

# Genesis 28-30

## Jacob Flees

Chapter 28 follows Jacob as he makes his way to Laban in Padan Aram.

### I. Intro:

A brief recap of Esau and Jacob

#### • Birth

After 20 years of marriage Rebekah, still unable to bear children cries out to the Lord and conceived. Because of the difficulty of her pregnancy she inquired of the Lord if something was wrong to which he replied:

**Genesis 25:23**

*“Two nations are in your womb,  
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;  
One people shall be stronger than the other,  
And the older shall serve the younger.”*

When the boys were born the first to come out was a hairy little guy so he was named Esau meaning hairy. The second born was grabbing onto his brothers heel and was named Jacob meaning supplanter or heel catcher

Supplanter – defined today as one who tries to trip up another or to overthrow

The birth scene is indicative of the continual struggle not only between the two brothers but also between the nations that will come from them

#### • Rivalry

Without giving details regarding their childhood, the narrative of Genesis jumps to a scene in the life of these two young men where Esau despises his birthright by selling it to Jacob for a pot of stew.

It is from the redness of the stew that Esau gets his nickname – Edom, which means red. It is by this name that his descendants will be known.

The New Testament commenting upon this passage refers to Esau as a “*Profane person*”

Profane does not necessarily refer to gross acts of sin as much as it does to a person who shows no regard to spiritual things. It seems that Esau was a man who cared little for what the birthright carried.

Whoever held the birthright also held the promise that through their seed the Messiah would come into the world

The next scene in the life of the boys takes place years later as the physical condition of Isaac causes him to believe that he is very close to death. In preparation for his dying he calls Esau to his side and promises to give him a blessing. Upon hearing of his plans, Rebekah convinces Jacob to disguise himself as Esau and steal the blessing that was rightfully his.

In addition to showing the character of Jacob as a supplanter, this story also gives insight into the dysfunctional nature of the family of Isaac.

- Isaac is unwilling to submit to the will of God
- Rebekah is unwilling to trust the Lord
- Esau and Jacob are constantly competing for the attention of their parents who have clearly chosen favorites.

As the scene unfolds Jacob will not only get the blessing Isaac intended for Esau but will also be a recipient of the wrath of Esau who vows to kill his brother. So enraged is Esau that he is not afraid to make known his desire to kill his brother.

It is from this scene that the events of Genesis 28-30 get their start

## II. Genesis 28

### • The Blessing

The Chapter begins with Isaac finally accepting that Jacob was the heir to the promise. It is this event that the book of Hebrews reflects upon when referring to the great faith of Isaac.

Hebrews 11:20

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

What a picture of the grace of God!

He bears no memory of the failures of Isaac only remembers that he blessed his sons

**Isaac promises Jacob:**

- Descendants
- A land
- All the blessings of Abraham

**Genesis 28:3-4**

“May God Almighty bless you,  
And make you fruitful and multiply you,  
That you may be an assembly of peoples;  
**And give you the blessing of Abraham,**  
To you and your descendants with you,  
That you may inherit the land  
In which you are a stranger,  
Which God gave to Abraham.”

## • The Journey

Isaac sets out for Padan Aram and the city of Haran

**Padan Aram** – meaning the field of Aram, was a region North and East of Canaan in modern Syria.

**Haran** was a town or city in Padan Aram where Abraham dwelt after leaving UR and before entering Canaan. (Coincidentally, Haran was also the name of Lot’s father)

It was in Haran that Abraham’s servant located Rebekah as a bride for Isaac

Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob back to Haran to her family to find a suitable wife.

A contrast is set in Gen 28:6-9 as Esau seeks a bride from the descendants of Ishmael. He had already chosen two wives from the Canaanites.

