

## Genesis 29

**Read Genesis 29:1-14:** On one hand it seems like Rebecca and Jacob used a questionable strategy to trick Isaac and Esau, preventing the family from falling into unholy leadership (under Esau). On the other hand, it was true that Isaac had become complacent about the direction of the family. Isaac undoubtedly was upset at first; but now he is on board with taking steps to preserve the godly bloodline.

Jacob's parents told him to find his uncle Laban in Padan Aram, and marry one of Laban's daughters (Jacob's cousin). The Mosaic Law had not yet been established; with all of its familial marital restrictions. Isaac and Rebecca forbid Jacob to take a wife from the local idolatrous Canaanite women, like Esau did.

*When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. <sup>35</sup> They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah. (Genesis 26:34)*

We can get caught up in all of the drama and short cuts being used here; but ultimately God used all of it to derail the status quo. At least his parents are finally unified on preserving the line of faith. This destination of Padan Aram was most likely located in Turkey or Syria.

Jacob was leaving a dysfunctional family who gave too much freedom to a wild son; while under-utilizing the more-capable son. It is not any different than a father favoring a start athlete son over a normal son. Perhaps there are no truly normal families. Jacob was about to enjoin himself to another dysfunctional family. Jacob noted some strange practices the moment he landed in Padan Aram.

Family businesses can have issues, as they are not subject to the normal checks and balances expected in the outside world. The local shepherds Jacob encountered seemed to be somewhat helpless and dysfunctional. They are wasting valuable grazing time; waiting as Rachel eventually shows up around noon with her sheep. That is not all how most agricultural enterprises function. That would normally be a ridiculous means of operation in the desert. They should be out grazing early (when it is cool) after getting water. Sheep chew the cud; meaning that they need to lay down after eating to burp up, re-chew, and re-swallow their feed. Jacob takes responsibility and jumps in and starts giving direction to people he does not know. This pathetic scene of laborers may be the result of an overbearing boss.

The more control that is held by Laban's micro-managing, the more likely workers will stop thinking for themselves. Either way, Laban was more than ready to have Jacob manage his flock as soon as he met him. That is not normal.

Jacob is overwhelmed by seeing this vision of beauty (Rachel); whom he intends to marry. Laban was thrilled to see a family member of marrying age.

**Read Genesis 29:15-30:** This seems to be a mutually-perfect fit. Laban needs a master shepherd and an enterprising son in law to take both of his daughters. Jacob is like an *expert from afar*. He is a more skilled operator. Isaac had a large sheep operation.

*<sup>12</sup> Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him. <sup>13</sup> The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; <sup>14</sup> for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him. (Genesis 26)*

Jacob likely raised **white, spotted, and speckled sheep** as indicated in the Bible, specifically in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 30:32-33, Jacob made a deal with Laban to care for the sheep that were marked with these distinctive traits. Generally, these sheep are believed to have been **local breeds** prevalent in that region during his time, although specific breeds aren't named in the text. The emphasis was more on their coloration rather than a defined breed type.

Bible: what were the local sheep breeds during jacobs time

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Local sheep breeds during Jacob's time (approximately 2000 BCE) in the region known today as the Middle East would have included a variety of breeds that were common in that area. Some notable ones were:

## 1. Awassi

- **Characteristics:** Known for their resilience and adaptability, they are fat-tailed sheep with a high milk yield.



## 2. Sassari

- **Characteristics:** This breed has a short, fine wool and is known for good meat production.



## 3. Barbary

- **Characteristics:** Recognized for their hardiness in arid climates and suitable for sheep husbandry.



## 4. Turkish Hair Sheep

- **Characteristics:** These sheep shed their wool naturally and are primarily raised for meat and milk.



## 5. Iraqi Local Sheep

- **Characteristics:** Typically found in Iraq, these are hardy sheep known for their adaptability and good production traits.

While specific breeds were not documented in biblical texts, these varieties align with the types of sheep that could have been raised in the ancient Near East, contributing to the agricultural practices of that era. Jacob's reference to spotted and speckled sheep illustrates the selective breeding practices common at that time.



