

The Prospering of Jacob

- * This final part of chapter 30 proceeds in 2-stages
 - ◆ Stage 1 is the **prelude to parting** in vv. 25-36, which we just read
 - ▶ Jacob recognizes its time to return to Canaan ...
 - ▶ Which Laban, quite expectedly resists
 - ▶ To which Jacob cites the need to provide for his family ...
 - ▶ Leading to the terms of a “serve & release” agreement
 - ◆ Stage 2, in vv. 37-43, records how **God prospers Jacob**
 - ▶ Which leads to jealousy and evil intentions from the Laban clan

Prelude to Parting

- * After the birth of Rachel's first child ... and his 11th son ... Jacob realizes it is time to return home
- * This would likely have been somewhere near the end of the 14th year of Jacob's service — **How do we know this?**
 - ◆ Because Jacob had pledged 14 years of service and would not have asked for and early release from his commitment
- * **What does Jacob ask Laban for?**
 - ◆ His wives and his children

Prelude to Parting

* What is notably absent from Jacob's request?

- ◆ Any of the "profit" from his service ... which vv. 27-30 spell out was substantial

* What do we learn about Laban in v. 27?

- ◆ He is a pagan ... he has "divined" that Yahweh is the source of blessing
 - ◆ At least he gets the source right ... if not by the wrong means — divination
- * As such, Laban has no desire to release his "meal ticket"

Prelude to Parting

* So he proposes yet another business deal — figuring Jacob's loyalty is merely a matter of price

- ◆ How magnanimous he is — Name your price and I will give it!

* What is interesting about Jacob's reply in vv. 29-30?

- ◆ He doesn't bite on the "pay for hire deal" ... just as back in 29:16ff
- ◆ Rather he affirms what Laban has divined — that ...
 - Yahweh is the source of the blessing, and
 - The blessing has been ABUNDANT
- ◆ And, he articulates the motive behind his request — to provide for his family

Prelude to Parting

- * Laban then switches gears in the first part of v. 31 ... **Is he granting Jacob his release?**
 - ◆ It's hard to be dogmatic ... but I think the inference is "what shall I give you — to stay"
- * Ever the wise one, Jacob will not accept any gifts — **What does he do instead?**
 - ◆ Jacob proposes a work release deal ...
 - ◆ He will continue to "pasture and keep" Laban's flock in return for building his own family's nest egg from that point forward

Prelude to Parting

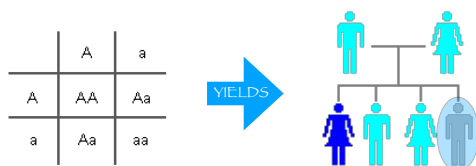
- * **Now — what is intriguing about Jacob's proposal?**
 - ◆ It is a demonstrable act of faith on his part
- * **Why?**
 - ◆ The probability of acquiring any significant wealth will rely on God "beating the **genetical odds**"
- * To understand we need to understand the normal make-up of Bedouin flocks and do some genetics ...
- * First the animal types
 - ◆ A sheep in its first year is called a lamb, thereafter a sheep

Prelude to Parting

- ◆ Goats belong to an entirely different genus
- * Genetically, we need to know that ...
 - ◆ Bedouin goats are predominantly dark brown or black
 - ◆ Bedouin sheep are predominantly all white
 - ◆ Therefore, speckled, spotted, striped, and black offspring arise from the pairing of two recessive genes
- * So Jacob is effectively asking for the genetic “minority” as his compensation ... the short end of the straw despite his past efforts on Laban’s behalf

Recessive Gene Reproduction

Punnett square — Reginald Punnett, British Geneticist



25% Chance of a Striped, Speckled, Spotted, or Black Offspring

Prelude to Parting

- * Now obviously, Jacob knew that we would not come up empty ...
- * But he was relying on God's providence to tip the scales in his favor
- * What is absent from the terms of the agreement?
 - ◆ A term of service ... Hmm!
- * What does that seem to imply?
 - ◆ Jacob was NOT planning to leave Haran ...
 - ◆ Which I think will be confirmed when we get to chapter 31

