

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 30

This chapter gives an account of Rachel's envy of her sister for her fruitfulness, and of her earnest desire of having children, which she expressed to Jacob in an unbecoming manner, for which he reproved her, (~~Q301~~Genesis 30:1,2), of her giving her maid Bilhah to Jacob, by whom he had two sons, Dan and Naphtali, (~~Q303~~Genesis 30:3-8); and of Leah's giving her maid Zilpah to him, by whom he had two other sons, Gad and Asher, (~~Q309~~Genesis 30:9-13); and of Reuben's mandrakes he found in the field, and the agreement made between Rachel and Leah about them, (~~Q304~~Genesis 30:14-16); and of Leah's bearing Jacob two more sons and one daughter, (~~Q307~~Genesis 30:17-21), and of Rachel's also bearing him a son, whose name was Joseph, (~~Q302~~Genesis 30:22-24); upon which he desires leave of Laban to depart into his own country, his time of servitude being up, (~~Q305~~Genesis 30:25,26); which brought on a new agreement between him and Laban, that for the future he should have all the speckled, spotted, and brown cattle for his service, (~~Q302~~Genesis 30:27-36); and the chapter is concluded with an account of a cunning scheme of Jacob's to increase that sort of cattle, which succeeded, and by which he became rich, (~~Q307~~Genesis 30:37-43).

Ver. 1. *And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children*, etc.] In the space of three or four years after marriage, and when her sister Leah had had four sons:

Rachel envied her sister; the honour she had of bearing children, and the pleasure in nursing and bringing them up, when she lay under the reproach of barrenness: or, "she emulated her sisters"^{f1487}; was desirous of having children even as she, which she might do, and yet not be guilty of sin, and much less of envy, which is a very heinous sin:

and said unto Jacob, give me children, or else I die; Rachel could never be so weak as to imagine that it was in the power of Jacob to give her children at his pleasure, or of a barren woman to make her a fruitful mother of children; though Jacob at sight seems so to have understood her: but

either, as the Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it, that he would pray the Lord to give her children, as Isaac prayed for Rebekah; so Aben Ezra and Jarchi: or that he would, think of some means or other whereby she might have children, at least that might be called hers; and one way she had in view, as appears from what follows: or otherwise she suggests she could not live comfortably; not that she should destroy herself, as some have imagined; but that she should be so uneasy in her mind, that her life would be a burden to her; that death would be preferred to it, and her fretting herself for want of children, in all probability, would issue in it.

Ver. 2. *And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel*, etc.] Whom yet he dearly loved, hearing her talk in such an extravagant manner, as her words seemed to be, and were not: only expressive of great uneasiness and impatience, but implied what was not in the power of man to do:

and he said, [am] I in God's stead: do you take me to be God, or one that has a dispensing power from him to do what otherwise no creature can do; and which also he never gives to any? for, as the Targum of Jerusalem on (^{403D}Genesis 30:22) says, this is one of the four keys which God delivers not to an angel or a seraph; even the key of barrenness. Children are the gift of God, and his only, and therefore he is to be sought unto for them: hence Onkelos and Jonathan paraphrase it;

“wherefore dost thou seek them of me? shouldst thou not seek them of the Lord?”

who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? children, (^{403B}Psalms 127:3); not Jacob, but the Lord.

Ver. 3. *And she said*, etc.] in order to pacify Jacob, and explain her meaning to him; which was, not that she thought it was in his power to make her the mother of children, but that he would think of some way or another of obtaining children for her, that might go for hers; so the Arabic version, “obtain a son for me”: but, since no method occurred to him, she proposes one:

behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her, take her and use her as thy wife:

and she shall bear upon my knees; either sit on her knees in the time of labour, and so bring forth as if it was she herself; or rather bear a child, which Rachel would take and nurse, and dandle upon her knees as her own, (see ^{246D}Isaiah 66:12);

that I may also have children by her; children as well as her sister, though by her maid, and as Sarah proposed to have by Hagar, whose example, in all probability, she had before her, and uses her very words; (see Gill on “~~0162~~Genesis 16:2”).

