

Introduction

After the debacle over the birthright and blessing, Esau wants to kill Jacob but Rebekah and Isaac send Jacob away to Padan Aram and the city of Haran to get away from Esau. This begins a 20 year portion of the history of Jacob (31:41).

Jacob's Journey to Haran – Genesis 28

In verses 1-2, Jacob is entreated to not take a pagan wife, but to go instead to Padan Aram to find a wife. So, he has two purposes in leaving home: getting away from his brother, and getting married.

The Abrahamic promises are then confirmed through Isaac to Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. The promises include:

1. The blessing of God.
2. Many descendants.
3. The blessing that God promised Abraham would become his.
4. The land would be inherited by Jacob.

Esau observed Isaac's blessing of Jacob, that he sent him away, and gave him specific instructions regarding finding a wife. It was in this way that Esau knew for sure that his parents were not pleased with his own choice of two Canaanite wives. Thus he decided to marry a daughter of Ishmael. This would seem to qualify her as a non-Canaanite wife. Perhaps Esau is emulating his brother, and trying to win some favor again with his parents. Or, if his parents would not have been too keen on an Ishmaelite wife, he might have been trying to really irritate them.

Back to Jacob...his journey brought him to a spot where he had to rest. A dream was supernaturally given to him in which God again confirmed the Abrahamic covenant to him. Specifically, the land was promised to him again, his descendants would be large, and all the families of the earth would be blessed in him and in his seed. God also said that he would protect and watch over Jacob on his travels and bring him back to the land from which he was departing. This is an easy dream to remember, for it contains a ladder on which angels were "ascending and descending." This phrase also occurs in John 1:51.

At this point, Jacob woke up and became fearful because God was there in that place, and it was somehow a portal to heaven. After sleeping on, he got up in the morning and renamed the place Bethel, "the house of God." It had been called Luz before. Jacob then promised that he would take the LORD as his God if what God promised indeed happened, and that he would give God a tithe of all he owned. It seems that he already honored God in that capacity. Perhaps the "he will be my God" idea is that he will continue to follow God, or that he would personally take up where his father Isaac had left off in his faith of God. Consider 31:42 and 31:53, where Abraham refers to the God of his father, the Fear of Isaac.

Jacob Serves Laban 14 Years for Two Wives – Genesis 29:1-30

Jacob found Laban quite easily—again, by meeting some folks at a well and talking with them. Apparently Jacob knew that Rachel, who came on the scene, was the one for him—maybe love at first sight or something? The narrative is very short, but it does seem strange that he would kiss her so soon. Wow! I guess she didn't mind because she ran to tell her dad.

Jacob agreed with Laban to serve seven years in return for his younger daughter Rachel, because he was in love with her. Now, if you want to see the sin of mankind, just look in Genesis—starting in chapter 3 and thereafter in many chapters. In this chapter, Laban cheats Jacob by giving him his older daughter Leah, who was not attractive to Jacob. He must have been drunk or something on the night of the wedding, for he did not notice it was the wrong girl. Anyway, he finds out and then complained to Laban, who explained the older daughter had to be married first. So, the next week, Jacob was allowed to marry Rachel also, and so he had two wives. He had to serve another seven years for her.

What a bait and switch operation! Actually, Jacob was very gracious to take all this guff, because he said in 31:7 and 31:41 that Laban had changed his wages ten times. It may have been ten times, or that may be hyperbole (you've said that type of thing before, haven't you?). Anyway, Laban was not a very honest man.

Jacob's Children – Genesis 29:31-30:24

An interesting study is to compare the list of the 12 tribes as they appear throughout Scripture. Here is the first list in order of their birth, with the mothers of each indicated:

Leah		Zilpah
1. Reuben (29:32)		7. Gad (30:11)
2. Simeon (29:33)		8. Asher (30:13)
3. Levi (29:34)		Leah
4. Judah (29:35)		9. Issachar (30:18)
Bilhah		10. Zebulun (30:20)
5. Dan (30:6)		Rachel
6. Naphtali (30:8)		11. Joseph (30:24)
		12. Benjamin (35:18)

Leah also had Dinah after Zebulun. Dinah comes up again in Genesis 34.

Jacob Increases in Wealth – Genesis 30:25-43

Jacob tells Laban it is time for him to leave and go to his own country, but Laban has been prospered by Jacob's presence, and does not want him to leave (not that he likes Jacob personally or anything—he just likes the benefits!). So Jacob agrees to stay on for a while longer.

They agree that Jacob's wages would be all the speckled and spotted of the flocks. This would serve as identification so that they could tell whose animals were whose. Apparently the speckled, when bred together, would produce speckled offspring.

Jacob tried to help the breeding process along with some special tree branches that supposedly would help his flocks to have more offspring. What happens then is that if one of Jacob's flock mated with one of Laban's flock, then the offspring could be speckled and it would go into Jacob's column in the account books. God said in 31:11-12 that it was His control over the breeding process that caused the increase to Jacob. He did this because he had seen the unfair way that Laban was treating Jacob—and remember, God said that he would watch out for Jacob. It was not promised to be necessary immediate help, but it did come.

Jacob Leaves Laban, Genesis 31

God told Jacob to leave now that he had fallen out of favor with Laban and his sons. Part of what was at issue was the vow that Jacob made to God—God did not forget that, and He certainly kept His promise to Jacob. So, Jacob fled. But God told Laban not to harm Jacob, even though he left without letting him know.

On the way out, Rachel stole the household idols of Laban. She could not quite totally cut the attachment to the pagan gods, it seems. Jacob did not know that she had done this, and she hid it from Laban and from Jacob.

Laban said his goodbyes, and Jacob parted from him on his way back to his home country.