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Genesis 29:31 - 31:16



Genesis - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg provides a detailed analysis of Genesis 29:31 - 31:16, discussing Jacob's marriages to Leah and Rachel and their competition for having children. The text emphasizes the significance of each child's name, often linked to God, and delves into Jacob's knowledge of livestock breeding and medicinal plant use. Additionally, the text mentions Rachel's theft of household idols and Jacob's eventual departure with his family and possessions due to jealousy from Laban's sons. Throughout the commentary, Gregg provides context and insights into the cultural and biblical significance of these events.

Transcript

Last time we didn't quite get through chapter 29 and we came to a place that is a reasonable stopping point, actually. In chapter 29, Jacob had married his wives, Leah and Rachel. He had not been happy with being married only to Leah, which was what was the result of the deception that his uncle Laban had perpetrated.

And so he agreed to work a second seven years for Rachel. Now, I'm not going to commit myself at this point to at what point he took his wives. There's too many considerations.

If he took his wives at the end of the first seven years, then he had 11 more children in seven years. I'll tell you why. Because the last six years he was with Laban, the last six of the 20, he wasn't having any kids.

Because we read when Joseph was born, he made the arrangement to stay another six years. And then the next child born was Benjamin, who wasn't born until after he'd left Laban and gone to the Promised Land. So we can't allow those six years to be times where he's having kids.

He's got to have, if he married Leah and Rachel after the first seven years of working for Rachel, then he had from that seven years to the end of another seven years to have 11 sons and one daughter. That's 12 children in seven years. Now, he did have four women to do it by.

So obviously, a man can have multiple children the same year if he has multiple wives.

But one of the things that makes this difficult is that Leah herself had seven children during that period of time. She had six sons and one daughter in the period of time that were allowed to allow.

And after she had her fourth child, we should find she left off bearing. She was unable to bear for a while, which caused her to put her maid Vilha into the picture to continue competing with her sister. And so if it was only a seven year period that these children were being born.

And in that period, Leah had seven, including a period of time where she was unable to bear. That inability to bear must have been recognized within a few months time, which most women would not consider that a few months after they had a baby, if they didn't get pregnant again immediately, that they were unusually barren. So just the way it's told, it sounds like they needed more time.

And so for that reason, some have understood that Jacob worked or he contracted to work the first seven years. But he got Leah and Rachel really at the beginning of the period. Then he was then he was contracted to work 14 years for two women.

If that's true, then these births that were about to begin really pretty much at the beginning of his stay in Padanarum. And that gives him 14 years to have these 11 sons. And that is not unreasonable at all.

In fact, one might be surprised with four women bearing that he wouldn't have had more in that time than 11. But I'm not committing myself to it because I think it is ambiguous. And because, you know, the way it seems to read, we create something of a problem.

Now, it is possible for those 11 sons to be born within seven years. It's just it just makes it look like a real rush job because Leah has four children in rapid succession. If there was no gap between her bearing her first child and her getting pregnant with the second one, which is unusual, but not impossible.

She might have had those, you know, four children in maybe three years time. Left off bearing and then had three more later on. It's possible.

But we also have other women who are getting involved and there's a lot of comparison going on of who's having babies when and a lot of competition. And to fit it all into seven years is, I don't know, I guess it's just awkward. It's not impossible, but it does create another problem.

And that is that, as I said, Benjamin. Well, I guess Benjamin is not even a factor here, but Judah. If he was born fourth or the fourth of Leah.

And. And and let's say that was after seven years in Padanarum, Leah started having children, so she would have had her first child in the eighth year. The fourth child,

probably in the eleventh or twelfth year.

That means that, you know, Judah would have been like nine years old by the time they left Padinarum. And yet the other stories about him, especially in chapter 38, require that he's older than that, because in 33 years, they spent in Canaan. He had children and grandchildren.

And so it's not likely that he went to Canaan at age nine, fathered children immediately, and then they grew up and had children and so forth in that short time. So all I want to do is leave you with the awareness that there is there is some question as to whether these children were born over a period of seven years or over a period of 14 years. But we now read of the birth of these children.

In chapter twenty nine, verse thirty one, we pick up where we left off when Yahweh saw that Leah was hated. The New King James, I think, does us no favor. I translated it unloved.

