

# (Genesis) Genesis 30:31-39

by J. Vernon McGee

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*The sermon explores the story of Jacob and Laban, highlighting Jacob's use of trickery and his understanding of genetics and animal breeding, and ultimately pointing to the sovereignty and providence of God in our lives.*

**Duration:** 7:53

**Scripture:** Genesis 30:31-33, Genesis 30:36-39, Genesis 30:41-42, Genesis 31:1, Genesis 31:43-44

**Topics:** "Genesis"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Jacob and his encounter with his uncle Laban. Jacob, known for his trickery, meets his match in Laban, who is an even better trickster. Despite their deceitful ways, God still blesses Jacob and he leaves Laban's house with many possessions. The preacher also highlights the significance of Jacob's eleven sons, who will become the twelve tribes of Israel. The sermon concludes with a discussion of Jacob's agreement with Laban regarding the breeding of the cattle, emphasizing the importance of righteousness in Jacob's actions.

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## Transcript

Verse 31, he said, "...what shall I give thee?" And Jacob said, "...thou shalt not give me anything. If thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock. I'll pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from fence all the speckled and spotted cattle, all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and of such shall be my hire." In other words, the pure breed will be labans, but that which is just a half-breed are not breeds at all, that are not blue-ribbon cattle.

I'll take those if you'll give them to me, and that's all that you'll need to do. These are the off-breeds. They were not purebred by any means.

And he said, "...you let me have these, that'll be my wages." Now, that sounds like a pretty good proposition. Verse 33 now, and let me read, "...so shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come from my hire before thy face, every one that's not speckled and spotted among the goats and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me." And Laban said, "...behold, I would it might be according to thy word." And he removed that day the heat goats that were ring-streaked and spotted, and all the 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. In other words, they would not be able to breed with the others.

Jacob would take that which is the off-breed, and only the full-breed would bear, and that would belong to Uncle Laban, but the others would be his. He's making here a very interesting deal, and the way that it worked out is quite interesting. And I want to read this because this has been criticized.

Verse 36, "...he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks, and Jacob took in rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree, and peeled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had piled before the flocks in the gutters and the watering troughs, when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink." Well, there have been several explanations of this. There are those that say this is nothing in the world but just pure superstition, and others say it's just old wives' tales, and this is certainly something that ought not to be in the Bible record.

I think probably it should be in the record. In fact, it's my judgment it should be in the record. It's very important that it be in the Word of God.

And the fact of the matter is this is not superstition. There are several explanations. Now, I'm of the opinion that there are those that today have been able to ascertain that this does have an effect upon those that are bringing into the world animals, and certainly what a woman sees in time of pregnancy and her experience during that time has a tremendous effect upon the child.

And today the psychiatrist and psychologist makes a great deal of it. Well, it affects the animal world also. Now, I do not intend to go into that particular phase of it, but there are things that frankly I can't explain, and I don't know that anybody that can explain them.

If they can, they ought to explain them to me because I'm in the dark. I remember in our community where I lived as a boy in southern Oklahoma, there was one of these men that would take a fork and stick and tell you where there was water. And everybody in our neighborhood, when they wanted to drill a well, they called for him.

He came along with a fork and stick, and the interesting thing is that every time they called him in and he picked out a spot, they drilled for water where he said and they got water. Now, I don't know whether they would have got water if they hadn't called him in. I don't know.

All I know is that there was a very strange procedure. It sounds superstitious to me, but it seemed to work. I know in many cases it does not work.

But I found out that there are a lot of scientific cures today that they give and they don't work. And there are a lot of scientific explanations that don't work. So that just goes to say it doesn't work, and in some cases it does work, and that doesn't prove anything.

All I'm trying to say is don't rule this out as being superstitious. Now, if you want to know the thing that I actually think, both Laban and Jacob believe this is what caused them to be ring-straight. And that's the thing that's important for this story.

Maybe you are smart enough not to believe it, but these two boys believed it. And what you must remember, all those cattle were together and some cattle would produce ring-straight and speckle and some of the offspring would be white. Now, if there's speckle, some speckle and some not, even that one that's not may bring into the world one that is not.

I know that it may use a very homely illustration. I remember we had a cat one time when I was a boy and that cat was the prettiest, whitest cat that I've ever seen. Now, she had a bunch of kittens and there were a lot of them just speckled, you know, just like the cattle, and several were perfectly white.

And lo and behold, in that litter, there was one that was as black as ink. Now, you tell me how he got in there when his mama was a white cat, just a snow-white cat, and here she has a black kitten and yet other speckled and others white. Well, I know she must have met a black cat somewhere, but I do know this.

Why did one be perfectly white and one black? Well, that's what's happening with these cattle. I don't understand all that myself and I don't propose to try to explain it. All I say is this is the record that is here these men believed it and Jacob is using trickery again regardless of whether there's value in it or not.

He's using trickery. Now, he's been quite a trickster, you can see, but he's met an uncle that's a better trickster than he is and he's trying now to make a comeback. Well, may I say to you, poor Jacob, because he came there with just a walking stick and when he leaves, he leaves with quite a few possessions.

Now, God is calling him to leave and before we leave the chapter, I think probably I ought to call attention to this. It may be mechanical about these boys, but here you have the mention of the 11 sons and that's important because these 11 sons are the sons that are going to constitute the 12 tribes of Israel.

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