

## 99-11-14a

And as we continue our worship this morning, turn with me for our scripture reading to the first epistle of Peter. Our scripture reading this morning is in 1 Peter. Then we'll resume our study over in Genesis chapter 30.

Chapter 2 of 1 Peter picks up the thread of thought. Peter has been talking about the fact he's, of course, writing to the sojourners, the scattered of Israel throughout the regions of Cappadocia and Asia, Pontius and Galatia, and so forth, Bithynia. And I can hardly come to 1 Peter without reminding you that this 1 Peter is one of the places that theologians love to come to talk about election and that this is written to the elect according to the foreknowledge of God.

If you look at chapter 1, verse 1 and 2, Peter writes and he says, it's written to the pilgrims of those regions I mentioned, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father in sanctification of the Spirit for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. This scripture reading is important to us in our study of Jacob because we find Jacob in Genesis chapter 30 sojourning outside the land of promise. He has big dealed his brother out of the birthright.

He has deceived his father into giving him the blessing, the two parts of the heritage that belong to our firstborn son. Jacob has them both. God has also appeared to him at Bethel and promised him the land and has confirmed that even though the means was bad, he does possess the blessing of God and the heritage coming down from his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.

But no sooner has he obtained these things than he is outside the land and he has nothing. He shows up on his uncle Laban's doorstep with nothing but the robe on his back, so to speak. And we've seen that God says, I will be with you.

Just as Jacob is leaving at Bethel, there he has the vision of the ladder going up to heaven and God says, I will be with you wherever you go and I will bring you back to this land. There's going to be 20 years pass before this promise is fulfilled. What is God's purpose for Jacob outside the land of promise, outside the place of blessing and fulfillment that is a part of the Abrahamic covenant? Well, there are things we can learn sojourning that we can't learn in the peace and prosperity of our settled home.

And that is in fact the status that we have here as strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It would be interesting if God were to take us directly into the eternal future as soon as we're saved. If our salvation is the main goal of this life, then once we've arrived there, why not just go? Why have to stay here and suffer the slings and arrows of perhaps decades of life here in a fallen world with a fallen nature? Why not just go to glory? There are things that we can learn as sojourners in this land that we could never learn firsthand in a perfect eternal future.

And it's important for us to recognize that and to take advantage of the opportunity. We can see at first hand the grace of God in suffering. We can see the grace of God and the provision of God when things aren't perfect.

The angels watch us with great concentration because they've lived in an eternal perfect environment. And outside of the fall of Satan and the departure of one-third of the angels with him, they've seen very little of adversity, sin, and the sides of God's character that are displayed when there is an occasion for mercy, when there is an occasion for compassion. It's one thing to see these things, things that angels long to look into.

It's something else to be the recipient. Those who have been forgiven much love much. And it's many times our experiences of God's grace at first hand that impress upon us the reality of God's character.

And it's a wonderful opportunity that we have and that will never come again in this life to see each day as an opportunity to learn about God, to learn about the reality of his grace, his compassion, his mercy, his loving kindnesses that are renewed every morning. Jacob has some things to learn. We've already seen that safely nestled in the camp of Isaac, he doesn't know much about integrity.

He doesn't know much about honesty. He has become a crafty manipulator. He manipulates his brother.

He manipulates his father. And these are flaws in his character that need to be brought to the surface and worked on. Well, God can do this.

And so God uses what seems to be an adversity, the hatred of his brother, the suddenly hostile environment that he finds himself. He has to leave. As Mother Rebecca says, you've got to go to my brother Laban.

Isaac blesses him and says, you go out there and get yourself a wife. And so that's where he goes. And as he leaves the land empty-handed with the promise of blessing, but not its fulfillment.

And in many ways we find ourselves possessed of all spiritual blessings, but where are they? They're in the heavenly places, Ephesians tells us. So we, like Jacob, have the promise and have the hope and have the blessing of God's presence with us. And it's time to learn.

It's time to take advantage of each day and the opportunities that come our way. Well, Peter is writing to a scattered group of Jews who also are strangers and pilgrims, sojourners in foreign Gentile lands. So what does Peter have to say to sojourners? We find this in our scripture reading this morning.

