

Come Follow Me February 28-March 6

Genesis 28-33

“Surely the Lord Is in This Place”

As you read [Genesis 28–33](#), ponder what you learn from the examples of Jacob and his family. Write down any impressions you receive.

Record Your Impressions

[Chapters 28](#) and [32](#) of Genesis tell of two spiritual experiences that the prophet Jacob had. Both happened in the wilderness but under very different circumstances. In the first experience, Jacob was traveling to his mother’s homeland to find a wife and, along the way, spent the night on a pillow of stones. He may not have expected to find the Lord in such a desolate place, but God revealed Himself to Jacob in a life-changing dream, and Jacob declared, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not” ([Genesis 28:16](#)). Years later, Jacob found himself in the wilderness again. This time, he was on his way back to Canaan, facing a potentially deadly reunion with his angry brother, Esau. But Jacob knew that when he needed a blessing, he could seek the Lord, even in the wilderness (see [Genesis 32](#)).

You may find yourself in your own wilderness seeking a blessing from God. Maybe your wilderness is a difficult family relationship, such as Jacob had. Maybe you feel distant from God or feel that you need a blessing. Sometimes the blessing comes unexpectedly; other times it is preceded by a wrestle. Whatever your need, you can discover that even in your wilderness, “the Lord is in this place.”

Thoughts to Keep in Mind

The House of Israel

Somewhere in the wilderness east of Canaan, Jacob nervously awaited an encounter with his twin brother, Esau. The last time Jacob had seen Esau, about

20 years earlier, Esau was threatening to kill him. Jacob had spent all night wrestling in the wilderness, seeking a blessing from God. As a result of Jacob's faith, persistence, and determination, God had answered his prayers. That night Jacob's name was changed to Israel, a name that means "he perseveres with God" ([Genesis 32:28](#), footnote *b*; see also [Genesis 32:24–32](#)).¹

This is the first time the name *Israel* appears in the Bible, and it's a name that perseveres throughout the book and throughout history. The name soon came to refer to more than just one man. Israel had 12 sons, and their descendants were collectively known as the "house of Israel," the "tribes of Israel," the "children of Israel," or the "Israelites."

Throughout history, the children of Israel attached great significance to their descent from one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their lineage was an important part of their covenant identity. The Apostle Paul proclaimed that he was "of the tribe of Benjamin" ([Romans 11:1](#)). When Lehi sent his sons to Jerusalem to retrieve the plates of brass, one reason was that the plates contained "a genealogy of his fathers" ([1 Nephi 5:14](#); see also [1 Nephi 3:3](#)). Lehi discovered that he was a descendant of Joseph, and his posterity's understanding of their connection to the house of Israel proved important to them in the years to come (see [Alma 26:36](#); [3 Nephi 20:25](#)).

In the Church today, you may hear about Israel in expressions like "the gathering of Israel." We sing about the "Redeemer of Israel," the "Hope of Israel," and "Ye Elders of Israel."² In these cases, we aren't talking or singing only about the ancient kingdom of Israel or the modern nation called Israel. Rather, we are referring to those who have been gathered from the nations of the world into the Church of Jesus Christ. We are referring to people who persevere with God, who earnestly seek His blessings, and who, through baptism, have become His covenant people.

Your patriarchal blessing declares your connection to one of the tribes of the house of Israel. That's more than an interesting piece of family history information. Being a part of the house of Israel means that you have a covenant relationship with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. It means that you, like Abraham, are meant to "be a blessing" to God's children ([Genesis 12:2](#); [Abraham 2:9–11](#)). It means, in the words of Peter, that "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye

should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). It means that *you* are one who “perseveres with God” as you honor your covenants with Him.