Ver. 4. *And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid*, etc.] To be enjoyed as a wife, though she was no other than a concubine; yet such were sometimes called wives, and were secondary ones, and were under the proper lawful wife, nor did their children inherit; but those which Jacob had by his wives' maids did inherit with the rest:

and Jacob went in unto her; consenting to what Rachel his wife proposed to him: having concubines, as well as more wives than one, were not thought criminal in those times, and were suffered of God, and in this case for the multiplication of Jacob's seed; and perhaps he might the more readily comply with the motion of his wife, from the example of his grandfather Abraham, who took Hagar to wife at the instance of Sarah.

Ver. 5. *And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.*] This was so far countenanced by the Lord, that he blessed her with conception, and Jacob with a son by her.

Ver. 6. *And Rachel said*, etc.] As soon as she heard that Bilhah had bore a son:

God hath judged me: and hereby testified his approbation, as she understood it, of the step she had took in giving her maid to her husband, and she was justified in what she had done:

and hath also heard my voice: of prayer; she had prayed to God that her maid might have a child, or she have one by her:

and hath given me a son; whom she reckoned her own, Bilhah being her servant, and so her children born of her, hers; or whom she adopted and called her own, and therefore took upon her to give it a name, as follows: and here let it be observed, that she looked upon this child as a gift of God, as the fruit of prayer, and as in mercy to her, God dealing graciously with her, and taking her part, and judging righteous judgment:

therefore called she his name Dan; which signifies “judgment”; the reason of it lies in the first clause of the verse.

Ver. 7. *And Bilhah, Rachel's maid, conceived again,* etc.] Soon after the birth of her first child:

and bare Jacob a second son; this was his sixth son, but the second by Bilhah.

Ver. 8. *And Rachel said, with great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister,* etc.] Or, “with the wrestlings of God”^{f1488}, wrestling and striving in prayer with God; being vehement and importunate in her petitions to him, that she might have children as well as her sister: some render it, “I used the craftinesses of God”, or “great craftiness with my sisters”^{f1489}; by giving her maid Bilhah to her husband, and having children by her:

and I have prevailed; as she strove in her desires and prayers to have another child before her sister had; in that she prevailed, or she was succeeded in her desires, she had children as she wished to have:

and she called his name Naphtali; which signifies “my wrestling”, being a child she had been striving and wrestling for: these two sons of Bilhah were born, as say the Jews, Dan on the twenty ninth day of Elul or August, and lived one hundred and twenty seven years; Naphtali on the fifth of Tisri or September, and lived one hundred and thirty three years.

Ver. 9. *When Leah saw that she had left bearing,* etc.] For a little while, for she afterwards bore again, and observing also what her sister had done;

she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife: in this she was less excusable than Rachel, since she had four children of her own, and therefore might have been content without desiring others by her maid; nor had she long left off bearing, and therefore had no reason to give up hope of having any more.

Ver. 10. *And Zilpah, Leah's maid, bore Jacob a son.*] For it seems he consented to take her to wife at the motion of Leah, as he had took Bilhah at the instance of Rachel; and having gratified the one, he could not well deny the other; and went in to her, and she conceived, though neither of these things are mentioned, but are all necessarily supposed.

Ver. 11. *And Leah said, a troop cometh,* etc.] A troop of children, having bore four herself, and now her maid another, and more she expected; or the commander of a troop cometh, one that shall head an army and overcome his enemies; which agrees with the prophecy of Jacob, (⁽¹⁴⁹⁾Genesis 49:19);

and she called his name Gad: which signifies a “troop”, glorying in the multitude of her children, that she had or hoped to have.

Ver. 12. *And Zilpah, Leah's maid, bare Jacob a second son.*] As well as Bilhah, and no more.