I mean, it does clarify what it really means. But we do find throughout the Bible the contrast between love and hate used in a particularly Semitic way. That is a Hebrew way.

And to my mind, we're better served by our chancellors letting us know when that's happening, because then we can become more acquainted with the idiom and know how to deal with it in other places. It specifically says Yahweh saw that Leah was hated. Now, of course, it really means unloved or at least not preferred.

Because the previous verse says that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. It does not say he hated Leah. And there was no real reason for him to hate her.

She was. And if he hated her, how do you have so many children by her? You know, I think that what we're to understand is the love and hate contrast, which is often in Semitic writing is simply referring to preferring or not preferring. When God said, Jacob, I have loved Esau, I have hated him.

If I have preferred Jacob over Esau, when Jesus said no one can serve two masters, he must love the one and hate the other. He means if you have two masters, you're going to prefer one over the other. You don't really have to hate one or love one for that matter, but you do have to prefer one.

You have to give preferential treatment to one over the other. And when Jesus said, whoever does comes in and does not hate his father and his mother, his wife and children, obviously he means one must not give preferential treatment over God to them. And that's clear when the parallel in Matthew 10 is viewed where he says he that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

So this is an idiom that we find many times in scripture, love and hate, where the

Hebrews don't mean what we mean by love and hate necessarily. And these when this contrast is made, it's generally saying preferred versus not preferred, loved more than the other. And so the New King James is correct in interpreting the word hate to mean unloved him.

That's what it does mean or loved less or preferred less. That's what it means. But I always like it.

And the chancellors actually tell us what the Hebrew says, not what it means. Let me decide what it means. Tell me what it says and let me do my own thinking.

I'm a little stubborn and rebellious that way. I like to do my own thinking and not have chancellors do my thinking for me. It's enough that I need them to tell me what the Hebrew words mean in terms of their English equivalence.

I don't read Hebrew, but I don't want them to also give me commentary. I just send them. Give me the words of the scriptures and let me think it out.

So this is a pet peeve of mine. As you can see, I've spent a long time talking about something that none of you care about. It's one of my peeves.

So the Lord saw that Leah was hated, which means that she was loved less than Rachel was. And so he opened her womb and Rachel was barren. So God showed preferential treatment to Leah, not to Rachel.

Just kind of to even things out, perhaps. So Leah conceived and bore a son and she called his name Reuben. For she said, Yahweh has surely looked on my affliction.

Now, therefore, my husband will love me. Now, the name Reuben means see a son. I see that I gave you a son and therefore you got to love me because your other wife has not given you any sons.

And so she thought that this would cause Jacob to love her because she was now the mother of his only child. And she named the child, see a son. Notice she mentions Yahweh specifically.

Yahweh has surely looked on my affliction. There were other names for God, including generic ones that could apply to Yahweh that she could have used. But when Yahweh is mentioned by name, it is by somebody, generally speaking, who is acknowledging Yahweh as their God.

Verse 33, Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, Because Yahweh has heard that I am unloved, he therefore has given me this son also. And she called his name Simeon. Simeon means heard because Yahweh had heard that I am unloved.

Then verse 34, She conceived again and bore a son and said, Now this time my husband

will become attached to me. Notice she keeps showing hope every time a baby is born. But and we're not reading of how Jacob responded, except that the next time she's raped.

Well, maybe this time it'll work. You know, it's obvious that he's not responding to her just as he should. And as she felt like he would.

So she said, Now this time my husband will become attached to me because I have borne him three sons. Therefore, his name is called Levi, which means attached. And she conceived again and bore a son and said, Now I will praise Yahweh.

Therefore, she called his name Judah, which means praise. Then she stopped bearing. Judah means praise.

And she says, Because I'll now praise Yahweh. The word Jew comes from the word Judah. The word Jew does not appear until much later in Scripture, but it is applied to people who were of the nation of Judah.

And it was short for Judah. And therefore, the word Judah or the word Jew really means praise. Also, though, it's not the complete word.

It's its etymology is to the word praise. Remember, Paul said in Romans chapter two and verses twenty eight and twenty nine. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he was on inwardly.