Family Tree of Jacob (Israel)



Family Tree of Jacob (Israel), by Brent Evans

GENESIS CHAPTER 28

Isaac forbids Jacob to marry a Canaanite—He blesses Jacob and his seed with the blessings of Abraham—Esau marries a daughter of Ishmael—Jacob sees in vision a ladder reaching up into heaven—The Lord promises him seed as the dust of the earth in number—The Lord also promises Jacob that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth will be blessed—Jacob covenants to pay tithes.

1 And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

2 Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother’s father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother’s brother.

3 And God ^aAlmighty ^bbles thee, and make thee ^cfruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a ^dmultitude of people;

4 And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy ^eseed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

5 And Isaac sent away Jacob: and he went to Padan-aram unto Laban, son of Bethuel the ^fSyrian, the brother of Rebekah, Jacob's and Esau's mother.

6 ¶ When Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob, and sent him away to Padan-aram, to take him a wife from thence; and that as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan;

7 And that Jacob obeyed his father and his mother, and was gone to Padan-aram;

8 And Esau seeing that the daughters of Canaan pleased not Isaac his father;

9 Then went Esau unto ^gIshmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his ^hwife.

10 ¶ And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

11 And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put *them for* his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

12 And he ⁱdreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the ^jangels of God ascending and descending on it.

13 And, behold, the ^kLORD stood ^labove it, and said, I *am* the ^mLORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the ⁿland whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

14 And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the ^onorth, and to the south: and in thee and in thy ^pseed shall all the ^qfamilies of the earth be ^rblessed.

15 And, behold, ^sI *am* with thee, and will keep thee in all *places* whither thou goest, and will ^tbring thee again into this ^uland; for I will not leave thee, until I have done *that* which I have spoken to thee of.

16 ¶ And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew *it* not.

17 And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful *is* this place! this *is* none other but the house of God, and this *is* the gate of ^vheaven.

18 And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put *for* his pillows, and set it up *for* a ^wpillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

19 And he called the name of that place ^xBeth-el: but the name of that city *was* called ^yLuz at the first.

(7-12) Genesis 28:10–19. The Vision of Jacob's Ladder at Bethel

Two comments by latter-day prophets give a greater understanding of the significance and meaning of Jacob's experience at Bethel. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, speaking

of Paul's comment about one who was caught up to the third kingdom (see [2 Corinthians 12:2](#)), "Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob's ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms" (Teachings, pp. 304–5).

President Marion G. Romney explained why this vision of heaven was shown in the form of a ladder and why the name of the place where it happened was called Bethel:

"When Jacob traveled from Beersheba toward Haran, he had a dream in which he saw himself on the earth at the foot of a ladder that reached to heaven where the Lord stood above it. He beheld angels ascending and descending thereon, and Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings—blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord.

"Because he had met the Lord and entered into covenants with him there, Jacob considered the site so sacred that he named the place Bethel, a contraction of Beth-Elohim, which means literally 'the House of the Lord.' He said of it: '... this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.' ([Gen. 28:17](#).)

"Jacob not only passed through the gate of heaven, but by living up to every covenant he also went all the way in. Of him and his forebears Abraham and Isaac, the Lord has said: '... because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods.' ([D&C 132:37](#).)

"Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob. Even more, they are also the gates to heaven for all of our unendowed kindred dead. We should all do our duty in bringing our loved ones through them." ("[Temples—The Gates to Heaven](#)," Ensign, Mar. 1971, p. 16.)

20 And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

21 So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

22 And this stone, which I have set *for* a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

GENESIS CHAPTER 29

Jacob meets Rachel at the well—He serves Laban seven years for her—Laban gives to Jacob first Leah then Rachel in marriage—Jacob serves another seven years—Leah bears Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

1 Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

2 And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone *was* upon the well's mouth.

3 And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

4 And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence *be* ye? And they said, Of Haran *are* we.

5 And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know *him*.

6 And he said unto them, *Is* he well? And they said, *He is* well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

7 And he said, Lo, *it is* yet high day, neither *is it* time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go *and* feed *them*.

