

Building Jacob's Family & Fortune

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. Thanksgiving Eve - 6:30! in 2 weeks.

II. Slide2 Intro: Building Jacob's Family & Fortune

A. Slide3 God vs. Nebuchadnezzar, king/Bab Dan.4:34,35 *After this time had passed (7 yrs), I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshiped the Most High and honored the one who lives forever. His rule is everlasting, and his kingdom is eternal. 35 All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He does as he pleases among the angels of heaven and among the people of the earth. No one can stop him or say to him, What do you mean by doing these things?*

III. Slide4 BUILDING JACOB'S FAMILY (1-24)

- A. What does this teach us about polygamy? trusting in herbs? trusting in divination?
- B. (1) Give me children, or I shall die - Barrenness was viewed as a divine judgment, so life without children was *unbearable*.
1. What is *unbearable* to you at this stage of life? not having a **child**? not having a **spouse**? a **close friend**? a **job**?
- C. (2) Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb? - Jacob considers Rachel's plea *irrational* since he views conception as *the province of God*.
1. His response to Rachel's barrenness *differs sharply* from his father's response to Rebekah's barrenness.
 2. Both men consider their wives' ability to conceive to be *within God's purview*, *but Isaac petitions God for help*, *whereas Jacob deflects blame away from himself*.
- D. Slide5a (14) Mandrakes - mandrake ['man, drāk] NOUN a Mediterranean plant of the nightshade family, with white or purple flowers and large yellow berries. It has a forked fleshy root that supposedly resembles the **human form** and was formerly widely used in medicine and magic, allegedly shrieking when pulled from the ground.
- E. Mandrakes (*duda'im* in Hebrew) were believed in the ancient Near East to have *magical fertility powers*.

1. **The root** resembles a human figure, which led to its association with fertility rites. *[It also has **hallucinogenic alkaloids** in it]*
2. The plant has **no stalk**, but it has **large leaves** with **violet flowers** and **yellow fruit** similar in size and shape to a tomato, **yet** related to the potato. **It ripens in March or April.**
3. The Greek goddess of sex and love, **Aphrodite**, was called the **“Lady of the Mandrakes.”**
 - a) **Slide5b** In SoS 7:12b,13, the word is used in wordplay: ***I will give you my love*** (*doda*); ***the mandrakes*** (*duda'im*) ***give forth fragrance...O my beloved*** (*dodi*)
 - b) **It is unclear whether the mandrakes played a part.**

- F. **Slide6 Names:** all word plays. Each name **sounds like** the word associated with it.
- G. **Dan** (דָּן/dan) & **judged** (דָּנָן/danan) - to judge, vindicate, contend.
- H. **Naphtali** (נַפְתָּלִי/naftali) & **wrestled** (נִפְתָּלוּ/naptuli) -
- I. **Gad** (גָּד/gad) & **good fortune** (גָּד/gad) - can mean troop, but also good fortune. Leah refers to her good fortune.
- J. **Asher** (אֲשֵׁר/asher) & **happy** (אֲשֵׁר/osher) -
- K. **Issachar** (יִשָּׂשכָר/Yis-saskar) & **wages** (שָׂכָר/sakar) -
- L. **Zebulun** (זְבֻלֹן/zevulun) & **honor** (זָבַל/zaval) -
- M. **Dinah** - no announcement or meaning...but sets up ch.34 (defiled by *Shechem* the Hivite).
- N. **Joseph** (יְהוֹסֵף/Yowseph) **2 meanings:** **taken away** (אָסַף/asaf) & **may the Lord add** (יָסַף/yasaf) [Rachel says it's this 2nd one].
1. **However, both Her words are are pertinent to Joseph's story** (in chs.37-50).
 2. **If Joseph's name** comes from the Hebrew word **asaf**, it alludes to **the loss of Joseph via** the treachery of his brothers.
 3. **If Joseph's name** derives from **yasaf**, it is a reference to his being **added** to the family through the formerly barren Rachel.

- O. Slide7 What I see in this first half of the chapter is these women being *demanding, manipulating, & controlling*. *Issues we all deal with*. Yet God still gives them their children.
1. Our confidence in God is blown. So we seek anything & everything the world throws at us to try. Maybe it's to *cover all bases philosophy*?
 2. *If, like these ladies, we don't trust God with our children, then* WE will do whatever it takes, to make it go our way. *And if we are wealthy enough, we'd even pay bribes to get our kids into elite colleges...like actresses Lori Loughlin and Felicity Huffman & the rest. We are no different, when we want our way, & don't trust God...enough.*
 3. Without *honesty*, we can't give God **the space** to work in our lives.
 - a) When we are *weakest*, God is **closest** to us. When we feel *strongest*, God is **farthest** from us.
- P. Slide8a Paul writing from prison wrote the famous Phil.4:13 *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*
- Q. Slide8b (12,13) Verse 13 is connected to vs.12 *I know how to be brought low, and I know how to **abound**. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing **plenty and hunger, abundance and need**.* [Paul's not at a gym ready to bench press 300lbs.]
1. It isn't having any, **wild-eyed pipe dream** you can concoct.
 2. Paul is saying then...*I've been in need. I've been flat level. I've been abandoned. I've been betrayed. I've been forgotten about. I've been depressed. I've been accused. I've been broke. I've been sick. But my God is still Jehovah-Jira.*
- R. Be Content to live in Plenty or Poverty.
1. We must be able to **mount up** w/wings like eagles, *but* we must also know how to **come down**. [eagles don't *only* ride the high winds...But in Alaska they sit on the beaches]
 2. *Are we able to live in life's Valley's?* Being able to *do all things* was referring to **mostly things of abasement, hunger, & when we suffer needs**.
- S. Slide8c Where do you put the emphasis on vs.13? On, *I can* or on *through Christ*?

