

Genesis 30:25-43

Jacob the Deceiver Prospers Once Again

I think that we have all heard of Paul Harvey

- He began his radio career in 1933
- That is 74 years ago

It was in May 1976 that Mr. Harvey began a series of programs on the ABC Radio Networks

- This series was called “The Rest of the Story”
- This series revealed “[forgotten or little known facts behind stories of famous people and events](#)”¹

He opens his broadcasts with the famous phrase, “Hello Americans. This is Paul Harvey.”

- He captivates us with information about ordinary people and events that affect our lives
- He is able to tell a story in such a way that captures our attention

Then, of course, he winds his story to a climax toward the end of his broadcast

- He signs off by saying, “Paul Harvey...Good Day!”

This morning, we will consider another story in the life of Jacob

- It will not be told by Paul Harvey
- Instead, the Holy Spirit Himself will tell the story

The passage before us in Genesis 30 is but one more step in the life of Jacob

- He has deceived Esau and Jacob in the land of Canaan
- He had been deceived by Laban in the land of Haran

God is teaching him some hard lessons along the journey

- And God intends for us to learn them as well

Read Genesis 30:25-43

In Genesis 30:25-43, God will show His sovereignty despite the deceit of others and the efforts on our part²

- The contract between Laban and Jacob (30:25-34)
- The contest between Laban and Jacob (30:35-43)

I. The contract between Laban and Jacob (30:25-34)

Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country.

Late in Genesis 29 and early in Genesis 30, we have seen the twelve children of Jacob

- 11 sons and 1 daughter

¹ <http://www.paulharvey.com/bio.shtml>

² Allen P. Ross, *Creation & Blessing*, 519.

Of course, these twelve children came through four different wives of Jacob

- Seven through Leah
- Two through Bilhah
- Two through Zilpah
- One through Rachel

The most loved wife, Rachel, has had only one child thus far

- His name was Joseph

It is at this point that verse 25 addresses

- It seems to have been a turning point of some kind in the mind of Jacob³

The birth of Joseph seems to have occurred at the end of this second seven years of contracted service

- The first seven years were spent without a wife anticipating the marriage between Jacob and Rachel
- However, Laban deceived Jacob and had him marry Leah instead

After spending a week with Leah, Jacob was given Rachel as a wife

- He would spend another seven years in service for Rachel

It was during a time period of seven years that all twelve of these children were born

- The only exception may have been the birth of daughter Dinah, who could have been born after this seven years

So 11 or 12 children in seven years

- Obviously, there was some overlap in the births
- They are not presented in a strictly chronological fashion

So at the end of his fourteen years of contracted labor, Jacob told Laban, “Send me away”

- It was clearly Jacob’s desire to ask permission to leave

He could have run away at any point up to now

- But he had enough integrity to keep his part of the bargain

But the words “send me away” had been used many years prior by Abraham’s servant

- When the servant found that Rebekah would be willing to return to Canaan and marry Isaac, he was overjoyed
- He told Laban, “Send me away to my master” (24:54)

Laban had said “good bye” to his sister and had not seen her since

- It would have been very hard for him to allow Jacob to take both his daughters and all the grandchildren

Notice that Jacob wants to go to “my own place and to my own country”

- Up to this point, he has not had his own place
- He hasn’t been living in his own country

He yearns to have a place that he can call his own

- He desires to have a place that is separate from this conniving father-in-law

³ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 277.

We also must keep in mind what God told Jacob at Bethel, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (28:13-15)

- God promised Jacob that the land would be given to him and to his descendants
- God promised that He would bring Jacob back to the land

What encouragement this brought to Jacob during these long fourteen years

- To have such a manipulating father-in-law must have been difficult
- Yet God’s promises were greater than Laban’s deceptions

In essence, Jacob had a land that was his

- But his obligation was to finish the years of promised labor in exchange for his wife, Rachel
- It had taken him fourteen (14) years to pay for the privilege of marrying her

²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you.”

Jacob’s request seems a little odd, at least initially

- He seems to ask permission to take his wives and children

I believe that Jacob had honorable intentions about leaving

- He didn’t want to appear to be running away from a situation
- But he was also very careful with Laban who was a trickster and deceiver

Three times in verse 26, Jacob uses a form of the word for “serve”

- “I have served you”
- “you yourself know my service”
- “Which I have rendered you”

Although Jacob was a distant relative, he has been treated and viewed by Laban as a household servant⁴

- He has served Laban for fourteen long years
- Jacob had kept his part of the bargain

Now that his time of obligation is over, he wants to go home

- But Laban doesn’t want to hear about this

Laban would be losing too much

- His two daughters
- A great servant in Jacob

⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 2, 254.*

²⁷ But Laban said to him, “If now it pleases you, *stay with me*; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account.”