8 And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and *till* they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

9 ¶ And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

10 And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

11 And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

12 And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's brother, and that he *was* Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

(7-13) Genesis 29:12. How Were Jacob and His Wives Related?

The following genealogy lines show clearly that each of the three great patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—married relatives. (The broken lines show marriages, and the dotted lines show individuals who are the same.)

Abraham married Sarah, who was his niece; Isaac married Rebekah, who was his first cousin once removed; and Jacob married Leah and Rachel, who were his first cousins.

13 And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

14 And Laban said to him, Surely thou *art* my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

15 ¶ And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou *art* my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what *shall* thy wages *be*?

16 And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

17 Leah *was* tender eyed; but Rachel *was* beautiful and well favoured.

(7-14) Genesis 29:17. Leah was “Tender Eyed”

The Hebrew word translated as “tender” means “soft, delicate, or lovely.” The fact that this trait is emphasized for Leah, while Rachel is described as “beautiful and well-favoured,” that is, beautiful in every respect, seems to suggest that Leah’s eyes were her most attractive feature.

18 And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

19 And Laban said, *It is* better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

20 And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her.

21 ¶ And Jacob said unto Laban, Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her.

22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast.

23 And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her.

24 And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid *for* an handmaid.

25 And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it *was* Leah: and he said to Laban, What *is* this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

26 And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

27 Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

28 And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

29 And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid.

30 And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

(7-15) Genesis 29:20–30. The Marriage of Jacob to Leah and Rachel

Here is given the first glimpse of Laban’s crafty nature. After promising Rachel to Jacob for seven years of service, Laban sent Leah to Jacob’s tent to consummate the marriage. The modern reader may find it hard to believe that Jacob did not discover the switch until it was morning; however, the following possibilities could explain the success of

Laban's ruse. As sisters, Rachel and Leah may have been quite similar in height, weight, and general appearance. Second, the women of Haran sometimes veiled themselves (see [Genesis 24:65](#)). Third, Laban was a shepherd. If he was a typical shepherd of ancient times, he dwelt in tents instead of in permanent dwellings. The inside of a tent at night can be very dark. And finally, knowing what the reaction of Jacob would be if he discovered the substitution early, Laban may have told Leah to speak as little as possible so as not to give the deception away before it was too late to change it. Though Laban demanded another seven years for Rachel's hand, he allowed Jacob to marry her once the seven days of wedding feasts for Leah were finished and to fulfill his indebtedness after the marriage. The gift of the handmaidens to each daughter made the servants the direct property of each wife, not of Jacob. Thus, later, when the handmaids had children, the children were viewed legally as the children of Rachel and Leah.

31 ¶ And when the LORD saw that Leah *was* hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel *was* barren.

(7-16) [Genesis 29:31](#). Did Jacob "Hate" Leah?

The Hebrew word *sahmay* does not mean "hate" as the term is used today, but rather conveys the idea of "loving less." A better translation would be, "when the Lord saw that Leah was loved less or was not as favored," he opened her womb.

32 And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me.

33 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I *was* hated, he hath therefore given me this *son* also: and she called his name Simeon.

34 And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.

35 And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

GENESIS CHAPTER 30

Jacob marries Bilhah, and she bears Dan and Naphtali—He marries Zilpah, and she bears Gad and Asher—Leah bears Issachar and Zebulun and a daughter, Dinah—Then Rachel conceives and bears Joseph—Jacob works for Laban for wages of cattle and sheep.

1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, *Am* I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

3 And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.

5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.

6 And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan.

7 And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.

8 And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

9 When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.

10 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.

11 And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.

12 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.

13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

14 ¶ And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.

15 And she said unto her, *Is it* a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.

16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.

17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.

18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.

20 And Leah said, God hath endued me *with* a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun.

21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

22 ¶ And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

(7-18) Genesis 30:14–22. What Are Mandrakes and Why Did Rachel Want Them?