And then he says, Whose praise is not of men, but of God. So he's making a play on words. There are true Jew is one who is receives praise, not from men, but receives praise from God because the name Jew comes from Judah, which means praise.

Now, she used the word praise a little different in connection with words. She didn't speak of this child as receiving praise from God, but God was going to receive praise from her because of the child. And she bore four children.

And then she stopped bearing. Now, if all this is happening within a total of seven years, all these children, then some of the children were about to read up were born during the time she was having these four children. It's not impossible.

Sometimes the way the narration goes, it just records one block of information and then it records some things that happened prior to the ending of that period of time. And so Chapter 30. Now, when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob, no children, Rachel envied her sister and said to Jacob, Give me children or else I die.

And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel. And he said, Am I in the place of God who is withheld from you the fruit of the womb? So she said, Here is my maid Bilhah. Go into her and she will bear a child on my knees that I may also have children by her.

So the same thing Sarah had Abram do with Hagar. Apparently, this is customary for barren women to do and use their maid as their womb. Then she gave him Bilhah, her maid, as wife.

And Jacob went into her and Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. And Rachel said, since she was the technical mother, since the mother was a slave, Rachel gets to name the children. God, she simply uses Elohim, not Yahweh.

God has judged my case and has heard my voice and given me a son. So she named his name Dan, which means judge or judging. Now, you know, it's obvious that this is kind of a bad spirited motivation on her part.

I think it seems to me, maybe not, but she doesn't mention Yahweh as the judge, but only God. And Rachel's maid, by the way, later on, Rachel stole her father's gods and was keeping them as a thing of value, too. So Rachel, I don't know if Rachel really in her early life was devoted to Yahweh.

Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, with great wrestlings, I have wrestled with my sister and indeed I have prevailed. So she called his name Naphtali.

Now, if we've got to fit all of this into seven years time, 11 sons in seven years, and I'm not sure that we do. But if we do, then these two sons apparently were born during the time Leah was having her four sons that we've already read about. Leah might have, for example, had two children in a row.

And Rachel sees the trend here. Leah is getting pregnant regularly and I'm not. And so she jumps in with Bilhah and starts having a couple of babies.

Perhaps these two were born around the same time as the second two of Leah. So then we read that Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, which is, of course, what happened after she had her fourth child. It also appears to be mentioned here after Bilhah's second child.

So it may be that the bearing of these two children of Bilhah overlaps the bearing of four children of Leah. So now there's six children in four years or maybe less, because four children could be born in less than four years conceivably. Again, no pun intended there.

Now, Leah saw that she had stopped bearing and she took Zilpah, her maid, and gave her to Jacob as wife. So she can do the same thing. Rachel is barren.

Leah appears to be barren, at least temporarily. So she jumps in and gives her maid so that Rachel may not catch up. Oh, by the way, I didn't mention Naphtali.

His name means wrestling. But now Zilpah's in the picture and Leah's made Zilpah bore

Jacob a son. And Leah said, a troop comes.

So she called his name Gad, which means a troop. Now, a troop comes probably is like a declaration of faith. Okay, this is the beginning of a new batch, a large batch, like a troop of warriors.

In this competition with my sister, I'm recruiting, you know, this troop of soldiers. These babies are the combatants in this battle between the mothers. And so she says, a troop is coming.

Now, this is the time when Leah does not mention Yahweh. She just says a troop comes. And Leah's made Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

Then Leah said, I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed. So she called his name Asher. So it's possible then that the first six children, the first four of Leah and the first two of Bilhah, the only two that Bilhah had, were born in the first four years or less.

Then Leah's maid has these two, which would take us up to the sixth year or less. Okay, so now we've got, what have we got? We got eight children here so far. I'm losing track here.

Ten? No, not ten yet. We got eight so far. And so she said to her, now Reuben, verse 14, went in the days of the wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah.

Then Rachel said to Leah, please give me some of your son's mandrakes. Now, mandrakes were a plant that were viewed as an aphrodisiac and a fertility enhancing herb. And so finding mandrakes in a situation like this, where there's competition for having babies, gives a woman an advantage.

And it was Leah's son who found the mandrakes, so they were Leah's by right. And both Leah and Rachel were barren at this point. Leah had stopped bearing, so they were both interested in these mandrakes because they figured it's sort of like a fertility treatment, you know.