Laban’s tone in speaking to Jacob is one of politeness and respect

- He refers to Jacob as being in a superior position

Remember, Laban doesn’t have any more leverage with Jacob

- He doesn’t have any more wives to barter more years of service

Laban confesses, “**I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account**”

- Laban admits that he has been blessed because of Jacob

He isn’t the first person to acknowledge that the presence of Abraham’s seed has produced a secondary blessing for them

- Melchizedek acknowledged this (14:19-20)
- Abimelech acknowledged this (21:22; 26:28-29)

Part of the Abrahamic Covenant was that “**in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed**” (12:3)

- This had been repeated for Isaac (22:18) and Jacob (28:14)

This is a secondary reason why Laban doesn’t want Jacob to leave

- Laban was being blessed because of Jacob

²⁸ And he continued, “Name me your wages, and I will give it.”

Laban totally skips Jacob’s request about leaving

- Instead, he shifts the focus to Jacob staying
- So he asks what it will cost for Jacob to stay

Like shrewd businessman, Laban is always trying to make a deal

- He is always trying to figure out how he can manipulate the situation

Of course, Laban asked Jacob back in 29:15, “**Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?**”

- The wages were set at 7 years
- But Laban tricked Jacob

Knowing more about Laban now than he did then, Jacob is smarter than to play mind games with his father-in-law

- He has learned that Laban doesn’t play by the same rules

²⁹ But he said to him, “You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me. ³⁰ For you had little before I came, and it has increased to a multitude; and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?”

Instead of stating what his wages are to stay, Jacob reiterates the reality of his service to Laban over the past fourteen years

- Undoubtedly, Jacob is trying to find a way that Laban will allow him to leave nicely

Jacob points to the fact that Laban has prospered greatly through the LORD's hand of blessing on Jacob

- Verse 30 affirms, “For you had little before I came, and it has increased to a multitude; and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned”

Earlier, Laban realized and confessed that the Lord had blessed him on the account of Jacob

- Jacob elaborates on that in detail

But Jacob has reached the end of his obligation to Laban

- Now Jacob wants to have a place of his own to raise his family

Up to this point, his wages have gone to Laban

- Working these fourteen years has been a way to work in exchange for the privilege of marrying Rachel

In essence, he has worked fourteen years and has nothing to show for it!

- So Jacob asks, “when shall I provide for my own household also?”

³¹ So he said, “What shall I give you?”

Laban responds with a simple question, “What shall I give you?”

- Perhaps there is a tender side to Laban

Or perhaps Laban realizes that if he gives Jacob what he wants, then he will decide to stay in the area

- This will mean continued blessing for Laban

And Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything.

Jacob's reply is rather blunt and short, “You shall not give me anything”

You may wonder why Jacob didn't want to accept anything from Laban

- This is because anything that Laban did to help Jacob would and could be used to manipulate him at a later time

If Laban gave Jacob money or land, then Laban could use this as leverage at a later time

- “Jacob, you owe me! I helped you out before!”

The king of Sodom had offered to give goods to Abraham (14:21)

- However, Abraham refused to accept them
- He didn't want to be in debt to a pagan king who could claim to have made Abraham wealthy⁵

If you will do this *one* thing for me, I will again pasture *and* keep your flock: ³² let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep, and every black one among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *such* shall be my wages.

Jacob's request from Laban seems strange and abnormal

- Basically, Jacob asks permission from Laban to sort through his herds and remove the multi-colored animals

⁵ John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Genesis*, 203.

As a rule, goats were normally black and dark brown

- Sheep were normally white⁶

This was the only thing that Jacob asked for

- He wanted the multi-colored animals
- Laban could have the rest

³³ So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, will be considered stolen.”

Then Jacob makes the statement, “**So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages”**”

- Jacob having honesty?
- This deceiver who tricked his twin brother Esau and father Isaac?

Perhaps this was a back-handed rebuke to Laban for deceiving him

- We are not entirely sure his reasons for saying this

If Laban finds any animals that are not multi-colored, then they will be considered stolen property

³⁴ And Laban said, “Good, let it be according to your word.”

If we could see Laban’s expression after Jacob’s speech, I am sure that his mouth would be wide open

- This deal seemed too good to be true!

The manipulator was receiving exactly what he wanted!

