

## Genesis 28:10-32:3 “And Jacob Went Out”

### Introduction

In the previous study we considered an assessment of the timeline that revealed that Esau and Jacob may have been as young as 15 years old at the selling of the Birthright, associated with the death of Abraham. It is possible that Esau and Jacob were as much as 63 years old when Jacob tricked his father Isaac in order to receive the Blessing as well. This is tied to the possibility that 28:8-9 may indicate Ishmael died about the time that Esau was arranging to marry his daughter, Mahalath. Ishmael died at age 137 (25:17) at which time Isaac was 123 years of age. Esau and Jacob were born when Isaac was 60 years of age (25:26), therefore when Ishmael died, Esau and Jacob were age 63.

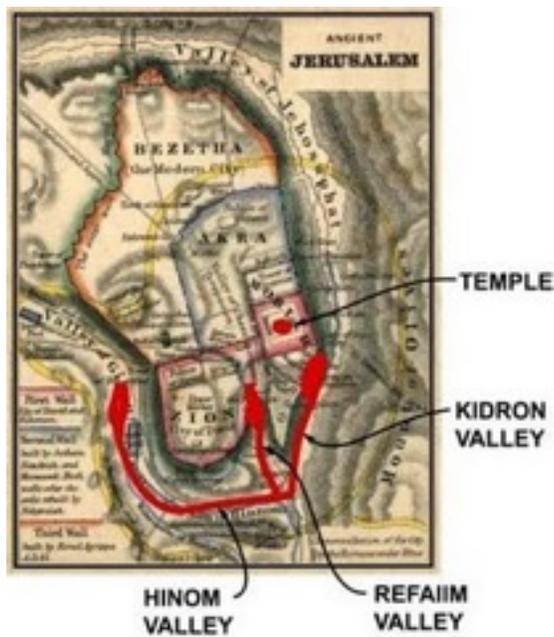
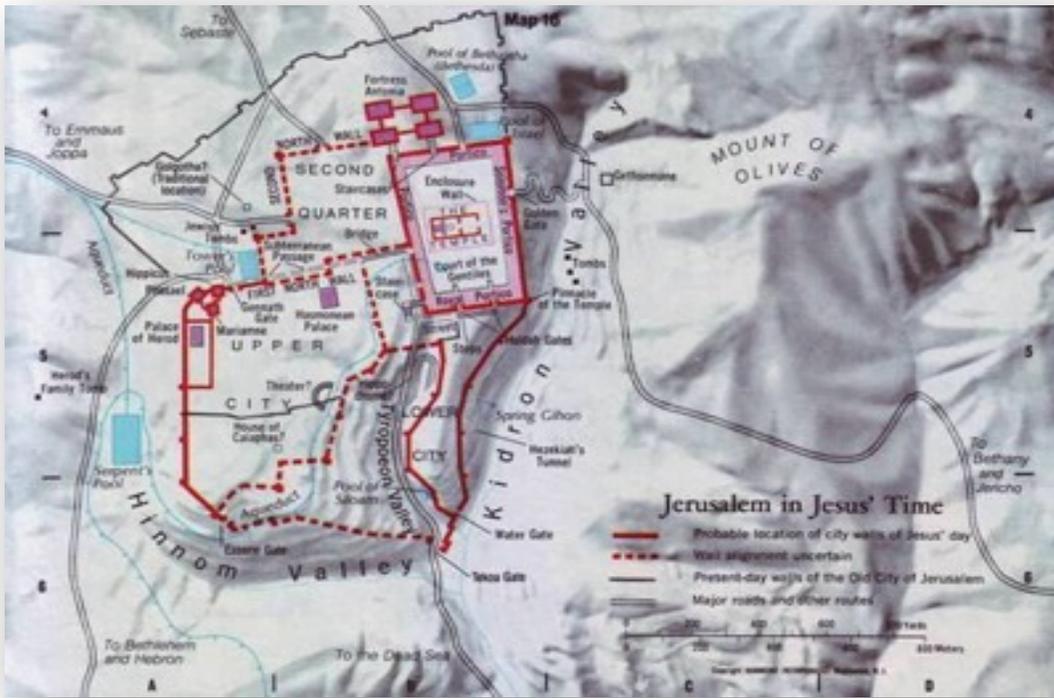
Continuing this train of thought, we can get a glimpse into the age of Jacob as his life story plays out through the balance of the book of Genesis. Jacob reports to Pharaoh that he is 130 years old (47:9) and he has lived a very hard life. At this time Joseph is 39 years old (41:46 and 45:6). This means Jacob was 91 years old in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of serving Laban. That would mean Jacob arrived at Paddan-Aram 14 years earlier at age 77. Jacob spent a total of 20 years working for Laban (31:41) and when he departed Laban he was 101 years old. So, the question appears to be where did Jacob spend the 14 years between leaving home and arriving at Uncle Laban’s?

