

Exegetical Notes – Genesis 30:25-43

“Another Crooked Deal”

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(Genesis answers three basic theological questions. The first question is, “Whose world is it anyway?” The text answers the question by affirming that it is God’s world by right of creation. It is God’s world because God made it. The second question Genesis asks is “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way?” The answer is by trusting God and obeying Him. Family becomes the concern, and Genesis begins to answer the third question, “How do we get along in God’s world God’s way particularly with the members of our own family?” In Genesis 25, we visited the family of Abraham, and we have seen how Abraham’s family was fractured because Abraham did not trust God completely and did not follow the plan of God for marriage. We saw how the family of Isaac, Abraham’s heir, was divided by parental favoritism. So far, we have not seen a family that remained healthy and intact. This text continues by showing what happened in Jacob’s family.)

Genesis 30:25-43

Verses 25-26

25 After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. 26 Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I’ve done for you.”

- Sometime later, Jacob decided that it was time for him to return to his homeland. He approached his Uncle Laban and told Laban that he wanted to take what was his and return to his homeland.

Verses 27-28

27 But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you.” 28 He added, “Name your wages, and I will pay them.”

- Laban asked Jacob to remain with him. He said that he had learned by divination that God had blessed him because of Jacob. Divination was forbidden by God. None-the-less, Laban apparently practiced it. He said that if Jacob remained in his service he would pay the wages Jacob requested.

Verses 29-30

²⁹ ***Jacob said to him, “You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. ³⁰ The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?”***

- Jacob pointed out to Laban that it was obvious how Laban had been blessed by his service. Divination was not necessary. Laban had been made wealthy by Jacob's service to him. But, he also pointed out that he had done little to prosper himself.

Verses 31-34

³¹ ***“What shall I give you?” he asked.***

“Don’t give me anything,” Jacob replied. “But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: ³² Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages. ³³ And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen.”

³⁴ ***“Agreed,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.”***

- Laban offered to give Jacob whatever gift he desired to stay. Jacob made Laban a counter-offer. Jacob suggested that Laban allow him to take all the spotted sheep, every dark colored lamb, and every speckled or spotted goat from Laban's herds on that day. These animals would be Jacob's wage for remaining with Laban. Jacob's honesty in dealing with Laban in this matter would be proven by the fact that all of Jacob's animals would be spotted, speckled or dark colored. Any animal not so colored would be considered stolen and Laban could take it back.
- Laban agreed.

- There was no term limit set in the contract. Apparently, this agreement would bind both men until such time as one or the other was no longer satisfied and they agreed to dissolve the agreement.

Verses 35-36

³⁵ That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. ³⁶ Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.

- Tricky Uncle Laban removed the marked animals from his flocks before Jacob could separate them out. He sent the marked animals off with his sons so that Jacob would not know that he had been tricked.
- But Jacob continued to tend Laban's animals that were not marked.

Verses 37-42

³⁷ Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. ³⁸ Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, ³⁹ they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. ⁴⁰ Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. ⁴¹ Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, ⁴² but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob.

- Jacob noticed his uncle's treachery. He knew that Laban had tried to cheat him. So, he took steps to outwit Laban. He placed branches in the watering troughs that, somehow, increased the breeding of the sheep he chose. He separated out the marked sheep and kept them for himself. Jacob later credited the increase in his flocks over Laban's to God (see Genesis 37:7 & 9) but, it is clear that his intention was to right the wrong Laban had done to him by outsmarting Laban.

Verse 43

⁴³ In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

- So it was that Jacob grew rich in Laban's service.

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