And Leah, Rachel wanted to take the mandrakes from Leah, but Leah said to her, is it a small matter that you've taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also? So we can see here, just in their speaking to each other, they're not very friendly with each other. And Leah is understandably somewhat bitter because Rachel had taken away her husband. Not in the sense that Leah's husband left her, but she stole the heart of her husband.

Leah was the wife first and would have remained the wife if Rachel had not come in. And now there's two wives, and obviously Jacob's affection is more toward Rachel. This is a sad thing when two sisters are in competition like this.

You know, later on in the law, although there was no law forbidding polygamy, there was specifically a law against a man marrying two sisters, a law which would have condemned Jacob in this case. But the law was given, no doubt, because of this kind of thing. And wherever there's polygamy, the wives are always in competition.

But when two sisters are made to be in competition, that's particularly distressing because they ought to be, sisters ought to be close to each other. So Leah says, it's a small matter you've taken away my husband. Would you take away my son's mandrakes also? But Rachel said, therefore, he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes.

I'll buy them from you. You get to sleep with Jacob tonight. Now, I guess Leah was right.

Rachel had taken him away. He apparently would sleep with Leah when it seemed like she might be fertile because she had children. But it wasn't what he did out of love, you know.

When he wanted to sleep with somebody out of love, it was Rachel. And Rachel was in a position to say, OK, I'll give him up tonight and you give me the mandrakes. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening.

Leah went out to meet him and said, you must come in to me for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes. Now, who feels like the prostitute here? Him. He's been bought.

He's been purchased, hired. And he lay with her that night and God listened to Leah and she conceived and bore Jacob, a fifth son. And this is not necessarily attributed to the mandrakes that she had, but they could be.

She didn't use mandrakes, excuse me, unless she kept some for herself. I mean, she gave some mandrakes to Rachel. Whether she gave them all to Rachel, we don't know.

But her conception here is not connected to the mandrakes as soon as we can tell. God listened to her and she conceived and bore Jacob, a fifth son. That is a fifth one from her.

He had some others in all likelihood by now. And Leah said, God has given me my hire because I have given my maid to my husband. And, of course, the hire is also that she'd hired Jacob that night by the mandrakes.

So she called his name Issachar, which means hire. And Leah conceived. But by the way, she doesn't use the word Yahweh there, but she will again.

Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob, a sixth son. Leah said, God has endowed me with a good endowment. Now my husband will dwell with me because I have borne him six sons.

So she called his name Zebulun, which means dwelling. Afterwards, she bore a daughter

and called her name Dinah. Then God remembered Rachel.

She had the mandrakes now, but it doesn't indicate that the mandrakes did anything in terms of her fertility. But God did. He remembered Rachel.

He felt sorry for her. And God listened to her and opened her womb. And she conceived and bore a son and said, God has taken away my reproach.

So she called his name Joseph and said, Yahweh. Rachel is now mentioning Yahweh shall add me another son. And that was true.

Now, whether she was making that as a positive confession, almost a demand from God, this is good. But I want another one or what? I don't know. It turns out she did have another son, but she died in childbirth.

And it might have been to her advantage not to have had another son and to have been content with this one. But in any case, she did conceive and brought a son. Now, there's almost certainly some overlapping here because we read of Leah having two children in a row.

And yet Rachel could easily have had this child immediately after, you know, got pregnant before the second one of Leah's was born, the sixth one. And had the child right afterwards. Joseph was almost the youngest brother, so he did come after these other children.

But the pregnancy might have overlapped. He might have been born shortly after Issachar or Zebulun, excuse me. Anyway, it is possible to squeeze 11 sons into seven years.

But it's as I said, I don't know that we need to do that. But if we had to, it can be done. And it came to pass when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, send me away that I may go to my own place and to my country.

Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you. And let me go for, you know, my service, which I have done for you. And Laban said to him, please stay.

This is at the end of 14 years. Please, I have found favor if I found favor in your eyes. I'm not sure how Laban could have found favor in Jacob's eyes, given the deception that he had foisted.

But it's just a manner of speaking. If you if you'll treat me well, please stay. For I have learned by experience that the Lord Yahweh has blessed me for your sake.