It was important for Isaac and Rebekah that their children be selective in who they chose to marry. Part of that selection was to be sure to “*fish in the right pond*”

- It would be incorrect to say that Jacob was sent away from the Canaanite women because of Idolatry (Those in Haran were also Idol worshippers, we will read of Rachel stealing household idols)
- But there is something to be learned from the fact that they wanted their children to seek at women who would be willing to leave the religion and culture of their families and devote themselves to following God and furthering His kingdom
- It is as important today that we choose wisely when it comes to whom we marry and even who we date.
  - Many Christians have been sidetracked by getting involved with someone who is not walking with the Lord
  - This can also be true of those who are called to ministry. If we begin a relationship with someone else who is not called to ministry we will find that we are hindered in our attempts to serve the Lord

### **Jacob sets out from Beersheba en route to Haran.**

**Beersheba** is located in the far south of Israel parallel with the Dead Sea.

**Haran** is located in the North of Syria

This journey of over 500 miles would have taken weeks to complete.

The average walking speed for humans is about 3MPH. Walking 10 hours a day, Jacob could travel

30 miles per day. At this speed it would take 16 days to go 500 miles.

That would mean 16 nights of camping out along the way. The narrative only draws attention to one of those nights, because of the importance of the event that transpires.

The first stop is at a place called **Luz**, which will be renamed **Bethel** because of the events that transpire here.

## Four things are worth considering

### o First the condition Jacob is in when he arrives in Luz

**Physically** Jacob has lost everything. The birthright and the blessing he worked so hard to attain will do him little good as he ventures out into an unknown land.

It seems that the haste in which he was forced to leave required that he take almost nothing with him on his journey. We find him with a rock for a pillow and sleeping under the stars.

**Emotionally** Jacob would no doubt be in turmoil. The description we have of him is that he was not a rugged outdoorsman like his brother. The comforts of home seem to be very important to Jacob, yet his circumstances put him in very difficult surroundings

**Spiritually** Jacob has yet to truly encounter the Lord. He has the religion of his parents but has yet to really take hold of trusting the Lord for himself

It is important to keep in mind that it is in this condition that The Lord appears to Jacob.

We see that throughout the Bible God makes it his business to interrupt the life of people in order to draw them to Himself. Some of the notable characters that find God without seeming to be seeking Him include:

**Moses** at the Bush

**Saul** looking for a donkey

**Matthew** collecting taxes  
**Saul of Tarsus** persecuting Christians

We should anticipate, even expect God to interrupt us tonight as we spend time in His word. It was in a difficult place that a backslidden man and an encounter with God

o **Second his encounter with God**

As Jacob slept he dreamt of a ladder whose top reached heaven. He saw on this ladder angels ascending and descending as they traveled from earth to heaven and back again.

As Jacob watched the Lord began to speak to him

**Genesis 28:13-15**

And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: “I *am* the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

**The message is in two parts:**

- **First, God passes the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob**

The promise includes; Land, descendants and the Gospel

“...In you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed”

Jacob had received this promise from his mother, and finally from his father, but now he will hear it directly from the Lord.

This is the first encounter that Jacob had with God.

Others include:

**Gen 31:11** – Where he is visited once again in a dream and told to choose the speckled and spotted lambs as payment from Laban

**Gen 32:24** – When he spent the night wrestling with God and has his name changed

**Gen 35:9** – Once again at Bethel Jacob meets with God who reminds him of his name change and of the covenant

- The second part of the message is personal

“Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

I will be with you  
I will keep you  
I will bring you back to Canaan  
I will not leave you  
I will accomplish what I promised

While this was a personal promise to Jacob, these promises are for the believer of every age and in every circumstance of life

I will be with you  
**Matthew 28:20**  
... *lo*, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.”