- Jacob would stay around
- The Lord’s blessings would continue
- Jacob received the multi-colored animals
- Laban would receive all of the other animals!

Laban’s agreement to this contract was short and to the point, “**Good, let it be according to your word”**”

- The contract was agreed to

What could Jacob possibly be thinking?

- Why would he ask for so little?
- Why would he put himself into a situation that seemed to favor Laban?

We will find some answers to those questions as we look at the second portion of this passage that deals with...

⁶ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 249.

II. The contest between Laban and Jacob (30:35-43)

³⁵ So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons.

Jacob and Laban have agreed to a contract

- Jacob will stay in the area, continuing to watch after Laban's flock

The only wages that Jacob asks for is the multi-colored animals

- This seemed to be a very small asking price

He could have asked for anything from Laban

- The sky's the limit!

Part of the deal was for Jacob to go through the flocks and remove the multi-colored animals

- Verse 32 tells us, Jacob speaking, "**let me pass through your entire flock today**" (emphasis mine)

Verse 35 says that "**he removed on that day...**"

- Who is the "**he**" of verse 35?
 - o Not Jacob
 - o It's Laban!

That's right, if you keep reading through verse 36, you see that it is Laban who is removing the multi-colored animals

- Once again, Laban is taking the initiative

You see, Laban doesn't want Jacob to have any advantage

- Already, Laban is beginning to go back on the details of the contract!

This is a man who refuses to have integrity in dealing with others

- He doesn't trust anyone
- And no one can trust him

So Laban removes all of the multi-colored animals

- He then commits them to the care of his sons

³⁶ And he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Laban then takes these flocks of multi-colored animals and takes them away!

- His sons take the multi-colored animals a distance of three days' journey from Jacob

Do you see what he has done?

- From his perspective, Laban has done everything to ensure that he will be the winner out of this situation

Laban wants to ensure that the two flocks will not be able to breed with one another⁷

⁷ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the OT*, 188.

Jacob wanted to select the multi-colored animals

- From this flock, there would be more multi-colored animals born
- These would then be the property of Jacob

It makes sense that the multi-colored animals would have the recessive genes in order to produce more multi-colored animals

- That is just the common sense law of genetics

Of course, Laban knows this as well

- So he takes the multi-colored animals and removes them from Jacob

So what is Jacob left with?

- The animals with solid colors

Laban knows that the percentage of offspring that will be multi-colored from a “pure” flock will be far less

- The offspring from these pure flocks will have a higher tendency to be pure, not multi-colored

If you are Jacob, you must feel like the cards have been shuffled on you

- The deal that you agreed to has changed
- Laban is the one who is now calling the shots

What would Jacob do now?

- How would he go about obtaining flocks for himself?
- How would he take care of his family?

That is what the rest of the chapter will chronicle

- You may be surprised at what Jacob does

³⁷ Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which *was* in the rods. ³⁸ And he set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink.

Imagine what Jacob must be thinking

- At least with the multi-colored flocks, he had a greater chance of seeing positive results

Remember, the essence of the agreement is this

- All multi-colored offspring belonged to Jacob
- All pure colored offspring belonged to Laban

In beginning with all pure colored animals, Jacob had his work cut out for him

- His gameplan had to change

The description of what Jacob does in verses 37-42 seems really strange to us

- I would venture to say that many of us have never spent much time around livestock

We have to remember that Jacob was a wise shepherd

- He had taken care of Laban’s flocks for fourteen years

During that period of time, the LORD had blessed his efforts

- So evidently, he was doing something right

From his years of experience, Jacob had made some wise observations

- He knew a few things from being around livestock

There was a widespread belief that a vivid sight during conception or pregnancy would leave its mark on the embryo⁸

- In other words, if an animal saw the striped bark of a tree before it as it mated, then the embryo would be striped

Of course, this was a far-fetched idea

- Science has ruled this to be an impossibility

Another suggestion has been that Jacob thought that some of the chemicals in the wood of the trees would be released into the water which the animals drank

- Perhaps these chemicals would promote fertility⁹

Whatever his rationale was, Jacob seemed to believe that it would work

³⁹ So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ And Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

So Jacob's plan was put into action

- These peeled rods were placed in the watering troughs
- They were also readily visible for the cattle

Sure enough, the flocks mated near the rods

- According to verse 39, the result was that “**the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted**”

This is amazing!

- How can an all pure-colored flock produce multi-colored offspring?

