



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Genesis 30:22-32, 43 **New Revised Standard Version** **November 25, 2018**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 25, 2018**, is from **Genesis 30:22-32, 43**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Genesis 30:22) Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her womb.

Sarah, Abraham's wife, Rebekah, Isaac's wife, and Rachel, Jacob's wife, all needed the LORD's intervention to conceive children. The LORD alone decided who would be in the ancestral line of Jesus Christ. Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his oldest daughter, Leah, and Jacob could only love the one wife he bargained to marry, Rachel.

When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He gave her many children; including Judah, who became an ancestor of King David and Jesus the Messiah. When Rachel became jealous of Leah she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!” and Jacob replied, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?” (Genesis 30:2). The LORD gave Rachel her children through Jacob.

(Genesis 30:23) She conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach”;

Following a custom of that day, just as Sarah gave her handmaid Hagar to Abraham as a wife so she could adopt Hagar’s son Ishmael; likewise, Rachel gave her handmaid Bilhah to Jacob as a wife so she could adopt Bilhah’s sons Dan and Naphtali. Finally, the LORD made it possible for Rachel to become pregnant through Jacob and bear her own firstborn son, Joseph. Rachel acknowledged the fact that indeed God was the one who had enabled her to have a son.

(Genesis 30:24) and she named him Joseph, saying, “May the LORD add to me another son!”

After naming her firstborn son, Joseph, Rachel prayed to the LORD for a second son. She died while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin. Because Joseph was born to Jacob in his old age, he loved him more than his brothers, who became jealous. After the family returned to the land the LORD had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his

brothers sold Joseph into slavery; which led eventually to their descendants, the Hebrews, becoming slaves in Egypt.

(Genesis 30:25) When Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country.

Because Laban was the head of his household, he could determine the futures of his sisters, Leah and Rachel. Because Laban deceived Jacob, Jacob worked seven years for Laban to pay for the wife he did not want, Leah, and another seven years to pay for the wife he bargained for, Rachel. Thus, Laban’s deception brought discord into Jacob’s family, even as Jacob’s deception brought discord between Esau and himself. After completing fourteen years of servitude, Jacob told Laban he wanted to return to his homeland in the Negev. At this time, Jacob and his family were living in virtual poverty, depending on the handouts a master would normally give his servants, for all his wages had gone to Laban to pay for his two wives. Except for Leah and Rachel, Jacob had no possessions.

(Genesis 30:26) Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know very well the service I have given you.”

Even though Jacob had nothing except his wives Leah, Rachel, and their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah (now his wives), along with his children, he told Laban that he was

now ready to take them back to his homeland. He reminded Laban that he had worked hard for him. As he looked forward to going home after so many years, little did he know that Esau still hated him and still wanted to kill him and would come to meet him with four hundred men upon learning of his return (see Genesis 32:6). Esau was determined that none of his birthright inheritance, that Jacob had stolen from him by deception, would be given to him. By the grace of God, Jacob would not need his birthright inheritance, God's blessing was sufficient for him.

(Genesis 30:27) But Laban said to him, “If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you;

Laban did not need divination to know that because of Jacob's labors he had become a wealthy man. He did not want to lose such a valued servant, and presumably the labors of Jacob's wives and children as they helped Jacob watch over Laban's increasing number of sheep and goats. Though Laban probably did not know that Jacob had received Isaac's blessing, the LORD had honored what Isaac had said in his blessing of Jacob. In addition, by staying close to home with Isaac and Rebekah in the Negev, Jacob had learned the best ways to carry on a family-owned agricultural business and care for flocks of animals. Laban had benefitted greatly from Jacob's knowledge and the LORD's presence with him, and later so would Jacob.

(Genesis 30:28) name your wages, and I will give it.”

