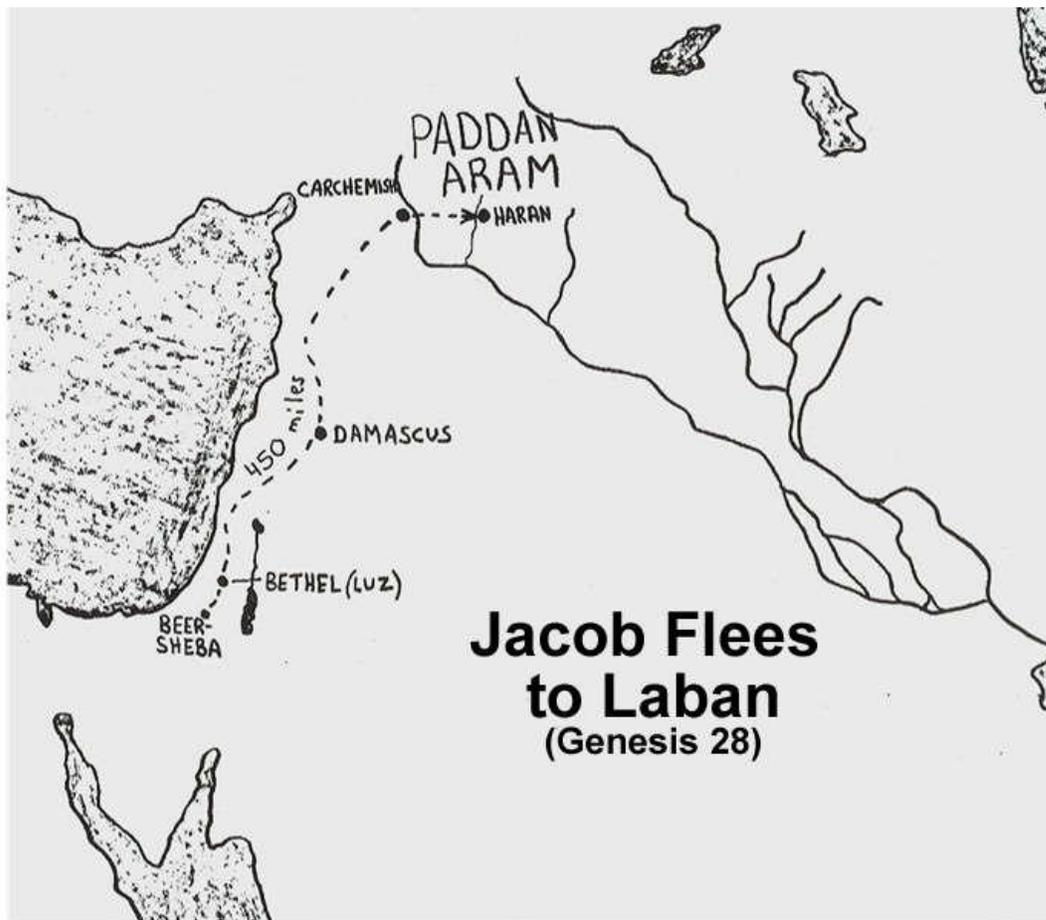


Read Genesis 28:1-5

- Considering the events of the previous chapter, what do you notice here regarding Isaac?
- Evaluate: “God let Jacob experience the results of the treachery he had perpetrated on his father. Jacob had to learn the hard way. He, the homebody, had to leave his home. Being forced to run for your life—and with a guilty conscience, at that—is not an easy way to leave one’s childhood home and family.”
- Can you imagine what life was like making this 500 mile journey?



Read Genesis 28:6-9

- Explain the poor decision Esau made here?

Read Genesis 28:10-15

- In the next section (v.19) we will find out that the place he stopped was Bethel (a.k.a. Luz). Jacob had traveled about 70 miles by this point. As Jacob wearily lay down his head at night, God came to him in a dream with some amazing promises. Note the promises that he was given. What comfort is found in each one?
 - *“I will give you and your offspring the land that you are now sleeping on.”* (v.13)
 - *“Your offspring will be like the dust of the earth”* (v.14)
 - *“All the peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.”* (v.14)
 - *“I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go.”* (v.15)
 - *“I will bring you back to this land”* (v.15)
 - *“I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”* (v.15)
- Jacob dreamed, *“A stairway was set on the ground with its top reaching heaven, and God’s angels were going up and down on it”* (v.12). What do the following two passages from the New Testament add to our understanding of this dream?
 - John 1:51 – *“I assure you: You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”*
 - John 14:6 – *“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”*

Read Genesis 28:16-22

- The dream from God cause mixed emotions for Jacob: gratefulness, fear, awe, amazement. What did all of this lead Jacob to do?
- “God’s unexpected goodness to Jacob at Bethel brought forth one more response: Jacob made a vow. His statement contained an “if” clause (language teachers call this the protasis) and a “then” clause (the apodosis), and it isn’t immediately clear from the text where the division between the two is to be made. It might seem that a translation preferable to that adopted by the NIV and the KJV would be to have the “then” clause begin at verse 22. Jacob’s statement would then read like this: “If God will be with me ... and if the LORD will be my God, then this stone that I have set up will be God’s house.” Regardless of which of the two translations we choose, however, we dare not regard Jacob’s words as bargaining with God (“God, if you do such-and-so for me, then you’ll be my God, otherwise not”). The Savior-God had assured Jacob that he was his God and that Jacob was a weak but dearly loved child. How happy we can be that our status before God is a matter determined by God’s undeserved love and is not dependent on our behavior!”
(People’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.237-238)

Read Genesis 29:1-12

- Note: The remainder of Jacob’s journey (from Bethel to Haran) is covered by verse 1. We are told nothing about what happened along the rest of the journey.
- What similarities do you notice between this meeting of Jacob and Rachel with the earlier meeting of Abraham’s servant and Rebekah?
- Rachel is the first shepherdess recorded in the Bible. The task of shepherding flocks was usually given to men. The next time a shepherdess is mentioned is in Exodus 2:16ff where Moses’ wife and her sisters acted as shepherdesses.
- When you read verse 12, what question comes to mind?