Some traditions hold that Jacob spent the 14 years in the home of Shem and Eber, the great grandson of Shem, studying Torah.

### Chapter 28 A most amazing dream

Vs. 10-22 Jacob leaves Beer-Sheba and heads to Paddan-Aram, a 34 year exile from his family and the Promised Land. The sages teach that prior to arriving at Uncle Laban’s, Jacob spent 14 years at the academy of Shem and Eber, learning Torah and preparing himself for the rigors of the 20 years in the home of Laban.

His first stop is just a few miles north, about 50 miles, Jacob stops to spend the night in a very special location. The Midrash teaches this is none other than Mount Moriah, the very place Abraham took Isaac to sacrifice, the future site of Temple Mount. Later this location is described as the place where God has written His name in the earth. The Hebrew letter, “shin”, is the letter that represents the name of God. Often the appellation used is “HaShem”, which is another way of saying, “The Name”. When looking down on Mount Moriah one can see the formation of the “shin” carved into the mount by the three prominent valleys: the Hinnom, Tyropoeon, and the Kidron valleys.



Here Jacob has a most unique dream. A ladder or stair case extends from heaven to earth and angels of God were moving up and down the ladder. Hashem was standing at the top of the ladder, over Jacob, and He speaks to Jacob and pronounced a blessing, the continuation of the blessing and covenant He had with Abraham and Isaac before him.

### **The Blessing and Covenant**

- “I am Hashem, God of Abraham your father and God of Isaac”
- “The ground upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendents”
- “Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread out powerfully westward, eastward, northward and southward”
- “All the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and your offspring”
- “Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go, and I will return you to this soil”
- “For I will not forsake you until I have done what I have spoken to you”

### **Jacob awoke from his sleep and responded to God:**

- “Surely Hashem is present in this place and I did not know it”
- “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God and this is the gate of the heavens”
- “If God will be with me, will guard me on this way that I am going”
- “Will give me bread to eat and clothes to wear”
- “And I return in peace to my father’s house”
- “And Hashem will be a God to me”
- “Then this stone which I have set up as a pillar shall become a house of God”
- “And whatever you give me, I shall repeatedly tithe to you”

### **So what is going on here?**

There are several interpretations of these special events; all involve this episode as a Messianic foreshadowing:

- One thought is that Jacob is laying down on this special Mount, laying his head on a stone, representing that in this very place the Messiah will die, be buried and have his head laid on a stone in the tomb.
- Keeping with the Messianic foreshadow, this dream may very well represent both, or either, the Messiah’s baptism and the Transfiguration of the Messiah.

Both of these were special ordination events preparing the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to enter His ministry or to prepare Him for the ministry of crucifixion. Jacob is leaving his father's house and entering the world, Paddan-Aram, where he is to retrieve his bride. We will talk more about this in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 29 Welcomed by the family**

Vs 1 So Jacob lifted his feet and went toward the land of the easterners. This is reference to his ancestors, the family of Abraham, originating in Ur of the Chaldeas.

Vs 2-8 Jacob arrives at a well in a field where flocks of sheep are gathered waiting to be watered.

- Paddan-Aram represents the world and Jacob, the Christ type, is entering into the world to bring healing and to redeem his bride
- The sheep are the people of the world waiting to be redeemed, watered, by the redeeming Messiah. The stone cannot be rolled off the well till the Messiah comes. The sheep (people) become the receivers of the blessing God stated in the previous chapter that would usher from the descendents of Jacob.
- V.10 When Jacob saw Rachel, his bride-to-be, coming with her sheep, he rolled the stone off the well and all the sheep were watered.

Vs. 9-11 Meet Rachel

- She was a shepherdess
- Jacob kissed Rachel and raised his voice and wept
- Jacob explained their relationship through his mother, Rebecca and Laban

Vs 13-22 Meet Laban

- Laban heard the news of young Jacob's arrival and came running toward him
- Laban embraced and kissed Jacob, and took him to his house
- Jacob recounted all the events leading him to Laban's house
- Laban said, no matter the events (Esau related), you are my flesh and blood
- He hosted Jacob for one month
- Laban easily recognized the contrast between the arrival of Eliezer and Jacob
  - Eliezer arrived with 10 camels loaded with wealth
  - Jacob arrived by foot carrying only his stick
  - No doubt Laban had heard of the great wealth and power of his brother-in-law, Isaac.