As we pick up in chapter 2, he has already talked about the importance of the word of God. And we might even begin by looking at verse 22 of chapter 1. Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever. Because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.

The grass withers, and its flower falls away. But the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which, by the gospel, was preached to you.

The difference between the temporal and the eternal. The difference between the temporary and the permanent. Our sojourning, our experience of the fallen and the sinful and the failed is temporary.

It's the word of God that has promised us the perfect and the eternal. Therefore, this is where we really begin our scripture reading. Therefore, in chapter 2, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow thereby.

If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Coming to him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious. You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Therefore, it is also contained in the scripture. Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious. And he who believes on him will by no means be put to shame.

Therefore, to you who trust, or you who believe, he is precious. But to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble being disobedient to the word, to which also they were appointed.

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light, who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. It's difficult to find a place to stop because this letter is so great. But what we want to focus on in this scripture reading this morning is that we are like these pilgrims in environments that are distracting.

There are pressures, there are difficulties, there are decisions to be made. We can easily become caught up in circumstances. But there's a purpose for us being here, and we don't want to ever lose sight of why we are here.

Any more than a child working a story problem in a math book should become so caught up in the details of the story problem that they forget that the goal is to exercise

knowledge of the principles of math. So, Peter, rather than saying, oh, we're praying for you, brethren, we know it's difficult out there in Cappadocia, and addressing the symptoms or addressing the situation in terms of its circumstances, Peter says, remember, you are living stones. Christ is the rock, and we are living stones being built up.

This is why we're still here. God is building us up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. This is the invisible temple.

Everyone used to look at the temple, especially Solomon's temple, in all of its glory, and later the temple that was rebuilt by the Jews and greatly enhanced and furbished by Herod, and they would say, oh, look at the glory of the God of Israel. But that pales, even the glorious temple of Solomon pales in significance next to the glory of God that's reflected in the spiritual temple that God is building with us and through us. We are living stones being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we forget, and we start trying to offer up material sacrifices, forgetting that the things that we do in the world are expressions of what goes on in the invisible realm, and it is the spiritual part of the sacrifice that counts. It doesn't mean that we never engage in works of service or that we never find ourselves operating in a physical form of ministry, but the emphasis and the lasting value is in the spiritual side of the sacrifice, and it's acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. So Jesus Christ can either be the rock of our salvation or a stone of stumbling.

It's up to us, depending on how we view our sojourning in this life. Let's return now to our study in Genesis chapter 30. We've seen in the last part of chapter 29 and the beginning of chapter 30 the birth of twelve of Jacob's children, the eleven sons and Dinah, who will appear again in the not-too-distant future.

The only son that has not yet been born now is Benjamin. We digressed a little bit and looked at the symbolic value that these sons who will become tribes in Israel have, their location, the order of march, even to the engraving of their names on the stones of the breastplate of the high priest, and the fact that even in the millennial Jerusalem, even in the eternal kingdom of the Father in the last few chapters of Revelation, there are gates that are named for these twelve tribes, and their symbolic value is brought out throughout the scripture. What do we bring out of all of this? It's interesting to look at the faces of the cherubim and to look at the order of march in the camp and so forth, but primarily we see that each of these tribes, each of these sons, regardless of his successes or failures, is a part of the people of God, the Old Testament people of God, the nation of Israel, and God has assigned them a place.

Some of these are places of honor. Judah is on the east, the place of the rising sun, the place where the constellation appears of the Pleiades that marks the birth of spring and

new life and new hope. Dan is always up to the north, both in his location north of the tabernacle when they're in the wilderness and later when the land is allocated under Joshua.

It's the northernmost area and it becomes a great place of apostasy and idol worship and is one of the first places to be conquered by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. Even in the millennial allocation of the land, and we saw those horizontal stripes, Dan is the furthest away from the holy city and the temple and the land belonging to the prince. Why? Because not only Dan as a son of Jacob, but Dan as a tribe is characterized by a lack of interest in the things of God. Are they believers? Yes.