Ver. 13. *And Leah said*, etc.] Upon the birth of the second son by her maid:

happy am I; or, “in my happiness”; or, “for my happiness”^{f1490}; that is, this child is an addition to my happiness, and will serve to increase it: for the daughters will call me blessed; the women of the place where she lived would speak of her as a happy person, that had so many children of her own, and others by her maid; (see ^{<BCTB>}Psalm 127:5):

and she called his name Asher, which signifies “happy” or “blessed”. These two sons of Zilpah, according to the Jewish writers^{f1491}, were born, Gad on the tenth day of Marchesvan or October, and lived one hundred and twenty five years; and Asher on the twenty second day of Shebet or January, and lived one hundred and twenty three years.

Ver. 14. *And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest*, etc.] Leah's eldest son, who is supposed to be at this time about four or five years of age^{f1492}, who went out from the tent to the field, to play there perhaps; and this was at the time of wheat harvest, in the month Sivan, as the Targum of Jonathan, which answers to part of our May; a time of the year when the earth is covered with flowers:

and found mandrakes in the field; the flowers or fruit of mandrakes, mandrake apples, as the Septuagint. This plant is said to excite love, provoke lust, dispose for, and help conception; for which reasons it is thought Rachel was so desirous of these “mandrakes”, which seem to have their name “dudaim” from love: the word is only used here and in (^{<2173>}Song of Solomon 7:13); where they are commended for their good smell, and therefore cannot be the plant which goes now by that name; since they neither give a good smell, nor bear good fruit, and are of a cold quality, and so not likely to produce the above effects ascribed unto them. It is very probable they were lovely and delightful flowers the boy picked up in the field, such as children delight in; some think the “jessamin”, others lilies, and others violets^{f1493}; it is not easy to determine what they were; (see Gill on “So 7:13”);

and brought them unto his mother Leah; as children are apt to do, to show what line flowers or fruit they have gathered:

then Rachel said to Leah, give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes; being taken with the colour or smell of them; for as for the notion of helping conception, or removing barrenness and the like, there is no foundation for it; for Rachel, who had them, did not conceive upon having them; and the conception both of her and Leah afterwards is ascribed to the Lord's remembering and hearkening to them.

Ver. 15. *And she said unto her*, etc.] Leah to Rachel, taking this opportunity to bring out a thing which had some time lain with uneasiness upon her mind:

[is it] a small thing that thou hast taken away my husband? got the greatest share of his affections, and had most of his company; which last was very probably the case, and more so, since Leah had left off bearing; and this she could not well stomach, and therefore upon this trifling occasion outs with it:

and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? which were poor things to be mentioned along with an husband; and besides, Rachel did not offer to take them away from the child without her leave, which she in very humble manner asked of her:

and Rachel said, therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy son's mandrakes; which showed no great affection to her husband, and a slight of his company, to be willing to part with it for such a trifle; and it seems by this as if they took their turns to lie with Jacob, and this night being Rachel's turn, she agrees to give it to Leah for the sake of the mandrakes: or however, if she had engrossed him to herself very much of late, as seems by the words of Leah above, she was willing to give him up to her this night, on that consideration; which Leah agreed she should have, as appears by what follows.

Ver. 16. *And Jacob came out of the field in the evening*, etc.] From feeding his flocks;

and Leah went out to meet him; knowing full well the time he used to come home:

and said, thou must come in unto me; into her tent, for the women had separate tents from the men; as Sarah from Abraham; and so these wives of Jacob had not only tents separate from his, but from one another:

for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes: that is, she had hired that night's lodging with him of Rachel, with the mandrakes her son Reuben had brought out of the field. Jacob made no objection to it; but consented, being willing to please both his wives, who he perceived had made this agreement between themselves:

and he lay with her that night; and that only, for the present: for, by the way of speaking, it looks as if he did not continue with her more nights together at that time, but went, as before that evening, to Rachel's tent.