Although Bible scholars are not sure exactly what plant is meant by the word *mandrake*, the significance of this plant to Rachel and Leah is clear. “The Hebrew

name denotes love fruit. The fruit had a pleasant taste and odor, and was supposed to ensure conception.” (Bible Dictionary, s.v. “mandrakes.”) In other words, the mandrakes were thought to enhance a woman’s fertility and ability to have children. Knowledge of this belief helps explain the interchange between Rachel and Leah. Rachel desired the mandrakes so that she could at last bear children of her own. As has already been seen, there was a fierce competition between the sisters in this regard. Leah’s response was, therefore, equally natural. She indicated that Rachel had already taken her husband, which probably meant only that Rachel had the first place in his affections. (Some scholars, however, believe that this passage means that Jacob actually lived in Rachel’s tent rather than in Leah’s tent.) The one advantage Leah had was her ability to bear children, while Rachel could not. In essence she told Rachel that it would be foolish for her to give Rachel her mandrakes and help her have children, for this would only lessen Leah’s one advantage (v. 15). So Rachel made a counter offer. She promised that she would encourage Jacob to go to Leah that night if she, Rachel, could have the mandrakes (v. 15). Leah agreed and told Jacob. Out of the agreement Leah conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son (vv. 17–18). She later bore another son and Jacob’s daughter Dinah (vv. 19–21).

Although not stated specifically, the record implies that the mandrakes did nothing for Rachel. Finally, Rachel did conceive, but it was not because of mandrakes. Rather, “God hearkened to her, and opened her womb” (v. 22).

23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:
24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

(7-17) Genesis 29:31 to 30:24. The Children of Israel

The scriptures in this chapter indicate that each child born to Jacob was given a name which reflected the feelings of his parents. There was a tremendous competitive spirit between the wives. Being able to bear a male child for their husband was a great honor. Rachel apparently was very sad that she did not have a child until later in her life. When she finally bore a son the name she gave him indicated her feeling for him and the hope she had in the future. The twelve sons of Jacob are listed below.

<i>Mother</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Reason for Name</i>
Leah	Reuben	See a son	Joy for having a son (see <u>Genesis 29:32</u>).
Leah	Simeon	Hearing	Because the Lord heard that she was hated (see <u>Genesis 29:33</u>).

<i>Mother</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Meaning</i>	<i>Reason for Name</i>
Leah	Levi	Joined	"This time will my husband be joined unto me" (Genesis 29:34).
Leah	Judah	Praise	"Now I will praise the Lord" (Genesis 29:35).
Bilhah	Dan	Judging	"God hath judged me" (Genesis 30:6).
Bilhah	Naphtali	Wrestling	"With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister" (Genesis 30:8).
Zilpah	Gad	Troop	"Leah said, A troop cometh" (Genesis 30:11).
Zilpah	Asher	My happiness	"Leah said, Happy am I" (Genesis 30:13).
Leah	Issachar	A reward	God hath given me my reward (Genesis 30:18).
Leah	Zebulun	Dwelling	"Now will my husband dwell with me" (Genesis 30:20).
Rachel	Joseph	Adding	"The Lord shall add to me another son" (Genesis 30:24).
Rachel	Benjamin	Son of my right hand	"You are the son of my right hand" (see Genesis 35:18).

25 ¶ And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

26 Give *me* my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry*: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give *it*.

29 And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

30 For *it was* little which thou hadst before I *came*, and it is *now* increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed *and* keep thy flock:

32 I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and *of such* shall be my hire.

33 So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

34 And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

35 And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, *and* every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons.

36 And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

37 ¶ And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which *was* in the rods.

38 And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

40 And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.

41 And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

42 But when the cattle were feeble, he put *them* not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.

43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

(7-19) Genesis 30:37–43. Did the Peeled Rods Influence the Conception of the Flocks of Jacob?