Are they interested in the things of God? No. Do they have an eternal future? Yes. Is it near to David's greater son? Is it near to the glory of the temple? No.

It's furthest away. Why? That's what they have historically chosen. That's where they're comfortable.

To take people who are uncomfortable about God, who are apathetic toward God, and place them closest, they wouldn't appreciate it or enjoy it anyway. But their salvation is secure. Their place in the plan of God is assigned based on what they have chosen.

So we see two sides of a coin. On the one hand, we know that all things work together for good. God has a plan for every one of us.

But our place in God's plan is determined by what we choose, by what we prioritize. What is most important to us? If the things of God are important to us, we are going to be blessed with the things of God. If we concern ourselves with the affairs of this life, if we begin to get superstitious and rely on human wisdom, as the less interested and less faithful tribes in Israel did, that's going to be our heritage.

We see even in the eternal future, when you get to Revelation chapter 20, and the apportionment of inheritance to those who have sought the things of God and have put Him first, there are wonderful blessings and access to the city of Jerusalem. It says those who persisted in evil lifestyles of lying and deceit and adultery and fornication and so forth, it says their part, their meros in Greek, which is the portion. That's the term that means your allocation of inheritance.

It says their portion is in the lake of fire. It doesn't mean they are in the lake of fire, but their inheritance, because they didn't value the things of God, they don't have the things of God in that future time. So we've reviewed that, and we're ready now to resume in chapter 30, the story of Jacob in his sojourn with Laban, beginning in verse 25.

It came to pass when Rachel had born Joseph, remember there have been 11 other children born to Leah, to Bilhah, to Zilpah, and Rachel, the beloved wife, the younger of the two sisters, has not born any children, but finally, at long last, after some 14 years,

Rachel has a child of her own, and it's Joseph. It came to pass when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, Send me away that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served you, and let me go, for you know my service which I have done for you.

Laban said to him, Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake. Then he said, Name me your wages, and I will give it. So Jacob said to him, You know how I have served you, and how your livestock has been with me.

For what you had before I came was little, and it has increased to a great amount. The Lord has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house? So he said, What shall I give you? And Jacob said, You shall not give me anything.

If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks. Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats. These shall be my wages.

So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, or brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if it is with me. Laban said, It says here in the New King James, O that it were according to your word.

But he basically says, Fine, let it be according to your word. The word that they've translated, O, there, is actually a figure of speech that means, Fine, this is great. Fine, let it be according to your word.

So he removed that day, and this he in verse 35 is Laban. Laban removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had some white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave them into the hands of his sons. Then he put three days journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

This is a good place to stop, and take a look at what is taking place here. Jacob has now served Laban for fourteen years. Seven years for Leah, seven years for Rachel.

That was the agreement. The contract is up, and they're square. Neither one owes the other anything.

So Jacob goes to Laban and says, Send me away, that I may go to my own place, and to my country. This is my hypothesis. This is my theory.

I don't think Jacob is really wanting to leave, but he knows that this is not going to sit well with Laban, because Laban's got a great deal. Jacob has a great knack, or facility

from Laban's point of view, with herds and flocks. Laban didn't have very much.

He was not a rich man at all when Jacob came. Now he is quite prosperous, and this has all happened under Jacob. Jacob is smart.

He didn't get to be where he is by not being able to read people, and know how to bend them to his will. There's still a little of this in Jacob, even after these fourteen years, in the same way that he knew when Esau would be weakest. So he says, My time is up.

I believe I'll go home. Knowing that Laban is going to panic and say, Oh. And sure enough, Laban says, Please stay if I have found favor in your eyes.

This phrase, If I have found favor in your eyes, this is the phrase that is used by a subordinate to a king, or to a master, or a ruler. You might remember over in Esther, much later when Hadassah, when Queen Esther goes to Ahasuerus, or Xerxes. Everybody has two names in Esther.

I don't know why. But Xerxes is the king. He's also called Ahasuerus.

Esther, the queen, I guess that's her court name, but her Jewish name was Hadassah. But she is going to go to the king, and she says, If I have found favor in your eyes. Many times you'll find this phrase, and this is always a subordinate to a superior.