Ver. 17. *And God hearkened unto Leah*, etc.] To the prayer of Leah, as the Targum of Jonathan, for more children: the desire of these good women for the company of their husband was not from lust, or an amorous desire in them, but for the sake of having many children, as appears by giving their maids to him; and the reason of this was, as Bishop Patrick well observes, that the promise made to Abraham of the multiplication of his seed, and of the Messiah springing from thence, might be fulfilled; and is the true reason of Moses's taking such particular notice of those things, which might seem below the dignity of such a sacred history:

and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son; the fifth he had by her, but the ninth in all, that were born unto him.

Ver. 18. *And Leah said, God hath given me my hire*, etc.] Of the mandrakes with which she had hired of Rachel a night's lodging with Jacob, and for which she had a sufficient recompense, by the son that God had given her: and she added another reason, and a very preposterous one, and shows she put a wrong construction on the blessing she received:

because I have given my maiden to my husband; which, she judged, was so well pleasing to God, that he had rewarded her with another son;

and she called his name Issachar, which signifies "hire" or "reward"; or, there is a reward, or a man of reward.

Ver. 19. *And Leah conceived again*, etc.] For bearing children Jacob took more to her, and more frequently attended her apartment and bed:

and bare Jacob a sixth son; the sixth by her, but the tenth by her and his two maids.

Ver. 20. *And Leah said, God hath endued me [with] a good dowry*, etc.] Having so many children; for though her husband could give her nothing at marriage, and her father gave her no more than one handmaid, yet God had abundantly made it up to her, in giving her so many sons: these are the heritage of the Lord, (^{437B}Psalm 127:3);

now will my husband dwell with me; constantly; and not come to her tent now and then only, as he had used to do;

because I have borne him six sons; this she thought would fix his affections to her, and cause him to cleave to her, and continue with her:

and she called his name Zebulun; which signifies “dwelling”. These two sons of Leah, according to the Jewish writers ^{f1494}, were born, Issachar on the tenth day of Ab or July, and lived one hundred and twenty two years, and Zebulun on the seventh of Tisri or September, and lived one hundred and twenty four years.

Ver. 21. *And afterwards she bare a daughter*, etc.] Which some writers, as Aben Ezra observes, say, was at the same birth with Zebulun, a twin with him; but being said to be afterwards shows the contrary:

and called her name Dinah; which signifies “judgment”: perhaps she may have some reference to the first son of Bilhah, Rachel’s handmaid, whom she called Dan, a name of the same signification; intimating as if it was a clear case that judgment went on her side; and that by the number of children she had, it was plain God had determined in her favour.

Ver. 22. *And God remembered Rachel*, etc.] In a way of mercy and kindness, whom he seemed to have forgotten, by not giving her children:

and God hearkened to her; to her prayer, which had been made time after time, that she might have children; but hitherto God had delayed to answer, but now gives one:

and opened her womb; gave her conception, and made her fruitful, and she became the mother of a child she so much desired.

Ver. 23. *And she conceived and bare a son*, etc.] Through the goodness of God unto her, and for which she was greatly thankful;

and said, God hath taken away my reproach; the reproach of barrenness with which she was reproached among her neighbours; and perhaps by her sister Leah, and indeed it was a general reproach in those times; and especially, it was the more grievous to good women in the family of Abraham, because they were not the means of multiplying his seed according to the promise, and could have no hope of the Messiah springing from them.

Ver. 24. *And she called his name Joseph*, etc.] Which signifies “adding”, or rather, “to be added”; or, “God shall add”, giving this reason for it;

and said, the Lord shall add to me another son: which is expressive of strong faith; that as she had begun to bear children, she should bear another, as she did; though some read the words as a wish or prayer, “may the Lord”, or, “and that the Lord would add”, etc. ^{f1495}; but our version seems best: the name Joseph is composed of two words, one which signifies to gather or take away, used in (^{o1323}Genesis 30:23), and another which signifies to add; and so has respect to the Lord’s taking away her reproach, and adding to her another son: Melo, an Heathen writer, makes mention of Joseph by name, as Polyhistor ^{f1496} relates, and makes him the twelfth and last son of Abraham, whereas he was the eleventh of Jacob. He was born, as the Jews say ^{f1497}, the twenty seventh of Tammuz or June, and lived one hundred and ten years.