Jacob's peeling of branches and placing them before the animals so that when they conceived they would bear multicolored offspring seems to be a reflection of a common superstition that the conception of offspring is influenced by what the mother experiences or sees at the time of conception. Nothing is known by modern science to explain any relationship between what Jacob did and what happened in the hereditary patterns of the animals. Perhaps something is missing from the text. Perhaps the Lord

was just taking advantage of the virility of crossbred animals. Divine intervention certainly played a part. In any event, Jacob's herds grew and the Lord blessed him. Also, Jacob's separation of the flocks (v. 40) follows principles of good animal husbandry and would have increased the likelihood of having multi-colored animals.

GENESIS CHAPTER 31

The Lord commands Jacob to return to Canaan, and Jacob departs secretly—Laban pursues him; they resolve their differences and make a covenant of peace—Laban blesses his descendants, and he and Jacob part company.

1 And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that *was* our father's; and of *that* which *was* our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

2 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it *was* not toward him as before.

3 And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

4 And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

(7-20) Genesis 31:4

It is significant to note that Jacob counseled with his wives on the important move he was contemplating. Often modern scholars claim that woman in the Old Testament were of low status and were treated as property by their husbands. But this example, and others like it, show that such was not the case.

5 And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

(7-21) Genesis 31:7

Jacob's comment that Laban changed his wages ten times cannot be documented in the record—that is, ten times cannot be counted. But the nature of Laban makes it not unlikely that once Jacob began to prosper, Laban kept changing the terms of their agreement. Nevertheless, the Lord continued to bless Jacob temporally.

8 If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me.

10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle *were* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, *saying*, Jacob: And I said, Here *am* I.

12 And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle *are* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

13 I *am* the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, *and* where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

14 And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, *Is there* yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

15 Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

16 For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that *is* ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

(7-22) Genesis 31:14–16. “For He Hath Sold Us, and Hath Quite Devoured Also Our Money”

It is interesting that both Rachel and Leah agreed that Jacob was justified in leaving Laban. They also pointed out that they had received nothing from their father, because of his covetous nature. One commentator explained their bitterness:

“The dowry was an important part of marriage. We meet it first in Jacob, who worked seven years for Laban to earn a dowry for Rachel (Gen. 29:18). The pay for this service belonged to the bride as her dowry, and Rachel and Leah could indignantly speak of themselves as having been ‘sold’ by their father, because he had withheld from them their dowry (Gen. 31:14, 15). It was the family capital; it represented the wife’s security, in case of divorce where the husband was at fault. If she were at fault, she forfeited it. She could not alienate it from her children. There are indications that the normal dowry was about three years’ wages. The dowry thus represented funds provided by the father of the groom, or by the groom through work, used to further the economic life of the new family. If the father of the bride added to this, it was his privilege, and customary, but the basic dowry was from the groom or his family. The dowry was thus the father’s blessing on his son’s marriage, or a test of the young man’s character in working for it.” (Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, pp. 176–77.)

17 ¶ Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

19 And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that *were* her father's.

(7-23) Genesis 31:19. What Were the Images of Laban?

There is much debate among scholars about what the images were that were stolen by Rachel and what they represented. The Hebrew word which is sometimes used for small images of false gods is *teraphim*. Some translators render the word as "household gods." Was Laban an idolator? If so, why did Jacob go all the way back to Haran to find a wife if they were idolators like the Canaanites? Others believe they were astrological devices used for telling the future. But this suggestion raises the same question. One scholar theorized that these images were somehow tied in with the legal rights of inheritance (see Guthrie, *New Bible Commentary*, p. 104). If this theory is correct, the possessor of the *teraphim* had the right to inherit the father's property. This circumstance would explain why Rachel stole the images, since her father had "stolen" her inheritance (see Genesis 31:14–16). It would also explain Laban's extreme agitation over their loss and Jacob's severe penalty offered against the guilty party (see Genesis 31:31).

