Main Thought  God enrolls Jacob in the school of hard knocks for 20 years to prepare him for his future (1 Cor. 9:25).

INTRODUCTION – Jacob is in servitude to Laban as Israel will be to Pharaoh in Egypt. But God intervenes as both will leave enriched. Jacob is without prayer (until 32:9), little dialogue, and no leadership.

JACOB’S CHILDREN (29:31-30:1-13). He has 12 children in seven years by four women: Leah [7x]; Bilhah [2x]; Zilpah [2x]; Rachel [2x].

- LEAH (29:31-35). Leah is unloved (HEB=hated). Leah moves from her bitterness to praise as she names each successful son: REUBEN – “he has seen my misery”; SIMEON – “The Lord has heard I am hated” (Prov. 30:21-23); LEVI – “my husband will be attached to me”; JUDAH – “praise”. She stopped having children perhaps at Rachel’s insistence.

- BILHAH & ZILPAH (30:1-13). Rachel wants what Leah has (sons) and Leah wants what Rachel has (love). She blames Jacob with “Give me Children, or I’ll die!” Ironically, she will die in childbirth (35:16). Bilhah gives Rachel two sons: DAN – vindicated; NAPHTALI – my struggle. Zilpah gives Leah two sons: GAD – good fortune; ASHER – happy.

- MANDRAKES (30:14-24). This root like plant was thought to be an aphrodisiac (Song of Songs 7:13) in a desperate human attempt for children. They did nothing to help Rachel conceive.

- Alas, they were merely used by Leah to “hire” Jacob. Jacob was involved with 4 contracts: (1) birthright and (2) blessing where he was the victimizer; (3) marriage and (4) sex-by-hire (not loving but forced) where he was the victim. This is the law of reciprocity (Gal. 6:7-8).

- Leah gives birth to two sons: ISSACHAR – reward; ZEBULUN – honor and to DINAH – Jacob’s only daughter.

- Rachel, with God’s help alone, has a son JOSEPH – may he add (35:17).

JACOB OUTWITS LABAN (30:25-43). After 14 years of marriage contracts, the last 6 years (20 total in Haran) would make Jacob rich.

- THE CONTRACT (25-34) – All speckled goats and black sheep (rare) would be Jacob’s wages and rest (normal) belonged to Laban.

- THE CONTEST (35-43) – Laban took all the speckled for himself. But Jacob, with God’s help (not magic) by selective breeding, enriched himself and He gave Laban with weak animals.