I will keep you  
**Jude 1:24**  
Now to Him who is able to keep you[a] from stumbling,  
And to present you faultless  
Before the presence of His glory with  
exceeding joy

I will not leave you  
**Hebrews 13:5**  
*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He*

Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

I will accomplish what I promised

**Philippians 1:6**

being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

### o Third Jacob's response to the encounter with God

Jacob renames Luz as Bethel

**Genesis 28:16-17**

Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

**Bethel** means "House of God" but Jacob also refers to the site as "The gate of heaven"

**House of God** seems to refer to the encounter he had with God. In a very dark time in his life God appeared and promised to be with him and bless him

It is important to realize that it is not the location that matters. This place was named because he met with God not because this is the dwelling place of God and if we want to meet with him we have to travel to the West Bank and visit Bethel

Whatever desperate state you might be in God wants to meet with you and fulfill His promises in your life

**Gate of heaven** seems to refer to his understanding of the dream itself

Jesus references this dream in the New Testament

**John 1:51**

And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter[a] you shall see heaven open, and the



angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.”

**Essentially the dream is a picture of how we access heaven.** It is not a matter of the work of men but that of God.

This imagine is contrasted with the events that transpired at Babel where men attempted to build with their own hands a “*gateway to God*”

Heaven will be accessed not by a tower man makes but by a stairway God supplies

**John 10:9**

I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

**John 14:6**

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Jacob makes a promise:

**Genesis 28:20-21**

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, **21** so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God.

Jacob has made a mess of things. His own ambitions had driven a wedge between himself and his family, he has been forced to flee for his life and is now just about homeless. With his head resting on a rock he develops his own covenant with God. "If you will do these things for me then you will be my God."

I find it fascinating how often people will debate with themselves whether or not they will choose God. It is almost as though they make a mental pro verses con list to weigh out whether He is worth it or not. While the debate rages within I think it is worth noting that God is not on His throne in heaven questioning

whether or not He wants you. That question was answered long ago when He sent His only Son to make a way for us to be forgiven and go to heaven.

Instead of putting ridiculous requirements upon God why not look at all He has done to show His unfailing love and amazing grace. Stop debating and start following, abundant life awaits.

### III. Genesis 29

**Genesis 29:1**

So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East.

Without giving any further detail of the journey, we are told that Jacob arrives outside of the town of Haran at a well where shepherds watered their flocks.

It is here where the first of the promises of God will begin to find their fulfillment. It is nothing short of divine intervention, Jacob happens upon the well at the very time that Rachel approached to water her flocks. It is here where he first lays eyes upon the woman he will come to love.

**Genesis 29:10-11**

And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. Then **Jacob kissed Rachel**, and lifted up his voice and wept.

Moses seems to develop a contrast between the actions of Jacob and those of Abraham's servant back in chapter 24. With no mention of prayer Jacob moves forward in search of his spouse

It is here in Haran that Jacob will meet his match. He will begin dealings with his **uncle Laban** who will prove to be as much a **supplanter** as Jacob ever was.

After serving for 1 month, Jacob and Laban strike a deal where Jacob will work for 7 years after which time he will have earned the

right to marry Rachel. The only commentary we read on these 7 years is:

**Genesis 29:20**

Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

**By way of application** we might simply note that true love is always willing to wait. This is particularly true of intimacy in relationship. True love will always wait for marriage before becoming intimate.

As soon as a couple begins to cross the line physically it becomes very difficult for them to gage their relationship in a healthy way. Emotions become attached and they are unable to see when they are in fact going in different directions.

I met a young couple that dated for a while but when they were approaching the point of considering marriage they decided to separate for a time. He moved to a different city and they went without contact for a period of time. After that time had passed if they both still felt as though they wanted to spend the rest of their lives together they would marry. It was a blessing to do their wedding with such confidence that they had truly sought the Lord

**The narrative fast-forwards 7 years to the day of Jacob and Rachel's wedding**

After what would no doubt have been a time of celebration, Jacob entered the Honeymoon tent and spent the night with his new bride. The next morning to his horror he had actually been with her older sister Leah.

It is worth noting that the deceiver had been deceived.

He who once dressed up and pretended to be another had the same thing happen to him

When Jacob questions Laban his response seems to be an attack on Jacob himself

**Genesis 29:26**

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

Jacob will now work another 7 years to earn the hand of Rachel as his wife.