**What are the events Jacob recounted to Laban?**

- Family information
- The purchased birthright
- The stolen blessing
- 14 years in the house of Shem and Eber

- Surviving the threats from Eliphaz, son of Esau
- The meeting with God on Mount Moriah
- Jacob's mission to find a wife from among his own people, the family of his mother

### Let's make a deal

- After a month you need to work and I need to pay you - what are your wages to be?
- "I will work for seven years and my pay will be Rachel as my wife"
- Laban said, "It is better I give her to you than to another man. Remain with me"
- Jacob worked for seven years and the years seemed to fly away
- At the end of seven years Jacob requested a wedding with his beloved Rachel

### Now, let's really meet Laban

- Laban invites all the people for the wedding feast on the appointed day
- In the darkness of night, covered with a wedding veil, and perhaps too much wine, Laban substitutes Leah for Rachel and the marriage is consummated
- The next morning it becomes obvious to Jacob something went terribly wrong - Jacob was married to Leah, not Rachel
- The older sister must marry first, then the younger. Work another seven years for the right to marry Rachel
- After the marriage celebration (?) week with Leah was complete, another wedding took place, this time with the beloved Rachel, but at the cost of seven more years of labor

### Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah

Vs. 31-35 The birth wars begin.

- "Hashem saw Leah was unloved so He opened her womb." Did Jacob not love Leah or did he love Rachel so much that in comparison Leah seemed unloved? This is a difficult passage with angst for the reader regarding Leah. How unfair is all of this for her?
  - Was she an ugly person?
  - Was she saddened because Esau, the first born, did not arrive to marry her?
  - Did Jacob treat her poorly or with abuse?
  - God showed her favor by allowing her to give birth to one-half of Jacob's sons, plus his one and only daughter.
- Rueben: *"Because Hashem has discerned my humiliation, for my husband will love me"*
- Simeon: *"Because Hashem has heard that I am unloved, He has given me this one also"*

- Levi: *“This time my husband will become attached to me for I have born him three sons”*
- Judah: *This time let me gratefully praise Hashem”*

**Chapter 30 Rachel engages in the birth wars. “Give me children - otherwise I am dead!”**

Through Rachel’s maid servant Bilhah:

- Dan: *“God has judged me; He has also heard my voice and has given me a son”*
- Naphtali: *“Sacred schemes have I maneuvered to equal my sister, and I have also prevailed”*

Not to be outwitted by her sister and her sister’s maid servant, Leah gives Jacob her own maid servant, Zilpah, to make babies

- Gad: *“Good luck has come”*
- Asher: *“In my good fortune! For women have deemed me fortunate!”*

Mandrakes: Reuben harvests mandrakes and brings them to his mother, Leah. Most commentators suggest the mandrakes were a fruit useful in promoting fertility, or at least, creating a pleasant environment conducive to conception. Rachel saw great potential if she could only have the mandrakes, perhaps she, too, could conceive a child for her husband, and her shame would be removed.

We see a bit of Leah’s pain as she challenges her sister, “Was your taking my husband insignificant - now you want my son’s mandrakes!” She trades the mandrakes for the opportunity to sleep with Jacob that night, and she conceives.

- Issachar: *“God granted me my reward because I gave my maidservant to my husband”*
- Zebulun: *“God has endowed me with a good endowment: now my husband will make his permanent home with me for I have born him six sons”*
- Dinah - like a minor footnote, the birth of Dinah, the only daughter, is recorded - no glorious recitation of praise.

**And finally, Rachel gives birth:**

- Joseph: *“God has taken away my disgrace. May Hashem add on for me another son”*.

Vs. 25-43 Jacob, now with four wives, 11 sons and one daughter, is ready to leave Paddan-Aram and head home to Canaan. *“Grant me leave that I may go to my place and my land. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and I will go; for you are aware of my service that I have labored for you”*.

- Laban had used divination to determine how much he had been blessed financially through Jacob’s labor
- Jacob knew by his labor how much he had enriched Laban

- Essentially, Jacob had been working for room and board for himself and his growing family - no hard assets
- So what will the wages be?
  - Nothing out of hand
  - Let me have the offspring of sheep and goats who are speckled, striped, spotted or brownish
  - Remove the current “blemished” sheep and goats, Jacob will only take those that are born to Laban’s herds from this day forward
  - Only those “blemished” in color animals born to whitish sheep and goats would become Jacob’s
- God blessed Jacob’s herds miraculously by a supernatural process and many striped, spotted, speckled and browning sheep and goats were born. Jacob took those lambs and moved them away from Laban’s observation.
  - Think about Naaman (II Kings 5:1-19) dipping seven times in the Jordan to become cleansed from leprosy or Jesus using mud (John 9:6) to heal the blind man. The healing was not in the dipping in the water or in the mud, both were miracles from God.
- Vs 43 *“The man became exceedingly prosperous and he attained large flocks, maid servants and servants, camels and donkeys”.*