Well, Laban has always made it quite clear that he is the superior. He's the one that has graciously allowed Jacob to stay when he had nothing to offer. He's the one that worked out the contract when Jacob had nothing to give to marry the daughters.

But now, he's being sort of obsequious here, and he's kind of buttering Jacob up. He doesn't want him to go. Please stay.

I've learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake. And he's even talking about Jacob's God here when he says the Lord, because this is really not the God of Laban, as we will see. So he says, Name me your wages and I will give it.

Because he's basically saying, he knows Laban. And Laban, this craftiness kind of seems to run in the family. Laban is no dull operator here.

And he says, Well, if I owe you anything, just tell me what it is. He knows good and well that the time of the contract is up, and he doesn't owe Jacob anything. So he says, Name your wages, tell me what I owe you, and I'll gladly give it.

Because he also knows that Jacob can't afford to leave with no flocks, no herds. If he wants to take his wives and children with him and has no possessions, how can he possibly support them? So Laban, this is very common if you have any experience, even if you watch movies that are set over in the Middle East. There is a surface conversation, and then there are the thoughts and intents that are behind it.

And all of this hospitality and hail fellow well met can conceal a lot of plotting and scheming. And this is just a daily way of life as a general rule in this part of the world. So there is this very polite conversation going on, and behind it, Jacob is saying, I need something more out of this deal than what I've gotten.

And Laban is saying, I don't owe you anything. You've served, and you've got the wives, so tell me what I owe you, and I'll gladly pay it. Because he knows he doesn't owe him anything.

So Jacob says, Look, you know how I've served you and how your livestock has been with me. You had a little, now you have a lot. How am I going to provide for my own house? Now we're kind of working through the surface layers and getting to the real issue.

Jacob's concern is he's saying he wants to leave, but he knows he can't because he has no possessions. Laban knows it as well. So now in verse 31, Laban says, Okay, what shall I give you? Are you asking me to just give you the golden handshake here and let you depart, to just hand you a third of my flocks? Jacob says, No, don't give me anything.

And this is where the craftiness of Jacob exceeds the craftiness of Laban. Because Jacob says, No, don't give me anything. Do this thing for me and I will again feed and keep your flocks.

I'll stay and I'll continue to prosper you the way I have if you'll do this. Let me pass through all your flock today and remove from there all the speckled and spotted sheep and all the brown ones among the lambs. We have to understand a little bit about livestock here.

Sheep, especially the sheep that are in the Syria-Palestine area, are generally white. Most of them are white. This is why wool and so forth is pictured as being white.

Robes of wool are white. But you have a minority of the flock that will turn out to be brown or spotted. And these are not the ones that are prized because when you shear the wool, if you weave this into a garment, you have spots and smudgy looking places.

You want the white wool. So the white sheep are the ones that are prized. Same way with the goats.

These goats are generally black or dark brown in this part of the world. This is, by the way, not the same as the goat we tend to think of the Rocky Mountain goat. And this is not the same goat at all.

The ram and things that you see on Dodge commercials. This is really a different animal than what you have over in Syria and Palestine. It's closer to the antelope type of animal.

These are short, long-haired goats with curly horns. Most of them had horns that curled

back, but there was one variety that's really picturesque. It had horns that came out in kind of a spiral and stuck straight out, sometimes as far apart as two feet.

They have a concave, I'm sorry, a convex face. If you look at them in profile, their face curves like this. So these are the animals in view.

So most of the flocks are already going to be dark goats and white sheep. And there will be just a few of these others in there. So when Jacob says, don't give me anything, just let me have the bad ones.

Let me have sort of the cast-offs that you don't really want anyway. So Laban says, fine. Jacob says, in the future, if you ever find any monochrome sheep, any pure white sheep, or if you find any dark goats, all dark, you'll know that I haven't been honest and fair because those belong to you.

As soon as those are born, as soon as they come about in the flock, I'll transfer them and they'll be yours. My flock will only be these variegated types. Laban says, great.