Now, the word experience in the Hebrew is actually divination. That's what it means. Experience is a strange translation of it.

The Hebrew word means divination. I have found by divination. Now, divination would be

like reading the entrails of chickens or goats or something like that.

Or possibly like what more modern times we tea leaf reading or reading poems or whatever. That's divination, getting information through occult means. Now, apparently Laban, when Jacob came to him, had been not very prosperous.

That is going to be pointed out later on. Jacob says, when I came to you, you were small and poor and then you become rich. But Laban has noticed that suddenly he's gotten rich over the last few years.

And he wonders if there's anything specific contributing to that. So he apparently has consulted divination, perhaps gold dust sprinkle on the top of a goblet of wine. And the shapes that make is one of the ways they practice divination, too.

In any case, he had divine through whatever means that Jacob was the reason that he was prospering. And therefore, he certainly didn't want Jacob to go now that his contract had lapsed. Then he said, name me your wages and I will give it.

And Jacob said to him, you know how I've served you and how your livestock has been with me. For what you had before I came was little and it is now increased to a great amount. And Yahweh has blessed you since my coming.

And now when I when shall I also provide for my own house? That is, he's gotten his family out of the deal, but he's only been taking care of someone else's livestock. And Laban has become rich, but Jacob doesn't own anything except his wives and children. He's been working 14 years simply for maintenance and for earning not not a wage, but his wife.

And so he's got his wife. He's got his children. He's been working 14 years to pay them off, but he hasn't earned anything from stuff.

He's not going to provide for my own estate. And Laban said, what shall I give you? And Jacob said, you should not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks.

Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep and all the brown ones among the lambs and the spotted and the speckled among the goats. And these should be my wages. So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come when the subject of my wages comes before you.

Everyone that is not speckled or spotted among the goats and brown among the lambs will be considered stolen if it is with me. This bargain was struck in a way between two men who really don't trust each other. And why should they? Actually, I don't think that Jacob has been dishonest up to this point with Laban, but Laban has shown himself to be sneaky and Jacob doesn't trust him.

And he's saying, listen, obviously my wages will be in the form of livestock. That's what you've got. That's what you've got to pay me in.

Livestock is good. I'll take livestock. But we've got a problem here.

The day may come when you challenge me and claim that I'm stealing your livestock. After all, I'm caring for your livestock. Without you present, you might suspect that some of those livestock of mine are really yours and that I've been kind of pilfering.

While you're not looking. So I've got a solution. All the irregularly colored livestock, which would be in the minority, will be mine.

And you can always check to see if I've got any of yours. And it'll be obvious because mine are only the brown sheep. Almost all the sheep would be in those days white.

And the goats were almost always solid black. But some of them had irregular patterns, spots, speckles and things like that. The majority of the sheep are going to be white with the oddball brown sheep.

The majority of the goats are going to be black with the oddball ring-streaked spotted speckled goat. So Laban saw this as a pretty good deal because Jacob's livestock would be a really small percentage of the total flock. And it was a good way to distinguish whether one thing belonged to Jacob or to Laban.

And so Laban agreed to this. Laban said, oh, that it were according to your word. So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted.

Every one that had some white in it and all the brown ones among the lambs and gave them into the hand of his sons. Now, who did this? Jacob had said, let me go in the flock and separate these. But this person who did it was Laban, and he gave them to his sons.

So then he put three days journey between himself and Jacob and Jacob said the rest of Laban's flock. Laban agreed that modified Jacob said those that are currently irregular. Let me take them out for my portion.

Now, of course, those that were already that color would have the genetics, which although they didn't understand genetics back then, they had observed livestock breeding enough to know that the speckled and discolored animals are more likely to bear offspring that are that way than the normal sheep are. The normal sheep may have recessive genes that sometimes come out that way. But these irregularly colored animals have dominant genes that are that way and therefore are much more likely to produce more of the same offspring.

So Jacob apparently wanted to take the few cattle livestock that were currently the

colors that would be his and use them for breeding stock, separate them and keep them in. And the rest of the labors. Oh, that's a great idea.

And then Laban goes, maybe even secretly. And he takes all of those sheep and goats that would have been Jacob's and give them to his son and separate them from the flock. So that all that Jacob's left with is the ordinary sheep, no breeding stock of his own.