# What Causes Sheep Farm Businesses to Fail?

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Sheep farming has long been a traditional and lucrative business, but in recent years, many farmers have faced challenges leading to the failure of their operations. Several factors contribute to this decline, including fluctuating market prices, rising production costs, insufficient management skills, and changing consumer preferences. Despite efforts to adapt and innovate, the harsh realities of the modern agricultural industry continue to pose a threat to the sustainability of sheep farm businesses.

## Pain Points

- Inadequate pasture management practices
- Poor animal health and disease management
- Insufficient market research and planning
- Lack of expertise in sheep farming
- Underestimating financial costs and investments
- Overlooking the importance of marketing and sales strategies
- Neglecting the impact of climate change on farm operations
- Failing to adapt to technological advances in agriculture
- Ignoring the sustainability and ethical considerations of modern consumers

Laban was like Jacob in some ways, while being different in other ways. Jacob was about to get *schooled* on the art of deception. God uses poetic justice to break us of bad habits. Laban was a master deceiver, who worked deals that always went his way. He was a poor operator, but a crafty trader. Jacob may have been nose-blind to his own character weaknesses. He was about to get taken advantage of. Jacob had similarly taken advantage of Esau in a weak moment. Now Jacob is at the mercy of Laban. He too will be taken advantage of over and over.

Jacob agrees to trade 7 years of service in the fields as a master shepherd in exchange for Rachel. Laban then slips in Leah on the wedding night with the costumes, veils and darkness. Jacob discovers that he had unintendedly spent the night with Leah. What a shock! Laban calms Jacob down by making another 7 year deal for Rachel; whom he would give right away. 14 years living in the fields as a shepherd is a huge price. This is not the last time that Laban tricks Jacob.

It is interesting that unbelievers usually fall to their weaknesses; while believers fall to their strengths and areas of self-confidence and ability.

**Read Genesis 29:31-35:** There are a number of accounts in the bible of infertile women. That culture placed child bearing as the highest value for women. A woman who could not bear children was considered to be of lesser value. God blessed Leah in her uncomfortable marriage. All of these unhealthy family dynamics and competition ultimately led to the 12 tribes of Israel. There were two wives and a number of maids who got into this team competition to get pregnant. Each sub-family group (same mother) grouped more tightly with each other and competed with the other groups of children. The names of the children all became prophetic, though they were just the mindset of each mother at the time of birth.

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### Names and meanings of Israel's tribes?

What are the names and meanings of Israel's twelve tribes?

#### I. Background and Context

Israel's twelve tribes trace their origin to the twelve sons of Jacob, who was later named Israel (Genesis 35:10). These sons became the foundational heads of distinct tribal groups. Their names, many of which were given at birth with direct significances, echo themes of gratitude, struggle, and hope. Scriptural references abound regarding their roles, territories, and blessings (see Genesis 49, Deuteronomy 33). Below is a comprehensive look at each tribe's name and meaning.

#### II. Reuben - "See, a Son"

- Name and Meaning:** Reuben is the firstborn son of Jacob and Leah. His name, רְאוּבֵן (in Hebrew, is commonly understood as "See, a son" or "Behold, a son") (Genesis 29:32).
- Scriptural Reference:** "So Leah conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, 'Because the LORD has seen my affliction, surely my husband will love me now.'" (Genesis 29:32).
- Tribal Notes:** Reuben lost certain rights of the firstborn due to personal failings (Genesis 49:3-4). Nonetheless, his descendants settled east of the Jordan (Numbers 32:1-5).

#### III. Simeon - "Heard"

- Name and Meaning:** The second son of Jacob and Leah, Simeon's name (Hebrew /šim- on/) signifies "heard" or "God has heard," reflecting Leah's gratitude that she was heard in her affliction.
- Scriptural Reference:** "She conceived again and gave birth to a son, and said, 'Now at last my husband will be attached to me because I have borne him three sons.' Therefore he was named Simeon." (Genesis 29:33).
- Tribal Notes:** Simeon's tribe shared geographical boundaries interspersed with Judah (Joshua 19:1-4). In various censuses, Simeon displayed fluctuating numbers, underscoring the tribe's challenging history (Numbers 1:20-22, 26:14).