Let it be according to your word, in verse 34. But Laban says, well, there's nothing in the contract that says I can't do a little filtering of the flock before I hand it back over to Jacob. So he sends his sons out before Jacob returns back out to the field.

Laban sends his sons out to filter out most of the colored animals in the flock. Not all, but most. You'll notice it says that he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted.

These are the strength of the flock. And in Laban's mind, the monochrome goats, the dark bull goats, if you will, the he goats, they're going to give birth. They're the ones in Laban's mind that are going to determine what the offspring are going to look like.

So he leaves all of the dark he goats in the flock and all of the ones that have any spots, he has his sons take them out. Now, there's still going to be some female goats that might be speckled and spotted. And so this, supposedly, Jacob can look and not think that there's anything amiss, as though Jacob isn't going to know after 14 years what's in the flock.

But Laban says, well, I'm going to tip this in my favor. I'll leave a few token spotted goats in the flock here, but all the he goats that will determine the future offspring, I'm going to get them out. So Laban sends his sons through there and gets all the speckled and spotted, everyone that had some white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs.

These are the dark, not so great lambs. Gave them into the hands of his sons and he put three days journey between himself and Jacob and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flock. So Laban and his sons take these and pasture them separately.

And Laban thinks, well, I'm going to really make out on this deal. I get the services of Jacob for another indefinite period of time and I'm still going to get to keep all the bests in the flock and he's not going to accumulate. And here's the key.

Why does Laban care if Jacob should acquire a large flock? At the point that Jacob has enough to sustain himself, that's the point at which he's going to leave. Well, Laban doesn't want him to leave, so by making sure that his flock stay very small, Jacob will pretty much have to stay indefinitely. So Laban says, I'm going to tip it.

He'll have a few, but he'll never have enough to be self-sufficient and leave. So this is the big plan. But what Laban does not understand is Jacob has learned something during his time.

You remember he was the stay-at-home flock and herd manager with Isaac the whole time he was growing up. And one of the reasons, of course not to ignore the blessing of God, but there's some skill involved here as well in what he's been able to do over the last 14 years with Laban's sheep and goats. He's a keen observer, just as he is of humans, also of animals.

And he knows their behavior. He knows how to work the flock so that they prosper. So it tells us in verse 37, Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them and exposed the white which was in the rods.

These three trees have a dark bark and when you peel the bark away, of course the white wood is exposed, so these sticks start to look like his sheep and goats, spotted. The rods which he had peeled he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. Well this has always raised my eyebrow, but let's read a little further.

So the flocks conceived before the rods and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then Jacob separated the lambs and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban, but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock. It came to pass whenever the stronger livestock conceived, Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters that they might conceive among the rods.

When the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in, so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger were Jacob's. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys. Of course once he begins to prosper and his flocks are large, he can now begin to barter, he can trade, he is becoming more and more self-sufficient, exactly the thing that Laban did not want.

But what is this thing about the peeled sticks? Remember that the actual utility of the animal is in its skin, in its hair, in its hide, and in its milk. Goats especially, the milk of

goats was used to make cheese. The milk itself, goat's milk even today, is used by children who sometimes cannot tolerate regular cow's milk.

The hair was woven into blankets and rugs and woven into bridles and harness and that sort of thing. It could be woven into rope. It's just like Laura Ingalls said in the Little House books when her mother was preparing the pigs.

They would slaughter a pig and she said, we use everything but the oink. She talked about all the different things that they used, the cracklings and all of the different parts of a pig that we don't really look for in the store today, they used. They even used the hooves and they boiled it down and made gelatin and everything.

Well, it was the same way. These animals were amazingly useful. They made bottles and things out of the skins.

You can look that up in a Bible dictionary and see all the things they did with these. So Jacob isn't concerned about their appearance. It's great that he's getting these animals.

But he takes these three different kinds of tree and makes these spotted rods. Well, think about this for a moment. And I had to do some digging around to try to figure this out.

But you remember even from the story of the meeting with Rachel at the well, remember the well was covered and they would assemble the flocks and water them all at one time. Well, remember Jacob is still up in this area. And so what happens? The flocks and herds of Laban in this case all assemble to be watered.