So Laban already is cheating and at the very beginning here. But God comes to Jacob's rescue, and even though the breeding stock were taken away, Laban's sheep still keep throwing irregularly colored animals, as we shall see. And it says Laban put three days journey between himself and Jacob and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flock.

Now, Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white stripes in them and exposed the white, which was in the rod and the rod switch. He appealed. 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.

So the flocks conceived before the rods and the flocks brought forth strict speckles and spotted. Then Jacob separated the lambs and made the flock face toward the street and all the brown of the flock of Laban. But he put his own flock by themselves and did not put them in Laban's flock.

And it came to pass whenever the strong livestock conceived that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters that they might conceive among the rod. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in so that the feebler were Laban's and the stronger were Jacob's. Thus, the man became exceedingly prosperous and had large blocks, female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

So he started with nothing but over a period of, as it turns out, six years, he becomes wealthy and virtually all the livestock becomes his through this process. We just read it. Now, what is this process? A lot of people find great objection to this particular section at the end of Chapter 30 because they say this is almost endorsing a superstitious idea of, you know, prenatal influence on the sheep and the goats.

And many people feel that what's going on here is that Jacob had a superstitious idea that if the animals, while they are conceiving, while they're mating, in other words, if they're looking at something streaked like a rod that is streaked, then it'll influence the color of their offspring. Now, obviously, no one would believe that's true today. And, you know, it totally ignores genetics as we know it.

It's a totally unscientific and superstitious notion. And many feel that the Bible is not only saying that Jacob did this, but that the Bible endorses it as the reason why, you know, he became prosperous. So that it becomes not only a flaw in Jacob's thinking, but in the Bible narrative itself.

And this is found to be a problem by many. However, I think they're totally missing the point. I don't think there's any suggestion of prenatal influence here.

The only thing that gives that impression is that the rods that he put in the watering troughs were said to have streaks in them. And some of the offspring also had streaks, but also spots and other things, too. He didn't put spotted rods in there to make spotted offspring or brown rods to get brown offspring of the sheep.

There's no suggestion that the appearance of the rods, the way they looked, was to be influential on the way the offspring looked. That's strictly misunderstanding. But in fact, I think the opposite is made clear.

It says that he put them in when the stronger animals came to mate, but not when the weaker ones did. It doesn't say, well, what I believe, I'll just say what I believe is going on here. I believe that Jacob, having come from a long line of shepherds, by the way, Abraham had tended sheep for over 100 years.

Isaac had done so all his life. Jacob was now, you know, over 80 years old, over 90 years old, and had been a shepherd most of that time. He was from a sheep herding family.

They knew the native plants. They knew the herbs. They knew medicinal things of the countryside.

They knew sheep. They knew livestock breeding. And I believe he had discovered that there were certain plants, which the sap of which when put into the water of the animals would be fertility enhancing.

Not that it would affect the color, but it would encourage conception to take place. And what I see happening here is Jacob is not doing something sneaky. He's not deceiving Laban by doing something sneaky where Laban didn't count on me doing this.

I'm going to put these streaked rods in and all the sheep are going to be my color. I think he's just being a responsible tender of cattle, including Laban's cattle. I don't think that Jacob is in any way seeking to manipulate the color of the offspring, but rather the strength of the flock in general.

He wanted the stronger sheep to conceive and the weaker ones not to. This has nothing to do with their color. He was just being a good livestock breeder.

And if you look at it again, the almond and the chestnut trees, he peeled strips of them to allow the sap to come out and to permeate the water that the animals drank. The rods, verse 38, which he had peeled, he set before the flocks and the gutters in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. Not that they would be colored, that their offspring would be colored by it, but so that they should conceive when they came to drink.

This was a device to help them be more fertile, not to influence the color of their offspring. And there's no reason to believe that this was superstitious. There's many herbal things that can enhance fertility.

As far as we know, we don't know. At least science has not disproven such a thing. And I would say that a man who spent whose family spent hundreds of years tending sheep in that general region might know a lot about the flora and its beneficial qualities on their animals.

So it only says that he wanted them to conceive, not that he wanted them to throw lambs and kids that were the color that would be his. And it says, so the flocks conceived before the rods and the flocks brought forth, streaked, speckled and spotted. It doesn't say it's because of the rods that they were that color.