20 And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

21 So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face *toward* the mount Gilead.

22 And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.

23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speaks not to Jacob either good or bad.

25 ¶ Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives *taken* with the sword?

27 Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

28 And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in *so* doing.

29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

30 And now, *though* thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, *yet* wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what *is* thine with me, and take *it* to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found *them* not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found *them* not.

35 And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women *is* upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

36 ¶ And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What *is* my trespass? what *is* my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

37 Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set *it* here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

38 This twenty years *have* I *been* with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

39 That which was ᵗorn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night.

40 *Thus* I was; in the day the ᵈrought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I ᵈserved thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the ᵈlabour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

43 ¶ And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These* daughters *are* my daughters, and *these* children *are* my children, and *these* cattle *are* my cattle, and all that thou seest *is* mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?

44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up *for* a ᵈpillar.

46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

47 And Laban called it *ᵊ*Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it *ᵇ*Galeed.

48 And Laban said, This heap *is* a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

49 And *ᵃ*Mizpah; for he said, The LORD *ᵇ*watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take *other* wives beside my daughters, no man *is* with us; see, God *is* witness betwixt me and thee.

51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold *this* pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

52 This heap *be* witness, and *this* pillar *be* witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat *ᵇ*bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

Ideas for Personal Scripture Study

Genesis 28; 29:1–18

I am promised the blessings of Abraham in the temple.

On his way to Haran to find a wife, Jacob dreamed of a ladder stretching from the earth to heaven, with God standing above it. In the dream, God renewed with Jacob the same covenants He had made with Abraham and Isaac (see [Genesis 28:10–17](#); see also [Genesis 12:2–3](#); [26:1–4](#)). President Marion G. Romney shared this thought about what the ladder could represent: “Jacob realized that the covenants he made with the Lord there were the rungs on the ladder that he himself would have to climb in order to obtain the promised blessings—blessings that would entitle him to enter heaven and associate with the Lord. ... Temples are to us all what Bethel was to Jacob” (“[Temples—The Gates to Heaven](#),” *Ensign*, Mar. 1971, 16).

What other words and phrases in [Genesis 28:10–22](#) suggest to you a connection between Jacob’s experience and temple blessings? As you read these verses, think about the covenants you have made; what impressions come to you?

As you read [Genesis 29:1–18](#), ponder how Jacob’s marriage to Rachel was important to the covenant God renewed with Jacob in Bethel (“house of God”; see [Genesis 28:10–19](#)). Keep this experience in mind as you continue reading about Jacob’s life in [Genesis 29–33](#). How has the house of the Lord brought you closer to God?

See also Yoon Hwan Choi, “Don’t Look Around, Look Up!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2017, 90–92.

[Genesis 29:31–35](#); [30:1–24](#)

The Lord remembers me in my trials.

Even though Rachel and Leah lived in a time and culture different from ours, we can all understand some of the feelings they had. As you read [Genesis 29:31–35](#) and [30:1–24](#), look for words and phrases describing God’s mercy to Rachel and Leah. Ponder how God has “looked upon [your] affliction” and “remembered” you ([Genesis 29:32](#); [30:22](#)).

It is also important to remember that even though God hears us, in His wisdom He doesn’t always give us exactly what we ask for. Consider studying Elder Brook P. Hales’s message “Answers to Prayer” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2019, 11–14) to learn about different ways Heavenly Father answers us.

For more about the cultural background of this story, see *Old Testament Student Manual: Genesis–2 Samuel* (2003), [86–88](#).

GENESIS CHAPTER 32

Jacob sees angels—He asks God to preserve him from Esau, for whom he prepares presents—He wrestles all night with a messenger of God—Jacob’s name is changed to Israel—He sees God face to face.

1 And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

2 And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

3 And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

4 And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now:

5 And I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

6 ¶ And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

7 Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that *was* with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands;

8 And said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

9 ¶ And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

10 I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.

11 Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, *and* the mother with the children.