#### IV. Levi - "Attached"

- Name and Meaning:** Leah's third son by Jacob, Levi (לֵוִי), is generally rendered "attached" or "joined," signifying Leah's hope that Jacob would be bound closely to her.
- Scriptural Reference:** "Once again she conceived and gave birth to a son, and she said, 'Now at last my husband will be attached to me because I have borne him three sons.' Therefore he was named Levi." (Genesis 29:34).
- Tribal Notes:** Levi's descendants were set apart for priestly and Levitical duties (Numbers 3:6-13). The tribe of Levi inherited no fixed allotment of land but received cities among the other tribes (Numbers 35:1-4).

#### V. Judah - "Praise"

- Name and Meaning:** The fourth son of Jacob and Leah, Judah (יְהוּדָה) means "praise," as Leah offered praise to God upon his birth.
- Scriptural Reference:** "And once again she conceived and gave birth to a son and said, 'This time I will praise the LORD.' So she named him Judah." (Genesis 29:35).
- Tribal Notes:** Judah became a leading tribe, eventually producing kings-most notably David-and ultimately the Messiah (Matthew 1:1-2; Hebrews 7:14). The southern kingdom of Judah retained the Davidic line after Israel's division (1 Kings 12:20-23).

#### VI. Dan - "Judge"

- Name and Meaning:** Dan (דָּן) in Hebrew) is the fifth son, but the first born to Jacob by Rachel's maidservant Bilhah. His name comes from a root meaning "to judge."
- Scriptural Reference:** "Then Rachel said, 'God has vindicated me; He has heard my plea and given me a son.' So she named him Dan." (Genesis 30:4).
- Tribal Notes:** Dan's territory was initially in the southwest near the Philistines, but part of the tribe migrated north (Judges 18). The tribe's name endures in various ancient records referencing Israel's settlement regions.

#### VII. Naphtali - "My Struggle" or "My Wrestling"

- Name and Meaning:** Naphtali (Hebrew /naḥ- shal) is Bilhah's second son by Jacob. The name is often rendered "my struggle" or "my wrestling" referring to Rachel's words about her rivalry with Leah.
- Scriptural Reference:** "Then Rachel said, 'I have had a great struggle with my sister-and I have won.' So she named him Naphtali." (Genesis 30:8).
- Tribal Notes:** Occupying territory in the north of Israel, Naphtali is later praised for bravery in conflicts such as those in Judges (Judges 5:18). Archaeological surveys in Upper Galilee show evidence of early Hebrew settlement that could be tied to Naphtali's tribal lands.

#### VIII. Gad - "Good Fortune"

- Name and Meaning:** Gad (Hebrew /gād) is Jacob's seventh son but the first by Zilpah, Leah's maidservant. Interpreted as "good fortune" or sometimes "a troop," it captures Leah's exclamation of blessing.
- Scriptural Reference:** "Leah said, 'How fortunate! So she named him Gad.'" (Genesis 30:11).
- Tribal Notes:** The tribe of Gad, like Reuben, settled east of the Jordan River. Renowned as capable warriors, they played key roles in defending Israel's frontiers (1 Chronicles 5:18-20).

#### IX. Asher - "Happy" or "Blessed"

- Name and Meaning:** Asher (Hebrew /āsher) is Zilpah's second son by Jacob. "Happy" or "blessed" fits Leah's response to his birth.
- Scriptural Reference:** "Then Leah said, 'How happy I am! For women will call me happy.' So she named him Asher." (Genesis 30:13).
- Tribal Notes:** Located in the northern coastal plains, Asher's territory was noted for agricultural richness, including olive groves (Deuteronomy 33:24). The tribe's name surfaces in later historical records citing settlements along the Phoenician border.