Read Genesis 29:13-30

- What was most likely included in Jacob's account to Laban in verse 13?

- After a month, Laban asked Jacob to name his wages. Jacob suggests 7 years of work to get Rachel's hand in marriage. Note how this is different than when Abraham's servant came for Laban's sister Rebekah.

- Explain: "After seven years had passed, Jacob (who had a crafty, dishonest streak in him) got to taste a bit of his own medicine."

- Note the uncanny similarity between the account of Jacob deceiving his father and Laban's deception of him:
 - Isaac chose to bless the person he loved.
Jacob chose to marry the person he loved.

 - Rebekah and Jacob used Isaac's blindness to trick him.
Laban used the cover of darkness to trick Jacob.

 - Rebekah substituted Jacob for Esau.
Laban substituted Leah for Rachel.

 - Because of Laban's treachery, Leah had to suffer.
Rebekah and Jacob's treachery caused their family as a whole to suffer.

 - The two people who were the substitutes, Jacob and Leah, turned out to be God's choice as the ones through whom he would fulfill his promise.

- How would you answer someone who used this account to say that God approves of polygamy?
- “We marvel at the patience of Jacob. Was God’s chastening already having an effect? Luther remarked: “I wouldn’t have put up with this. I’d have taken Laban to court and demanded that he be ordered to give me the bride for whom I served him under contract.” Perhaps mindful of how he had taken advantage of his brother and his aged father, Jacob submitted meekly to the dreadful disappointment God had permitted to enter his life. He declined to humiliate Leah by demanding that the marriage be annulled. Instead, as Laban suggested, he spent the bridal week with Leah and then married Rachel. For the rest of his life he had to live in a divided family, the husband of two wives, one of whom he loved more, the other less.”

(People’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.244)

Read Genesis 29:31-30:24

- Describe the dysfunction of this polygamous family.
- What strikes you as you look at the names of the sons born to these women?
 - Leah
 - 1 – Reuben (sounds like “has seen my affliction”)
 - 2 – Simeon (sounds like “has heard”)
 - 3 – Levi (sounds like “attached to”)
 - 4 – Judah (sounds like “praise”)
 - 9 – Issachar (sounds like “reward”)
 - 10 – Zebulun (sounds like “honored”)
 - Zilpah (Leah’s servant)
 - 7 – Gad (“good fortune”)
 - 8 – Asher (“happy”)
 - Rachel
 - 11 – Joseph (“He adds”)
 - 12 – Benjamin
 - Bilhah (Rachel’s servant)
 - 5 – Dan (sounds like “has vindicated”)
 - 6 – Naphtali (sounds like “my wrestling”)

- What do you notice when you compare v. 21 with Genesis 37:35 & 46:7?
 - Genesis 30:21 – ²¹ *Later, Leah bore a daughter and named her Dinah.*
 - Genesis 37:35 – (context – when Jacob was told that his son had died, but really had been sold into slavery) ³⁵ *All his sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said. “I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.” And his father wept for him.*
 - Genesis 46:7 – (context – when Jacob and family went down to Egypt during the famine) ⁷ *His sons and grandsons, his daughters and granddaughters, indeed all his offspring, he brought with him to Egypt.*

Read Genesis 30:25-36

- “Laban was aware of how he had been enriched during the years Jacob took care of his flocks and responded, “Please stay.” This was a selfish request, as can be seen from Jacob’s answer: “When may I do something for my own household?” Although Laban had benefited from Jacob’s expertise in raising cattle, his greed had been evident in his unwillingness to share the profits with Jacob. And now he stood to lose this valuable man. It’s not surprising that he offered Jacob a blank check. “What shall I give you, to induce you to stay?”

Jacob’s answer seems to have caught Laban completely off guard. To appreciate this, we’ll need to know that in the ancient Near East sheep were normally solid white in color, goats dark brown or black.

Speckled or spotted animals were unusual, as were black lambs. Laban could hardly believe his ears when he learned that all Jacob was asking for were the uncommon animals, the “irregulars.” And if Laban were to find any normally colored animals in with Jacob’s flock, he could consider them to have been stolen from his. One would like to think that by making this offer, Jacob was leaving his economic future totally in God’s hands.”

(People’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.252)

- How was Laban's greedy and suspicious nature on display in the way he responded to Jacob's request?

Read Genesis 30:37-43

- What is Jacob doing here?
 - "To induce solid-colored animals to bear spotted young, Jacob cut branches and peeled off the bark to expose spots or stripes of white wood underneath. At breeding time he would put these branches into the animals' drinking troughs. Whether this trick actually had prenatal influence on the female sheep and goats and actually resulted in the birth of larger numbers of "irregulars" is really beside the point. Whether this technique is scientifically accurate or just country superstition doesn't matter here. The point is that Jacob, the "heel-grabber," listened to the whispering of his evil nature, that urged him: "Don't get angry; get even!" This was not Jacob's new nature speaking; the shenanigans at breeding time were not evidence of a new life of faith. Jacob was not yet ready to graduate from the Lord's training school."

(People's Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.252)

- In the end, what happened for Jacob?