It's just we will find in the next chapter that Jacob, it took a dream from God to show him why they were coming out that color. He wasn't making them come out that color. God was, and Jacob didn't even know why.

All he knew was that he's trying to increase the general strength and virility of the flock. And the flock is getting stronger. The flock is getting better.

But they're also in the same time throwing all lambs and good kids that are going to be his. And that he has not controlled or even apparently tried to control. And look, verse 40, he separated the lambs and made the flocks face toward the street and all the brown in the flock of Laban.

But he put his own flock by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock. That is, he was being conscientious. If he had put his own flock in with Laban's, that would encourage the genetic traits of his flock to be spread throughout Laban's flocks more.

He didn't let his flock breed with Laban's so that he didn't corrupt Laban's flock with his own irregular sheep and goats. He did have his animals, it says, facing them. I'm not sure what that meant.

Apparently, they were in separate stalls or separate pastures. They could look at each other, but he wouldn't put them together. He wouldn't let them mate together.

And it seems to me like that's being conscientious, not being sneaky. If he had mixed his flock with Laban's flock, then, as I say, the genetics that favored his flock would be spread throughout Laban's flock. And Laban's flock would be throwing more of his kind of sheep.

But he didn't allow that. He kept Laban's flock discreetly separate. And yet they kept producing the kind of sheep that he needed.

It was God's doing, as we shall see very clearly in chapter 31. But he didn't know what was going on. He wasn't manipulating the coloration of the flock.

It came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters. In other words, he only was trying to increase the general strong traits, not coloration of the flock. He did not encourage conception among the weaker animals, assuming that their offspring would be inferior, not in color, but in weakness.

So, I mean, to make this to make this out like he's superstitious, I don't think that's suggested at all. I think the coloration of the offspring was God's doing. And we read that now in chapter 31, where it says, Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's son saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's.

From what was our father's, he has acquired all his wealth. And Jacob saw that the countenance of Laban, and indeed he saw the countenance of Laban, it was not favorable toward him as before. Then Yahweh said to Jacob, Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.

We've not been told yet, but we shall be told that this had been six years of this breeding that since the 14 years had ended, there's now been six more years. So it's been 20 years total. And God's saying now it's time to go back to the promised land, back to your father's land.

Verse four, So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock. He didn't wait till he got home to the tent. Why? He might be overheard.

There were servants there, no doubt. Remember how when Isaac conspired with Esau to get the blessing to Esau, they were overheard and their plot was foiled because apparently some servant or at least Rebecca was listening and heard of it. And so instead of talking about at home in the tent where other, you know, the curtains have ears, you know, others might hear and seek to expose his plan.

He called his wife out into the field. He knew that the sheep had ears, but they didn't have mouths that could talk. So it was OK if they overheard him and he told them his plot, which was not bad.

It was just something that needed to be kept a secret. If it was going to work, he said to them, I see your father's countenance that it is not favorable toward me as before. But the God of my father has been with me.

Notice, he doesn't say my God, but it's forgotten who is my father's God. And you know that with all my might, I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times.

But God did not allow him to hurt me. Now, this change in the wages ten times happened during the six years. We'll learn more about it a little later in the chapter when Jacob says, like ten different times, Laban came and saw that all the sheep were having, you know, brown lambs.

So he changed it to the brown lambs, the Laban's, then they also had white lambs. That every time Laban changed the arrangement, the animals produced what was good for Jacob. And Laban was always trying to jury rig the thing to make the animals be mostly his, but God was working against Laban.

And though he changed it ten times to adjust it so that he'd get all the animals, the flock will find this is explained a little later. The flock actually all turned out to be Jacob's, and he recognizes God's doing. God didn't allow him to hurt me.

Verse eight, if he said, thus, the speckled shall be your wages, then all the flocks were speckled. If he said, thus, the streaked shall be wages, then they all bore streaks. He didn't think that the rods in the water troughs were affecting all of this.

He just saw it as God. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. And it happened at the time when the flocks conceived that I lift up my eyes and saw in a dream.

And behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled and gray spotted. Then the angel of God spoke to me in a dream saying, Jacob. And I said, here I am.