Ver. 25. *And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph*, etc.] At which time his fourteen years of servitude were ended; for Jacob was in Laban’s house twenty years, fourteen were spent in serving for his wives, and the other six for his cattle, which begun from this time, as the context clearly shows; (see ^{o1341}Genesis 31:41); so that, as the Jewish writers ^{f1498} truly observe, in seven years’ time Jacob had twelve children born to him, eleven sons and one daughter; for he had served seven years before he had either of his wives: they also pretend that a twin was born with each, except with Joseph, but for that there is no foundation:

that Jacob said unto Laban, send me away; give me leave to depart thy house: he had a right to demand his liberty, and to insist upon it, since the time of his servitude was up; but he chose to have leave, and part in a friendly manner:

that I may go unto mine own place, and to my own country; to Beersheba, where his father and mother lived, and whom, no doubt, he longed to see;

and to the land of Canaan, in which that place was, which was his native country and was given him by promise, and was to be the inheritance of his seed.

Ver. 26. *Give [me] my wives*, etc.] His two wives, Leah and Rachel, and the two maids, Bilhah and Zilpah, which he had given him for wives also; he desires leave not to have them, but to take them away with him:

and my children; his twelve children; he did not desire his father-in-law to take any of them, and keep them for him, but was desirous of having them with him: no doubt, for the sake of their education, though he had nothing of his own wherewith to support them; not doubting that God would make good his promise in giving him food and raiment, and returning him to his country; and which his faith applied to his family as well as to himself:

for whom I have served thee; not for his children, but for his wives, his two wives;

and let me go; free from thy service, and to my own country;

for thou knowest my service which I have done thee: how much and great it is, and with what diligence and faithfulness it has been performed, and that the time of it fixed and agreed upon was at an end.

Ver. 27. *And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry*, etc.] One would think he could not expect to have much from him, by his treatment of him; but he craftily cajoles him in this fawning, flattering way, in order to gain a point, and begs of him, in a very humble and suppliant manner, if he had any love for him, that he would not depart from him, but stay with him, which he should take as a great favour; for he could not insist upon it, as bound in duty, or as a point of justice:

for I have learned by experience; by the observations made in the fourteen years past;

that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake: Laban had so much religion as to ascribe the blessings, the good things he had, to the Lord, as the author and giver of them; and so much honour, or however, thought it was more his interest to own it, that it was for Jacob's sake that he was thus blessed: the word translated is used sometimes of divination, and the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem render it, "I have used divinations"; and according to Jarchi and Aben Ezra, Laban was a diviner and soothsayer; and by the

teraphim he had in his house, (^{<0319>}Genesis 31:19); he divined, and knew thereby that he was blessed for the sake of Jacob; but, as Schmidt observes, it is not credible that the devil should give so famous a testimony to Laban of Jehovah and Jacob.

Ver. 28. *And he said, appoint me thy wages, and I will give [it].*] Say what thou wilt have, fix what salary thou thinkest sufficient, and I will agree to it, and punctually pay it: this he craftily said, not choosing to propose anything himself, but leaving it to Jacob, knowing very well the honesty and modesty of Jacob, that he would mention less wages than he could have the face to offer him.

Ver. 29. *And he said unto him,* etc.] Jacob to Laban,

thou knowest that I have served thee; not only diligently and faithfully, without any salary, excepting for his wives; otherwise he had no wages for his service all this time, which therefore should be considered for the future:

and how thy cattle was with me: always under his care, and he ever watchful of them; spent all his time and labour with them, and had no opportunity of getting anything for himself.