12 And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

13 ¶ And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother;

14 Two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams,

15 Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals.

16 And he delivered *them* into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

17 And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose *art* thou? and whither goest thou? and whose *are* these before thee?

18 Then thou shalt say, *They be* thy servant Jacob's; *it is* a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he *is* behind us.

19 And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him.

20 And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.

21 So went the present over before him: and himself lodged that night in the company.

22 And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

23 And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

24 ¶ And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is it that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

32 Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

(7-24) Genesis 32:24–32. The Wrestling of Jacob—What Was It?

Most scholars believe Jacob wrestled with an angel, but President Joseph Fielding Smith explained why this explanation could not be true:

“Who wrestled with Jacob on Mount Peniel? The scriptures say it was a man. The Bible interpreters say it was an angel. More than likely it was a messenger sent to Jacob to give him the blessing. To think he wrestled and held an angel who couldn't get away, is out of the question. The term *angel* as used in the scriptures, at times, refers to messengers who are sent with some important instruction. Later in this chapter when Jacob said he had beheld the Lord, that did not have reference to his wrestling.”
(Doctrines of Salvation, 1:17.)

GENESIS CHAPTER 33

Jacob and Esau meet and are reconciled—Esau receives Jacob's presents—Jacob settles in Canaan, where he builds an altar.

1 And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids.

2 And he put the handmaids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

(7-25) Genesis 33:1–2

Some have criticized Jacob's arrangement of the camp because it appears that he is putting the handmaids and their children in the most dangerous position. It would be a natural thing, however, in the Middle East for a clan leader to show off his family and possessions in such a way that the best and most highly favored is saved until last (see Clarke, Bible Commentary, 1:205).

3 And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

4 And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

5 And he lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who *are* those with thee? And he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

6 Then the handmaidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves.

7 And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves.

8 And he said, What *meanest* thou by all this drove which I met? And he said, *These are* to find grace in the sight of my lord.

9 And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself.

10 And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

11 Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough. And he urged him, and he took *it*.

12 And he said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

13 And he said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children *are* tender, and the flocks and herds with young *are* with me: and if men should overdrive them one day, all the flock will die.

14 Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly, according as the cattle that goeth before me and the children be able to endure, until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

15 And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee *some* of the folk that *are* with me. And he said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord.

16 ¶ So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir.

17 And Jacob journeyed to ᵃSuccoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle: therefore the name of the place is called ᵇSuccoth.

18 ¶ And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which *is* in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city.

19 And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.

20 And he erected there an altar, and called it ᵃEl-elohe-Israel.

Genesis 32–33

The Savior can help us overcome discord in our families.

As Jacob returned to Canaan, he was “greatly afraid and distressed” about how Esau would receive him ([Genesis 32:7](#)). As you read in [Genesis 32–33](#) about Jacob’s encounter with Esau and his feelings leading up to it, you might ponder your own family relationships—perhaps one that needs healing. Maybe this story could inspire you to reach out to someone. Questions like these could help guide your reading:

- How did Jacob prepare to meet Esau?
- What stands out to you about Jacob’s prayer found in [Genesis 32:9–12](#)?

- What do you learn about forgiveness from Esau’s example?
- How can the Savior help us heal family relationships?

See also [Luke 15:11–32](#); Jeffrey R. Holland, “[The Ministry of Reconciliation](#),” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2018, 77–79.

Ideas for Family Scripture Study and Home Evening

[Genesis 28–33](#).

Use “[Jacob and His Family](#)” (in *Old Testament Stories*) to help children understand the events from these chapters. Maybe family members could pause at each picture and identify what is being taught, such as the importance of marriage, covenants, work, and forgiveness.

You could use a ladder (or a picture of one) to talk about how our covenants are like a ladder. What covenants have we made, and how do they bring us closer to God? Family members might enjoy drawing Jacob’s dream, described in [Genesis 28:10–22](#).

