

GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Lesson 23. (Gen chapters 29:1 – 30:24). For lesson copies, go to <http://www.montgomerychurch.org/resources8.html>

Overview: Chapter 28 was a pivotal crossroad in Jacob’s conversion/sanctification process. Jacob met God as he exited the “*promised land*” and “converted,” i.e., he accepted God, not just as his father’s God (27:20), but as his own personal Presence and Protector, albeit conditionally with 5 “ifs” thrown in (28:20-21). Chapters 29-31 find Jacob encountering and interacting with his mother’s brother, Laban, outside the “*land of promise.*” Again, a literary ring composition provides structure. Relational confrontation & intrigue mark these chapters. Despite this, Jacob’s character will begin to undergo a slow transformation. The ultimate conniver/taker grudgingly is learning to credit God for prosperity! In fact, God, who promised to be with him and protect him on this life journey (28:15) is transforming him to learn to give freely, not just grasp. Note:

- (A) Jacob arrives in Haran (meets Laban) (29:1-14)
- (B) Jacob and Laban make a contract (29:15-20)
- (C) Laban deceives Jacob (29:21-30)
- (D) The birth of Jacob’s 12 children (29:31-30:24) [God does prosper, per the blessing: a *multitude*]
- (C) Jacob tricks Laban (30:25-43) [flocks increase]
- (B) Jacob and Laban dispute (31:17-24) [God promises presence & orders Jacob to return, vv. 3,13]
- (A) Jacob departs from Laban (Haran) (31:43-54) [Jacob credits God, v.42; Laban concurs/covenants, v 44]

Read 29:1-12. In 29:1, some versions read: “*Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.*” In light of past lessons where traveling “*east*” seemed to denote movement away from God, what can you infer might be in store for Jacob as he prepares to meet his relatives?

Read 29:13-30. Note the initial relationship. How is Jacob greeted and treated? What does Laban offer? What does Jacob request? Now note 29:18, 26 and compare reality in Haran with Jacob’s understanding of God’s dictates in the “*promised land*” in 25:23. Discuss what you think Jacob is thinking at this moment.

Read 29:31-35. Seven years after departing the “*promised land*” and in a period of one week (29:27-28), Jacob now has two wives and two handmaids. He still owes 7 more years service to Laban.

- In 29:31, how are the two wives described? What do you think about who and how God blesses according to this account? Discuss
- Compare the description of Rachel’s barrenness against 11:30; 16:1-2; 17:19-21; 21:1-2; 25:21. What do you think this theme signifies? Discuss.
- Note the names attached to Leah’s first round of children. In what way do these people link their life circumstances to their understanding of God’s sovereign will? Have we lost that? Discuss.

• <u>Name of Child</u>	• <u>Circumstances of birth</u>
Leah’s first Round of Children	
Reuben – “See a son” (re’uben)	“Because the Lord has looked on my affliction [<i>ra’ah YHWH be’onyi</i>]
Simeon (Shim’on)	“Because the Lord has heard [<i>shama</i>] that I am hated”
Levi (levi)	“Now this time my husband will be joined [<i>yillaveh</i>] to me”
Judah (Yehudah)	“This time I will praise [<i>’odeh</i>] the Lord”

Read 30:1-24. Conflict continues to plague Jacob. His wives compete & manipulate; but God blesses! Note particularly Rachel bargaining for mandrakes in hopes of getting pregnant (30:14-17) but God then favoring or blessing Leah with another child. What do you learn from these birth stories? Discuss.

Dan (<i>dan</i>) birthed from Bilhah (Rachel’s maid)	“God has judged me” [<i>dananni</i>]
Naphtali (<i>naphthali</i>) (birthed from Bilhah)	“with mighty wrestlings [<i>naphthule ‘elohim niphtalti</i>] I have wrestled with my sister”
Gad (<i>gad</i>) --birthed from Zilpah (Leah’s maid)	“Good fortune” [<i>bagad</i>]
Asher (‘asher) -- birthed from Zilpah (Leah’s maid)	“Happy am I” [<i>be’ashri</i>]
Issachar (yissaschar) – Leah’s second round	“God has given me my hire” [<i>sakar</i>]
Zebulon (<i>Zebulon</i>)	“God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor me” [<i>yizbeleni</i>]
Dinah (only daughter)	(no wordplay)
Joseph (<i>yoseph</i>) – Rachel’s child	“God has taken away [<i>asaph</i>] my reproach... may the Lord add to me [<i>yoseph</i>] another son!”