Now that Jacob had “worked off” his indebtedness to Laban for Leah and Rachel, Laban was ready to pay Jacob wages. He said he would pay Jacob whatever he asked, probably thinking he could trick Jacob no matter what wages Jacob wanted. Furthermore, Laban knew that it would take many years for a shepherd to earn and save enough money to return home with such a large family. Laban was shrewd and deceptive enough to know it was to his benefit to pay wages to Jacob no matter what wages Jacob wanted.

(Genesis 30:29) Jacob said to him, “You yourself know how I have served you, and how your cattle have fared with me.

In negotiating with Laban, Jacob reminded him that he had prospered under his care, and if he hired him on his terms, Laban would continue to prosper. He also knew that Laban desperately wanted to hire him, since he was willing to pay whatever he asked. Jacob was negotiating for the best terms possible, the terms he wanted that were more than just “wages.” Jacob knew he was worth a great deal to Laban, and whatever he asked would be worth the expense of Laban and his sons.

(Genesis 30:30) For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly; and the LORD

has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?”

Jacob reminded Laban that his family was poor before he came, and how they were now wealthy by comparison. Jacob also gave the LORD the credit for all that he had accomplished for Laban. If Jacob stayed on and worked for Laban, Jacob wanted Laban to know that the LORD would be with him blessing all his labors, implying that Laban would continue to benefit from Jacob’s labors and presence. In some sense, Laban would be hiring both Jacob and the LORD which would enable him to increase his wealth even more. Jacob also reminded Laban that after fourteen years of service, it was now time for him to do something for his own family. Jacob was continuing to build his case for the terms that he wanted if he was to continue working for Laban. Laban assumed that by hiring Jacob he would become even more wealthy.

(Genesis 30:31) He said, “What shall I give you?” Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything; if you will do this for me, I will again feed your flock and keep it:

Fully convinced that he wanted Jacob to keep working for him, Laban asked him to name his terms of employment. And Jacob probably caught him off guard by saying, “Don’t give me anything.” Laban must have been overjoyed to learn that he could keep Jacob in his service and he would have no “out of pocket” expenses, no “wages” to pay. He

would not need to use the money he had saved and would not need to use the money he earned in the future from his family business to pay Jacob anything. To a deceptive Laban, proud of his ability to cheat and trick people, this offer from Jacob probably sounded too good to be true.

(Genesis 30:32) let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages.

Read the rest of this chapter to learn more about how Jacob built up a flock of sheep and goats for his family. Briefly, Laban's sons became the shepherds of their father's speckled, spotted, and dark colored lambs and goats, either in behalf of Jacob or stolen from Jacob, and they took them far away from Laban's flock. Jacob became the shepherd of Laban's white lambs and goats, so it would have been very rare for white lambs and goats to produce lambs and goats that were speckled, spotted, and dark colored. Using unusual breeding techniques, Jacob continued tending and watching over Laban's flock of white sheep and goats and they began to produce many strong and healthy speckled, spotted, and dark colored animals for Jacob's flock. Thus, Jacob's flock eventually increased and Laban's decreased.

(Genesis 30:43) Thus the man grew exceedingly rich, and had large flocks, and male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.

Jacob was so successful with his selective breeding techniques that by separating the speckled, spotted, and dark colored lambs and goats from Laban's white flock that he cared for, he was able to create an exceedingly large flock of sheep and goats for his family, thereby becoming exceedingly rich. He became as rich or richer than his father Isaac, who also had servants, camels, and donkeys, which were considered signs of wealth at that time. Jacob became so rich that he could give a great deal of his wealth to Esau when he met him coming toward him with 400 men, and thus reconcile with Esau by not asking Esau for the birthright inheritance that he had stolen from Esau. The LORD helped Jacob do the right thing, and by Jacob doing what was right, the LORD brought peace into Isaac's family.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are one or more experiences that Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel had in common?
2. When Jacob talked to Laban, what did Jacob want to return home with?
3. What did Laban tell Jacob about the LORD?

4. What were some of the qualifications for a job with Laban that Jacob gave Laban?
5. What did Jacob want Laban to give him if he went back to work for him? What were the results?

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