All in all, Jacob will live 20 years in Haran. During that time he will marry Leah and Rachel and will father 11 sons and at least one daughter.

**Genesis 31:38**

**These twenty years** I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock.

The rest of chapter 29 and the beginning of chapter 30 focus on the children born to Jacob

Since Jacob’s name will be changed to Israel, it is from his descendants that the 12 tribes or sons of Israel will develop

Leah will bear 6 sons

- Rueben – A son
- Simeon – Been heard
- Levi - Attached
- Judah - Praise

Leah’s maid, Zilpah will bear 2 sons

- Gad – A troop
- Asher – Happy

Rachel’s maid, Bilhah bears 2 sons

- Dan – Judge
- Naphtali – Wrestle

Finally Rachel herself bears a son

- Joseph – He will add

The names of each of the children are symbolic of the struggle the women are facing as they each vie for the attention of their husband

## IV. Genesis 30:25 -

At this point the narrative returns to pick up the relationship between Jacob and Laban. Keep in mind that the events of chapter 29 leap ahead to cover the birth of the children, the text now picks up to speak of other things that are happening in addition to sons being born

The first event recorded is the desire that Jacob has to return back to Canaan.

### Genesis 30:25

Jacob said to Laban, “**Send me away**, that I may go to my own place and to my country.

Remember, 20 years earlier God promised to bring Jacob back to Canaan.

“Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and **will bring you back to this land**; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

I will be with you  
I will keep you  
I will bring you back to Canaan  
I will not leave you  
I will accomplish what I promised

Jacob had seen most of these promises fulfilled, now he longed to return to Canaan and was willing to trust God regarding the danger he would face when he encountered Esau

Laban did not want Jacob to leave, partly because the family ties and partly because of the obvious blessing that was on Laban’s house as a result of Jacob being there.

**It is at this point that they establish a new deal.** Jacob would agree to work for another season in exchange for being paid with all the lambs that were speckled and spotted.

### Genesis 30:32

**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 speckled among the goats**; and *these* shall be my wages.

It seems from the text that Laban's sheep were predominantly white, his cattle brown and his goats black.

Jacob asked to be paid with what would have been a small minority of animals

**The story then follows the antics of Jacob** as he attempts to **manipulate** the circumstances in order to increase the number of sheep that are born with spots

Genesis 30:37-

- Poplar, almond and chestnut tree branches and peeled off the bark
- Placed them in the watering troughs of the sheep
- Placed the rods before the animals as they conceived to ensure the strong ones would bear spots and speckles

This passage has received much undo ridicule because of the actions of Jacob. Allow me to point out three things:

- First, it is humorous to me that the same person who will suggest that animals adapt to their surrounding by changing color would have a problem with surroundings impacting the birth patterns of sheep.
- Secondly, A person who had spent a lifetime around sheep would be familiar with the fact that while a sheep might be white it is possible for it to give birth to a spotted lamb. We understand this today to be as a result of dominant and recessive genes. That is why two parents with dark hair can have a child with red hair. These animals had recessive genes that Jacob banked on. Remember the idea for his wages did not come from his own ingenuity
- Thirdly, and more to the text, if we follow the events of the chapter we will see that the attempt to alter the number of spotted offspring was entirely Jacob's idea and I believe completely unnecessary

When explaining himself and his actions to Rachel and Leah declares that he received the idea for his wages from the Lord in a dream

**Genesis 31:11-12**

Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.' **12** And He said, 'Lift 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.

It seems that God promised to provide for Jacob and his family but Jacob once again had a hard time trusting the Lord and instead came up with a far-fetched method to get the will of God accomplished

That is not uncommon today. We have an idea of what God wants to do, but we lose sight of how He wants to do it.

Remember the trouble Sarah got in when she tried to assist God in providing a son

Sometimes it is because we do not trust God that we think we need to help Him accomplish what He promises to do in our lives.