As we have mentioned already, there are recessive genes within animals

- These recessive genes may be related to color, birth defects, and other issues

Jacob was banking on these recessive genes

- His plan seemed to work on the first cycle of offspring

Now that he has some of the flock that are multi-colored, he plans to reproduce them with one another

- The probability of them producing more multi-colored animals is higher now

Verse 40 says that he takes the pure colored animals and has them mate while facing the multi-colored animals

- Remember, it was believed that whatever the animals focused on during the mating process would affect the offspring

Before, Jacob used the peeled part of trees

- Now he is using other animals to draw their focus

⁸ Ross, 522.

⁹ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*, 476.

After a few cycles of this, Jacob began separating his flock from Laban's flock

- Jacob had promised that any pure colored offspring would belong to Laban

We don't know if Laban or his sons came to check up on Jacob or not

- Perhaps Jacob wanted to ensure that if Laban's sons did come by, they would see that the pure colored animals were, in fact, separated
- At least Jacob was abiding by the rules of the contract

⁴¹ Moreover, it came about whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, that Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods; ⁴² but when the flock was feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

Now that Jacob was beginning to accumulate his own flock, he would practice selective breeding¹⁰

- When the stronger of the flock were mating, he would put the peeled rods in their sight

Once again, the probability was that the stronger would give birth to other stronger animals

- Now Jacob was counting on the dominant gene
- Stronger animals tend to produce strong offspring

But when the weaker animals were mating, he would remove the peeled rods

- He didn't want Laban having any of the stronger animals
- Not if he had anything to do with it!

Verse 42 even ends by stating, "so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's"

- The plan was working!
- Perhaps even better than Jacob planned

⁴³ So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

We fast-forward through several cycles and perhaps years of this type of breeding

- Obviously, Jacob's plan worked

Verse 43 says that "the man became exceedingly prosperous"

- No doubt these principles of breeding worked

Jacob "had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys"

- He had so much livestock that he had hire his own servants to help take care of them

The mention of "camels" should remind us of Abraham's servant who traveled to Haran in order to obtain a wife for Isaac

- That wife was Rebekah
- She was the mother of Jacob and Esau

So the author is helping us to see that the same blessings that came upon Abraham and Isaac are being experienced by Jacob himself

- All three of these men were blessed by the LORD as part of the Abrahamic Covenant

¹⁰ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale OT Commentaries, Genesis*, 163.

Genesis 31 will expound on this subject of Jacob's blessing of the livestock

- It will help us to see God's part in this blessing

In just reading Genesis 30, you would get the perception that it was all contingent upon Jacob

- But we know better

Although God is not mentioned specifically in Genesis 30, He will be in Genesis 31

- Jacob will speak of another dream that he had where he hears from God once again

Earlier in the chapter, Rachel believed that the mandrakes would provide her with a better chance of fertility

- It was folklore but she thought that it would help

This morning we have seen how Jacob practiced another type of folklore with the peeled rods

- He thought that they helped to produce multi-colored offspring

Rachel learned that it was God, not mandrakes, who caused her to become pregnant

- God is the One who opens and closes the womb

Jacob would also learn that it was God, not peeled rods, who gave him success and abundance

- God is the One who caused those pure colored animals to give birth to multi-colored offspring

Success ultimately comes from God¹¹

- It doesn't come by manipulation
- It doesn't come by deceit

Many times, we take full credit for something that God has clearly brought about

- God's grace, not our human efforts, is the reason for our blessing¹²

“But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is this day*” (Deut 8:18)

- We are to do our part in working hard
- But it is God who decides what portion of riches each person will have

By the time we reach the end of Genesis 30, Jacob would have been with Laban for nearly twenty years

- 7 years of service for Rachel
- 7 more years of service for Rachel
- 6 years of building up his livestock

It must have been very disappointing for Jacob to think of all these years in service to Laban

- He didn't seem to have much to show for it

But God had promised Jacob that:

- He would have many descendants
- He would return to the land
- He would have God's presence with him

¹¹ Ross, 522.

¹² Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 421.

I think one of the lessons that you need to learn from Rachel and Jacob is to examine where our trust is

- Are you placing faith in folklore or humanistic thinking?
- Or do you trust in the Lord to bring about answers to your prayers?

We have a tendency to “help” God when times of difficulty or trial come our way

- But God doesn’t need our help

Our responsibility is to wait on Him and trust that His will will be brought about

- Not to manipulate our circumstances
- Not to rush in and force our hand

Right now, we are under the impression that Jacob is to be credited with the success of the livestock

- But that is not the ultimate reason

Next week we will see that God was behind this success to Jacob

- And then we will know – as Paul Harvey says – *the rest of the story*