

Parashah 29

B'resheet 30:22-31:2; 1Sam 1:1-11; Acts 13:16-41

Summary by Claudio Ramos

Jacob's Legacy

- “Then God remembered Rachel” – The Covenant again unfolds
 - Joseph is Born – God’s future instrument to preserve Israel and others
 - 14 yrs of labor DONE! – now Jacob wants to “go to my home and to my land”
- But Jacob, trusting God, decides to stay longer working for Laban

“Yet in the midst of such faith Jacob also teaches us a very important lesson, namely, true faith does not negate human effort. Jacob could have simply “sat on his hands,” reasoning that since he had entrusted the future to God, he could just sit and wait for things to happen. But he didn’t. Like all true people of faith, after entrusting the future to God’s almighty hand, he set himself to accomplishing all within his power to be successful in his work” Tim Hegg, Parashah 29

- Jacob and Laban have an unhealthy relationship – Laban is unfair towards Jacob.
 - Jacob is Laban’s nephew and becomes Laban’s son-in-law
 - Did Jacob give Laban reason to abuse him?

Taking a closer look at Laban & Jacob – are we correctly characterizing Jacob?

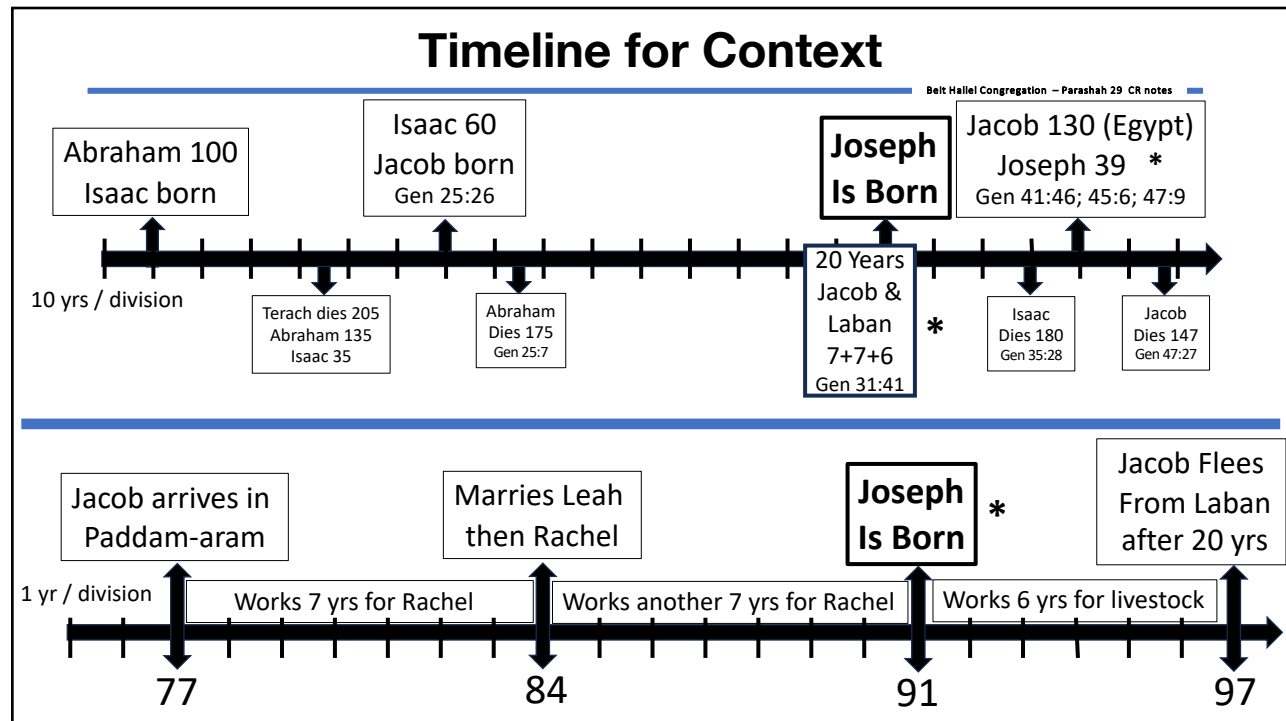
1

What do we know about Laban?