And he said, lift up your eyes now and see all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled and gray spotted. For I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to me.

Now arise, get out of this land and return to the land of your kindred. Now, what was this dream about? These offspring of these sheep and goats were coming out the way they were because of the parent males. The males had the traits that they passed on to the offspring.

Now, why did this, why was this revealed to him in a dream? Why couldn't he just see that with his own eyes, just watching the sheep? Either, either a lot of the reproduction of sheep was going on at night when Jacob wasn't able to watch and see which rams, which he goats were were breeding. And so God revealed to him in a dream, you know, all those, the reason these sheep returned because all the breeding males are the right color for your flock. And that was something Jacob didn't know and wouldn't have known without the dream to tell him.

Either, as I say, because they were breeding at night when he couldn't observe. And now God wanted to know that's what was going on, which means, of course, has nothing to

do with the rods in the watering troughs, but rather has to do with the breeding males and their genetics. Or else the other possibility is that although Jacob did have opportunity to watch the animals breed, he could not see these traits in the males because they were in the genes, but not in the coat of the animal.

That is to say, these, these males had these genes to pass on. And if you could see them as God saw them, you'd see these are speckled and spotted animals, but they weren't actually speckled spotted animals. That was just in their hidden genes and that in a dream God revealed to all those males.

The reason you're getting those kids that way is because the males all have that trait, maybe not externally, maybe only in their genetics where only God could see it. But in any case, whether it was, you know, whether it was at night where Jacob couldn't observe it or whether it was inside the animal where it couldn't be observed. God revealed to Jacob that God had led the animals in such a way that only the males that produced the offspring that would ultimately be Jacob's were doing the breeding with the females.

And so the Bible is vindicated here in that it's very clear that this is agreeable with genetic science and has nothing to do with the prenatal influence of looking at sticks and so forth. Then Rachel answered and said to him, Rachel and Leah answered, said to him, is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not considered strangers by him for he has sold us and also completely consumed our money? That latter part probably means that he doesn't have anything left of the money he sold us for, which was lifestyle. And so they felt like he treated them like chattel rather than like family.

And he's squandered the wealth that he had and he hasn't even respected the money he paid. He received in exchange for them for all these riches, which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's. Now, then, whatever God has said to you, do it.

Then Jacob rose and said his sons and his wives on camels, and he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions, which he had gained his acquired livestock, which he had gained in Paddan Aram to go to his father Isaac and in the land of Canaan. Now, Laban had gone to share his sheep, which means he wasn't paying attention to Jacob at the moment. And Rachel had stolen the household idols.

The Hebrew word here is terra fem. The King James called them God, but they weren't necessarily objects of worship. They were the terra fem have been discovered by archaeologists.

They are small little statuettes, which apparently some homes had a number of them. And many archaeologists believe that they were not so much objects of worship as they

were emblems of inheritance rights that whoever had the family terra fem could, as it were, claim the right to the inheritance of the family stock. A little bit like a scepter represents the king's authority to rule.

So the possession of these terra fem would be possibly indicative of who gets the inheritance. And Rachel had stolen them so that essentially her desire was that her son, Joseph, the only son she had, would get the inheritance of Laban. It didn't end up being that way, but that's apparently what she had in mind.

And it says Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban, the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

Now, I don't think that Jacob had agreed to stay for any set amount of time. So leaving without notice was actually something that he could possibly be considered to do without it being an actual betrayal of a contract. Although one has to wonder, did he leave Laban's sheep unattended? But probably there were a lot of Laban's servants serving under Jacob, and he could leave them in the care of the servants and not be neglectful that way.

The main thing was he saw the countenance of Laban and his sons, that they were getting jealous, upset with him. And he thought, well, these guys could do me some serious hurt if they really got angry enough. So he decided to just go home.

And God had told him to. He had a dream where God told him to go back. So he was doing that.

Verse 22, And Laban was told, you know what, I'm going to stop right there because of the time and because there's a lot of chapter ahead of us. So my goal to finish an entire chapter is simply not going to work out at this time. There's a huge amount of the chapter still ahead of us.

So I'm going to stop right there. Jacob has fled. Laban is going to hear about it and pursue.

But we'll wait for that part. We'll save the climax for the last hour.