The hymn “[Nearer, My God, to Thee](#)” (*Hymns*, no. 100) was inspired by Jacob’s dream. Your family could sing this song and discuss what each verse teaches.

[Genesis 32:24–32](#).

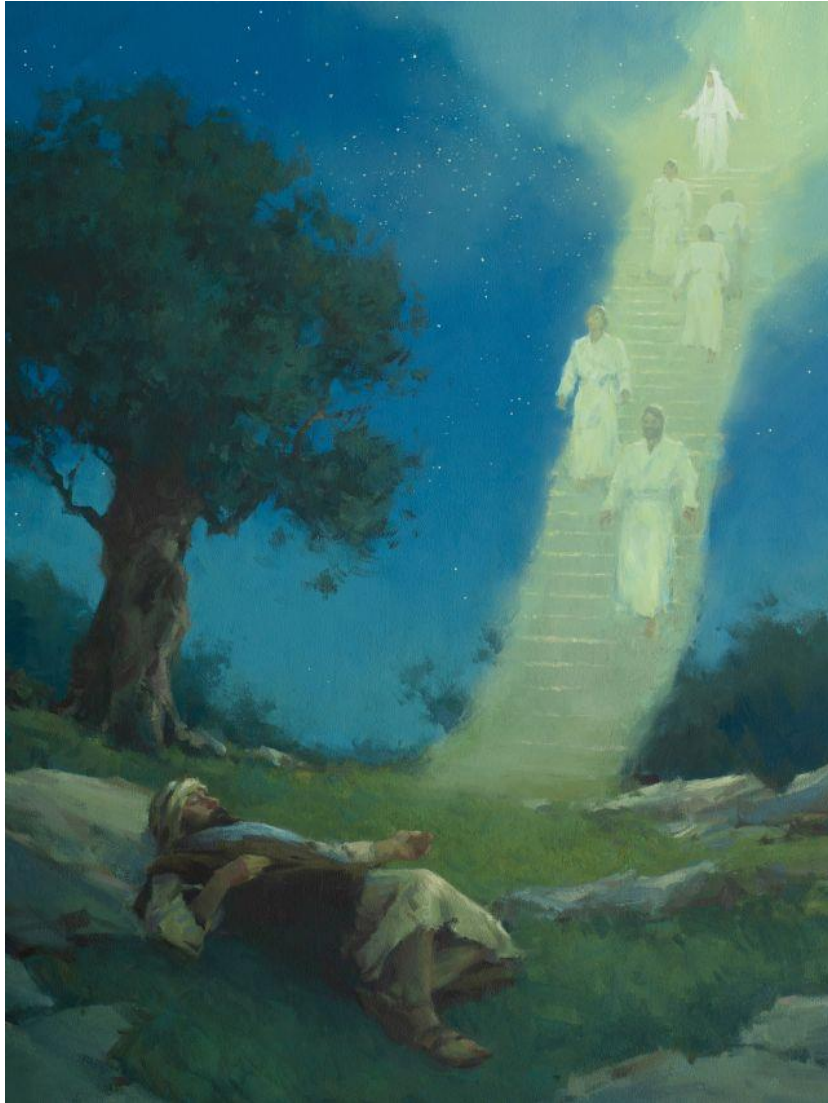
You might have family members who like to wrestle. Why is “wrestling” a good way to describe seeking blessings from the Lord? What do [Enos 1:1–5](#); [Alma 8:9–10](#) suggest about what it means to “wrestle ... before God”?

[Genesis 33:1–12](#).

After many years of hard feelings, Jacob and Esau were reunited. If Jacob and Esau could talk to us today, what might they say to help us when there is contention in our family?

For more ideas for teaching children, see [this week’s outline](#) in *Come, Follow Me—For Primary*.

Suggested song: “[Dearest Children, God Is Near You](#),” *Hymns*, no. 96.



Jacob's Dream at Bethel, by J. Ken Spencer