Ver. 30. *For [it was] little which thou hadst before I [came],* etc.] Perhaps but a single flock, and that not a very large one, since Rachel, his youngest daughter, had the care of it:

and it is [now] increased unto a multitude; or “broke forth” ^{f1499}, spread itself over the fields and plains, hills and mountains adjacent, so that they were covered with his sheep, these bringing forth thousands and ten thousands, (^{<0343>}Psalms 144:13);

and the Lord hath blessed thee since my coming; or “at my foot” ^{f1500}; ever since he set foot in his house. Aben Ezra observes it as a proverbial saying, such an one has a good foot, a lucky one, wherever he comes a blessing or success goes with him; or the meaning may be, wherever Jacob went or led his flock, and fed it, it prospered, the blessing of God going with him. Onkelos renders it, “for my sake”; and so it is the same with what Laban had observed and owned, (^{<0327>}Genesis 30:27);

and now, when shall I provide for mine own house? suggesting it was his duty to do it, and it was high time he did it, since he had a large family to provide for; (see ^{<518>}1 Timothy 5:8).

Ver. 31. *And he said, what shall I give thee?* etc.] So said Laban to Jacob, still avoiding making any offer himself, but waiting for Jacob, and pressing upon him to fix his wages:

and Jacob said, thou shalt not give me anything; a speech Laban liked very well: his meaning is, that he should give him no certain settled salary, nor even of anything that Laban was now possessed of, and God had blessed him with for his sake he did not desire any part of it;

but if thou wilt do this thing for me; which he was about to mention, and does in (^{<632>}Genesis 30:32);

I will again feed [and] keep thy flock; there is an elegance in the original; “I will return, I will feed, I will keep thy flock”: it seems by this that Jacob had relinquished the care of the flock, upon the time of his servitude being out; but, upon the following condition, proposes to return to it, lead it out to the pastures, and feed it on them, and keep it night and day, as he had used to do.

Ver. 32. *I will pass through all thy flock today,* etc.] Not alone, but Laban and his sons with him;

removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle; that is, such as were black and had white spots on them, or were white and had black spots on them; and the “speckled”, according to Jarchi and Ben Melech, were such as had small spots on them; and the “spotted” were such as had larger:

and all the brown cattle among the sheep; the russet coloured ones, or the “black” ^{f1501} ones, as some render it; and so Aben Ezra, and who makes mention of another sort, called “barud”, which signifies spotted with white spots like hailstones, but is not to be found in the text here, but in (^{<630>}Genesis 31:10); and besides coincide with those before described:

and the spotted and speckled among the goats: that had larger and lesser spots upon them as the sheep;

and [of such] shall be my hire; not those that were now in the flock, but such as were like them, that should be brought forth for the time to come;

which seems to be a strange proposal, and what was not likely to turn out much to the advantage of Jacob; but he knew what he did, and very probably was directed of God, if not in a vision, yet by an impulse on his mind, that such a method would be right, and would succeed; (see ~~Gen 31:10~~ Genesis 31:10-12).

Ver. 33. *So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come*, etc.] Either by the success I shall have, and the blessing of God upon me, making it prosperous; it will appear in time to come, and to all posterity, that I have most righteously and faithfully served thee: or rather, such a separation being made in Laban's flock, all the spotted ones being removed, and only white ones left with Jacob to keep; it would be a clear case hereafter, if any such should be found with Jacob, they were not taken from Laban's flock, but were what in Providence he was blessed with, and came by honestly and righteously:

when it shall come for my hire before thy face; when any spotted ones would be brought forth, it would be plain and manifest to his face, that they belonged to him for his hire or wages; or, as Schmidt, when any complaint should come before Laban concerning his hire, or about any speckled and spotted cattle that were Jacob's hire, as if he had wronged him of it, the action now done, by making such a separation, would be a sufficient vindication of him, and justify him from such an aspersion:

and everyone that [is] not speckled and spotted amongst the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be accounted stolen with me; if any such were found among those that Jacob should hereafter call his flock, as were without specks and spots, or were not brown, he was content they should be reckoned as stolen, and what he had no right unto.