Prelude to Parting

- * Let's make sure we understand the specifics of the deal in vv. 32-33
 - ◆ Jacob proposes to separate out all of the "non-standard" colored sheep and goats ...
 - Which are to be his wages
 - ◆ So it would seem that the non-standard sheep and goats are to be Jacob's "grub-stake" ... from which more shall proceed
 - ◆ This approach is intended to provide a clear demarcation between what belongs to Laban and what belongs to Jacob

Prelude to Parting

- * Well that's all pretty straight forward, but then it gets confusing ... to me anyway
- * How does Laban respond to the deal?
 - ◆ With **greedy delight** and **distrust**
- * Laban readily accepts the proposal in v. 34
 - ◆ "Behold, let it be as you say!"
- * And then starts altering the deal right out of the gate
- * What are the changes?

Prelude to Parting

- ◆ Laban does the separating vs. Jacob - v. 35a
- ◆ Laban assigns the shepherding of the "off-color" flock to his sons vs. in Jacob's care - v. 35b
- ◆ And, he moves the herd "a distance" of 3-days journey away - v. 36
- * How would you like Laban as your father-in-law?
 - ◆ NOOOOT!
- * So — what is confusing about the intent of the deal?

Prelude to Parting

- ◆ Did Jacob intend for the initially separated group to be his grub-stake ...
- ◆ Or did Laban understand the offer to mean that his “wage” was to come only from the offspring of the normally colored herd ... and was removing any temptation to “cheat” from Jacob?
- * I honestly don’t know — but I lean towards the latter, and it does shed some light on the future statement ...
 - ◆ “Yet your father cheated me and changed by wages 10-times” ... cf. 31:7, 41

Prelude to Parting

- * Whatever the truth is, Jacob sets to work with what he has ...
- * Which will also make God’s providential hand in Jacob’s prosperity all the more clear!!
- * And ... Though Jacob “starts” in faith, he tries to provide God with a helping hand

God Prospers Jacob

- * Despite his initial faith — Jacob resorts to “assisted faith” in vv. 37-42
 - ◆ Seems that Laban’s actions have shaken his initial faith
- * What is his plan?
 - ◆ Voo-Doo! ... with a mixture of truth thrown in
- * Let me ask our resident biologist whether there is any know science behind Jacob’s plan ... Roger?
- * Some reliable commentators suggest that Jacob had a special knowledge of genetics yet undiscovered ... I think not!

God Prospers Jacob

- * Rather, the text is preparing the way for God to display his providence ...
- * What implication is there for us?
 - ☞ Faith required trust and endurance ... we should not be shaken by every “twist and turn”
- * What are the two aspects of Jacob’s helping plan?
 - ◆ “Conception influence” ... the white in the tree branches
 - ◆ “Selective breeding” ... Jacob employed the conceptual influence when the stronger animals were breeding — gets that part right!

God Prospers Jacob

- * Verse 39 suggests that Jacob's plan worked ... which chapter 31 will debunk
- * Rather, we learn that there was a genetically disproportionate yield of "striped, speckled, and spotted" offspring
- * Which Jacob faithfully separated per the terms of the agreement - v. 40
 - ◆ Though not without some further "voo-doo" to aid in future outcomes

God Prospers Jacob

- * The section closes in v. 43 with a statement of the extent of Jacob's prosperity
- * The literal text is graphic ...
 - ◆ "And the man increased exceedingly exceedingly"
- * Not only was he successful in breeding, he also acquired servants, camels and donkeys ... all paving the way for the events of the exodus

God Prospers Jacob

* Before we leave ... What is notably missing in the account of vv. 37-43?

◆ Any thanksgiving or recognition of God's hand in his prosperity!!

* Reminding us that ...

👉 We need to be conscious of God's grace in our lives and praise him in thanksgiving, and ...

👉 We need to have a high-view of God and a low-view of man

Closing Thoughts

* God uses people "as they are" to achieve his purposes — because that's all He has to work with!

* Just because God uses someone does not mean they are eternally saved — surely Laban was not a true follower of Yahweh

* What other book than the Bible records with such candor the weaknesses of its heroes and events so contrary to the ideals it proclaims!!

* Well ... having completed the sojourn to Haran, we now move to the Journey home in Gen 31-33.