### **Chapter 31 The uncomfortable parting of ways**

Vs. 1-3 The wise man wrote there is a time for everything under heaven. For Jacob and Paddan-Aram, there was a time to come and a time to go. Now is the time to go:

- Jacob’s brother-in-law feels he has taken advantage of the family and perhaps even stolen from them
- Jacob noticed Laban is not as open with him, his disposition toward Jacob has changed
- Jacob has amassed wealth in great disproportion to Laban and the rest of the family
- Hashem has told Jacob it is time to go home

Vs 4-12 Jacob summons Leah and Rachel and lets them know it is time to leave. He recounts his encounters with Laban and the fact that he does not trust Laban any longer as it concerns the well being and safety for himself or his family.

Vs 13-16 Rachel and Leah realize, as well, their father is more interested in wealth than family and is not to be trusted. They consent to begin the move south.

Vs. 19- 24 When Laban goes to shear sheep, Jacob assembles his family, servants, flocks and herds and begins to head for home.

- He deceives Laban by not telling Laban his plan to leave.
- Rachel steals her father’s teraphim, idols used for divination, to keep her father from divining the whereabouts of Jacob and company, when he arrives home from the sheering.

Vs. 25-35 Laban pursues Jacob and family. When Laban catches up to Jacob he plays the victim role to the hilt. He feigns hurt and disappointment. He blames Jacob for trickery and thievery. He has been aggrieved by Jacob and Jacob should pay for his misdeeds. Even Laban's idols of divination have been stolen, and this accusation really angers Jacob. Jacob is unaware of Rachel's dealings in this matter and Rachel, acting like her father, hides them in her saddle bags and then claims to be "in the way of women" and cannot stand up so the saddle bags can be checked.

Vs 36-45 Jacob is now angered and responds with righteous indignation to Laban, "What is my transgression?" he asks. Jacob recounts the 20 years of labor he has done for Laban, often at great cost to himself and always with an honest and transparent heart. The final strong response sums up everything in regard to Laban: "Had not the God of my father - the God of Abraham and **the dread of Isaac** - been with me, you would have surely now sent me away empty handed. God saw the wretchedness and the toil of my hands, so He admonished you last night".

Vs. 49-54 Jacob and Laban make a pact and agree to leave each other on even terms.

### **Chapter 32:1-3 Laban departs and heads home.**

Jacob went on his way and angels of God encounter him. When Jacob saw the angels he realized this is a Godly camp, so he called the place Mahanaim.

### **Conclusion: So what do we make of all this?**

The big picture is God is developing His plan for redemption of sinful man. In our western way of looking at this story we struggle because it does not fit our sense of cultural propriety. God made a covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15) which is renewed with Isaac (Genesis 26: 2-5). God continues the covenant through Jacob, as he foretold Rebecca before Jacob was even born. God restates the covenant with Jacob on Mount Moriah (Genesis 28). It is His plan and His plan will be done.

- We should not get distracted by Rebecca's involvement in tricking Isaac.
- We should not get distracted by Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel, then adding Bilhah and Zilpah. Without all four women there might not have been the significant 12 sons born, forming the entire nation of Israel.
- We should not get distracted by Laban and his treachery. Jacob is in the world to redeem his bride, form a people and return with his people to the Promised Land.
- Jacob looks like Messiah, which is the point. This is a picture of the Messiah and the church coming out of the world to the promised land. We will see this picture many times in our study because the plan of redemption is the focus of the book. God ordained certain things in order to move His plan of redemption forward. **Everything that happens ultimately leads to the fulfillment of God's plan.**

Within the story we can have some fun speculation on what different people might represent:

- Jacob leaves his father, has money in his pockets, and goes to the world to find his bride.
  - Jesus leaves heaven and comes to the world to find his bride, Israel
- He is encountered along the way by his nephew Eliphaz and gives up all his wealth before entering the world
  - Jesus entered the world in the lowest of social positions, yet he was the son of God. Perhaps the encounter with Eliphaz is represented in the temptation in the wilderness by Satan
- The dream on Mount Moriah might represent Christ at baptism or even at the transfiguration when God speaks His blessings over His Son, ordaining Him for the mission that lies ahead - **redemption**
- Laban might represent the world, treacherous and self focused. At times it seems accepting and perhaps even friendly, but beware, it will turn on you!
- Leah and Rachel
  - Perhaps Leah is Israel and Rachel represent the church
  - Perhaps Leah represents those who were righteous in time of pre-Abraham and Rachel represents the church/bride of Christ/Jew and Gentile