Ver. 34. *And Laban said*, etc.] Being well pleased with the proposal Jacob made, as knowing that, generally speaking, cattle of a colour produced those that were of the same; and whereas Jacob proposed to have a flock of sheep of only white in colour, committed to his care, and to have such for his own that should be produced of them, that were speckled, spotted, and brown, Laban concluded from the general nature of things that he could have but very few, if any, and therefore was for striking the bargain at once:

behold, I would it might be according to thy word; he agreed it should be as Jacob had settled it, and he hoped and wished he would abide by it; he was afraid he would not keep to it.

Ver. 35. *And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted*, etc.] That had strakes of a different colour from the rest on their shoulders, thighs, legs, or feet, or in any part of the body: the word here used stands in the room of that before translated “speckled”; this Laban did, as the context shows; he went about it immediately at the motion of Jacob, with which he was pleased:

and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted; so that there might be neither male nor female of those mixed colours; this he did to prevent any generation of them:

[and] everyone that had [some] white in it; any white spot in it, as the Targum of Jonathan; that is, everyone of the brown or black colour, that had any white in it:

and all the brown among the sheep: that were entirely so:

and, gave [them] into the hands of his sons; not the sons of Jacob, as some in Aben Ezra; for they were not fit for the care of a flock, the eldest son, Reuben, not being seven years of age; but the sons of Laban, who were now grown up and fit for such service.

Ver. 36. *And he set three days’ journey between himself and Jacob*, etc.] Not three days’ journey for a man, but for cattle; this distance there was between the place where Laban and his sons kept the spotted, speckled, and brown cattle, and that in which Jacob kept the flock only consisting of white sheep; and this was done, that the flocks might not be mixed, and that there might be no opportunity to take any of the spotted ones, and that they might not stray into Jacob’s flock; or lest any of his seeing them might bring forth the like, such precaution was used:

and Jacob fed the rest of Laban’s flock; those that remained after the spotted, speckled, and brown were taken out; and Jacob having none but white sheep, there was no great likelihood, according to the course of nature, of his having much for his hire; since he was only to have the spotted, speckled, and brown ones that came from them, and generally like begets like; and, according to the Jewish writers^{f1502}, those that were

committed to his care were old and barren, and sick, and infirm, that so he might have no profit from them.

Ver. 37. *And Jacob took him rods of green poplar*, etc.] Of the white poplar tree, called green, not from the colour, but from the moisture, being such as were cut off of the tree:

and of the hazel and chestnut tree; the former some take to be the almond tree, as Saadiah Gaon, and others; and the latter to be the plantain or plane tree, so Ainsworth, and others:

and pilled white strakes in them; took off the bark of them in some places, and left it on in others, which made white strakes:

and made the white appear which [was] in the rods; that part of the rods which was stripped of the bark appeared white; and it appeared the whiter for the bark that was left on in other parts; and both made the rods to appear to have various colours, which was the design of Jacob in pilling them.

Ver. 38. *And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks*, etc.] Opposite them, in the view of them:

in the gutters in the watering troughs, when the flocks came to drink; that is, in places of water, where troughs or vessels were made, into which the water ran convenient for the cattle to drink out of; and here he placed his party coloured rods right over against the flocks:

that they should conceive when they came to drink; as it was most likely they should when they were together at the water, and had refreshed themselves with it; and being “heated”,^{f1503} as the word signifies, with a desire of copulation, might conceive in sight of the above rods; which were set to move upon their imagination at the time of their conception, in order to produce cattle of different colours; to which no doubt he was directed of God, and it had, through his blessing, the wished for success, as follows:

Ver. 39. *And the flocks conceived before the rods*, etc.] At them, and in sight of them; which had such influence upon them through the force of imagination, and a divine power and providence so directing and succeeding this device, that they

brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted; such as Jacob was to have for his hire; and, though there was no doubt a more than ordinary

concourse of divine Providence attending this affair; yet there have been many strange things brought about in a natural way by the strength of imagination, as may be observed in those marks which women are said to mark their children with, while with child of them; as also in conceiving and bearing such like unto them they have fancied, as the woman that bore a blackamoor, through often looking at the picture of one in her chamber; and an Ethiopian queen, who by the same means bore a white child, fair and beautiful, which she exposed, lest she should be thought an adulteress ^{f1504}; and what comes nearer to the case here, Jerom reports ^{f1505} the like things done in Spain among horses and mares, by placing beautiful horses before mares at the time of leaping; and the Apis, or Egyptian ox, which had peculiar spots in it, was produced in like manner, so that there was always in succession one of the same form and colour, as Austin asserts ^{f1506}; and it may be observed, what is affirmed by some writers ^{f1507}, that sheep will change their colours according to the different waters they drink of at the time of their being covered; and that some rivers drank of will make white sheep black, and black white, and others red and yellow. But as Jacob was directed of God to take this method, this is sufficient to justify him, and upon his blessing and providence the success depended, whatever there may be in nature to bring about such an effect; and as it was to do himself justice, who had been greatly injured by Laban, it was equally as just and righteous a thing to take this course, as it was for the Israelites by a divine direction to borrow jewels, etc. of the Egyptians, whereby they were repaid for their hard service.

Ver. 40. *And Jacob did separate the lambs*, etc.] The ringstraked, speckled, and spotted;

and set the faces of the flocks, that were all white,

towards the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; either to go before those that were all white, that they by looking at them might conceive and bring forth such, which was another artifice of Jacob's to increase his own sheep; or else he set at the water troughs the white sheep on one side of them, and on the opposite side the speckled ones, etc. that the same effect might also be produced the more successfully both by the rods and by the speckled lambs:

and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle; partly that they might not be mixed together, but kept distinct, that what was his property might be discerned from Laban's; and partly, lest his

spotted ones, being mixed with Laban's white sheep, by continual looking at them, should conceive and bring forth such likewise, and so his flocks be lessened.

Ver. 41. *And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive,* etc.] Whose limbs were well compact, and were strong and healthy:

that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods; and bring forth party coloured ones, and such as were robust and strong like themselves; and this was another device of Jacob's to get the best of the flock. Aben Ezra thinks this refers to the two seasons of the year, when the flocks conceived; the one was in Nisan, in the spring, and such as were brought on that conception were strong, and therefore Jacob chose to lay the rods in the gutters at that time, that he might have the best cattle; and so the Targum of Jonathan calls these here the forward ones, as it does those in (^{<130>}Genesis 30:42) we render feeble, the latter ones; which, according to Aben Ezra, conceived in Tisri or September, and what they brought were weak and feeble.

Ver. 42. *And when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in,* etc.] Or "when covered", as Menachem, that is, with wool, and so not so desirous of copulation with the males, nor so fit and strong for generation; and therefore he put not in the rods into the gutters, partly that he might have none feeble in his flock, and partly that he might not spoil Laban of his whole flock, strong and weak:

so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's; not only his flocks became more numerous than Laban's, but were a better quality.

Ver. 43. *And the man increased exceedingly,* etc.] Jacob grew very rich: *and had much cattle;* the greater part of Laban's flocks brought forth speckled, spotted, and brown cattle, which, according to agreement, were Jacob's:

and maidservants, and menservants; which he got to take care of his household affairs, and to assist him in keeping his flocks:

and camels, and asses; for his flocks increasing so very much, he sold many of his sheep at a good price, as Jarchi observes, and with it bought camels and asses; and these were very fit for his use, when he should be obliged or think fit to remove into his own country, and which he was

meditating, and had a direction from the Lord for, as in the following chapter.