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- Laban was possibly about 40 to 50 years older than Jacob
 - Isaac was 40 when he married Rivkah Gen 25:20 & 60 when Jacob born 25:26
 - If Laban was 20ish when Isaac married, then at least 40ish when Jacob was born
- Laban seems to be content to benefit at the cost of others
 - By trickery he unloads his eldest less beautiful daughter to his nephew
 - Becomes prosperous from “cheap labor” for 14 years
 - At end of 20 years he’s still trying to keep Jacob’s service and possessions
- We get acquainted with Laban in Gen Ch 24, then again in Ch’s 29-31
 - “come in blessed of the LORD”, feeds the camels, washes the travelers feet
 - Are these actions coming from Laban’s heart or from ulterior motives?
 - Is Moses giving us hints about Laban’s character?
 - 24:30 “when he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists”
 - 31:29 “... the God of your father spoke with me ...” *
 - 31:30 “... why did you steal my gods?”

2



3

Is the common view of Jacob as trickster correct?

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I propose a different view of Jacob is worthy of consideration

Let's examine 4 points that are traditionally used for "trickster"

- The meaning of the name 'Jacob' יַעֲקֹב
 - Derived from the Hebrew word for heel עֶקֶב
 - There are 2 key verses used to help understand his name's meaning
 - "...his hand took hold on Esau's heel, and his name was called Jacob..."^{25:26}
 - 25:26 makes a connection to 'the one who takes by the heel'
 - "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times?..."^{27:36}
 - 27:36 'supplanted': took the place of and served as a substitute
 - Yes, Jacob took the place of Esau both times
 - But HaShem told Rivkah: "the older shall serve the younger" Gen 25:23

4

Is the common view of Jacob as trickster correct? (Continued)

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2. Buys Esau's Birthright with a bowl of lentil soup Gen 25:31 * *
 - 1st thought was "that's a hard bargain, why not just trade some meat"
 - But Esau enjoyed hunting for game, and "despised his birthright." 25:34
 - If it meant nothing to Esau, then why not take it to give the BR honor?
3. "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken your blessing." 27:35
 - Firstly, I'm not supporting any acts of deception! Let's look carefully.
 - Jacob initially cautions his mother's request to "deceive" Isaac 27:8-13 *
 - "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go..." 27:13
 - Is Isaac able to make sound decisions? Obviously not on his own! *
 - Old & weak eyes 27:1 / Esau brought grief 26:35 / "older shall serve the younger" 25:23
 - Today we have "power of attorney" to legally help those we love
 - I see Rivkah and Jacob acting in support of the covenant to aid Isaac in his time of need, doing what Isaac would have done if competent

5

Ultimately what counts is what God says!

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- With all we have in the 66 books, yet there's much silence
- I caution about being dogmatic in areas of silence or opposing views
4. "... But Jacob was a peaceful (**תָּם** tam) man, living in tents." 25:27

וַיַּעֲקֹב אִישׁ תָּם יֹשֵׁב אֹהֶלִים

- Depending on context Tam can also be complete, blameless or perfect
- Book of Job uses "Tam" 7x's; (3) blameless, (3) guiltless, (1) integrity
- Tam occurs 15 times in Tanach, NASB95 translates them as:
 - (6) blameless, (3) guiltless, (1) integrity, (2) perfect one, (2) complete, (1) peaceful
 - Job 1:1, 8, 2:3, 8:20, 9:20, Psa 37:37, 64:4, Prov 29:10, Song 5:2, 6:9 *
- Philo writes - "And Moses bears witness to this, when he says that "Jacob was a man without artifice, dwelling in a house;" Studies 62
- God called Jacob "tam", he was CHOSEN & protected by mom
 - As Job was a blameless man, that's how I see Jacob

6

The contrast between Laban & Jacob – Night & Day

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- Laban was an idol worshiper, selfish and abusive
 - Laban's character is so obvious
- Jacob was chosen by God to:
 - Be the covenant bearer after Abraham and Isaac
 - Establish a nation of priests from his 12 sons
- Jacob encountered many challenges, but at his end he Blessed the 12 tribes and also prophesied about Messiah
- Laban worshiped himself/idols **≠** Jacob worshiped HaShem

7

Idolatry isn't always as obvious as Laban's

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- Idolatry separates us from God
- I don't see Jacob's life linked to "Idols"
- But Laban embraced anything that would bring him "gain"
- Gain or wealth is not a sin, but obsession of them IS
- Idols are anything that we embrace in place of God
 - Idols could be anything that is either "Good" or "Bad"
 - Food, drink, intimacy, need for acceptance by others, prestige, knowledge, wealth, control, power, position
- Let's embrace the hope of hearing HaShem say to us:

Well done good and faithful servant ...

Enter into the joy of your master Matt 25:23

8