1. The secret of the **I can** life lies in those 2 words... **through Christ**. [the secret of spiritual victory]
- T. I can do all things through Christ, when I allow Him to **do all things through me**.
1. I can heal this **marriage** through Christ, when I allow Him to do all things through me.
 2. I can battle this **addiction** through Christ, when I allow Him to do all things through me.
 3. I can say no to _____ through Christ, when I allow Him to do all things through me.
 4. I can find my **career** through Christ, when I allow Him to do all things through me.
- U. In what areas have I been *demanding, manipulating, & controlling?* (in my work, in my school, in my friendships, w/my marriage, with my kids, in my ministry?)
1. What have you said, "**I can do all things**"? confess it.
 2. Can you now add, "**through Christ who strengthens me**"? add it.

IV. Slide9a **BUILDING JACOB'S FORTUNE (25-43)**

- A. (26) **my wives and my children** - Jacob now has 11 sons and 1 daughter.
1. A 12th son, **Benjamin**, will eventually be born to him (35:18). [thus the 12 tribes]
- B. (27) Most translations understand the Hebrew verb used here as a reference to **divination**
1. **Slide9b Divination** - discerning the will of a deity based on using an **object, omen, or method**. *However in other occurrences in the ot, there is often an explanation of the divination procedure used, but one is not offered here.*¹
- C. **God** blessed **Laban** because of **Jacob**, & the old trickster admitted it.
1. It was **God's blessing and** not **Jacobs schemes** that increase the flocks.
 2. **God** was keeping the promises He made to Jacob at Bethel ch.28.
 3. When we are in difficult situations, we can **trust God** to care for us. *Wiersbe*
- D. **Name your wage** - Laban **does not** want Jacob to leave because Jacob has made him wealthy.
- E. (32-36) In this part of the world, **sheep** are typically white **and goats** are dark brown or black.

¹ Faithlife Study Bible

1. Consequently, the markings **Jacob** describes on the animals he demands for his wages would lead **Laban** to presume he was getting *the better side of the agreement* (v. 34).
2. **Jacob is confident he will do well and ultimately becomes successful.** Jacob attributes this turn of events not to his own actions, but to **God** (31:8,9).
 - a) **The agreement plays out over the course of 6 years** (31:41).
 - b) **Laban** moves through the herd, separating all the livestock that already have the markings **Jacob** has described. **He places them far enough away to prevent interbreeding.**

F. **Honesty** - Ironically, Jacob, who is not known for honesty, appeals to his *honesty* here.

G. (37-43) For Jacob to succeed in increasing his flock, *monochrome sheep and goats* must produce offspring with the **specified markings**.

1. **In order to increase his herd, Jacob employs sympathetic magical practices.**
2. **Slide9c Sympathetic magic** was based on the belief that the user could influence something based on its relationship or resemblance to another thing.
 - a) **e.g. Pastor Jude in Haiti, years ago, 3 corncobs around dogs neck was how many pups it would have. It had 3. Voodoo/superstition/semi-faith?**
3. **Jacob's actions also reflect the ancient Near Eastern belief that the offspring of an animal was affected by what it saw during the procreation process.**
4. Since Jacob attributes his success to **God** (31:9-11), **he believed he was acting in faith that God would supernaturally increase his flocks.**
 - a) While there is no natural explanation for Jacob's success and God does take credit for Jacob's achievement (31:12), **this does not mean that God responded directly to Jacob's techniques - instead, God is simply choosing to look out for Jacob as He promised.**²
 - b) **Maybe God just overrules our demanding, manipulating, & controlling, our mandrakes & magic, potions & concoctions...and just reigns sovereignly & providentially over our lives, showing grace & blessings...despite us :)**

H. **Who was in charge of both Jacob's Family & Fortune?** God.

² Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Ge 30:37-43). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

- I. Who was in charge over yours? God. I think God just wants to walk with us through each of these things. And wants us to look to Him!

- J. Have you tried to reduce God to a *Vending Machine* God? Put in a token of obedience for a blessing, or acceptance, or to get your way.
 - 1. Do you want to be in charge or allow God to be?