And we would imagine that Jacob is in the same general vicinity as this covered well and so forth. And what are they going to do? They're going to dip water out of the well and they're going to put it in watering troughs for these animals. So this is a place of assembly and a place of congregation.

Even when Jacob has his own flocks, they still all have to come to this covered well to get watered. Well, this is key because when is the most likely time for animals to breed? It's when they're all together, when they can see each other. And the he goats find the female goats and this is how the world has been since the beginning.

So Jacob knows this. He's been doing this for 14 years. And he knows that the most likely time when the he goats are going to mate is at watering time when the flocks are assembled.

And any of the female goats that are at the time is ripe, well, they're going to be there. Well, how do you control animals that are going to breed? Nowadays we have corrals and we go through all this kind of thing. We pin them up together.

Well, they didn't have this kind of luxury in the ancient world. Fences and corrals and things like that were unknown or certainly uncommon. So how is Jacob going to work this? Well, the whole idea of being speckled and spotted, this is cosmetic.

This is something in the appearance. There's no indication that they smell any different to a he goat or that they are any greater or less attractive. It's what you can see.

Well, those of us that have been in the service know all about camouflage. Camouflage utilities, you wear them, you stand in the trees, you can't see somebody as well. You put camouflage paint on your skin and you don't show up.

Well, sheep and goats are both known to be nearsighted. They don't see very far or very well. So if you make sort of a paling fence out of peeled logs, which animals are going to stand out? The spotted ones are going to blend in just like camouflage.

The monochrome ones, the solid dark ones in this case of the goats are going to stand out. Why would this be important? You would think, well, Jacob wants to multiply the spotted goats. And we'll talk about the goats first.

Well, here's the thing. You remember Gregor Mendel and breeding the peas and all of us have had a little smattering of genetics and the dominant gene for color is monochrome. Dark for the goats, white for the sheep.

And the recessive gene is for spottedness where you have a mix. So to make a long story short without getting into a whole, I thought about just giving you a whole genetics chart and working this out, but let me just say this. The crossbred animals are going to be spotted and they're going to be stronger.

In the same way that purebred dogs are more likely to be weak and have diseases. My parents used to have some conker spaniels and because of their constant breeding for purity, they have skin problems and they get cysts and they're not as healthy. Your best, most healthiest dog is a Heinz 57 that's got medium legs, medium hair, medium ears, medium nose, medium tail.

Anytime you breed for a particular characteristic, long legs or long tails or long snout, you actually are subtracting some healthy dog genetics out of the animal and it's going to be weaker. Well, even though the monochrome animals were prized because of their hair being all one color and being easier to work with, this was not the healthiest form of animal. The healthiest ones are the spotted.

Jacob knew this and that's why he asks for the spotted. But they also tended to not be as numerous because in the wild, the monochromes are going to breed with the monochromes. To make a long story short, Jacob can selectively breed.

He can influence what he goats are going to breed with what form of stock by using this

screen in the background. They come up to water and the he goats, when they come up behind, which is what they do, what are they going to see? The solid ones are going to stand out. And if you work out the genetics of this, you always want to take your spotted he goat and breed a monochrome female because this is going to give you a greater incidence of spotted offspring than if you breed a spotted with a spotted, you're going to match up the things and wind up getting a lot of monochromes.

So Jacob, to make a long story short, and believe me, it's complex in the Hebrew, but you can work this out and it makes sense. He understands the principles of selective breeding and the mechanism by which he influences the selective breeding is what the he goats can see and also what the rams in the flock of sheep can see. Because it says on down, as far as the sheep go, in verse 40, he separated the lambs and made the flocks face toward the streaked and the brown in the flock of Laban.

He's using the dark goats as the backdrop for the sheep. He's not going to try to peel all the bark off the sticks, which would take way too long, and try to make a solid white backdrop because what he wants is a dark backdrop. So he's got all of the dark and the dark colored ones in the flock of Laban.

He puts them visually as the backdrop behind the sheep so that when the rams come up to breed, they're going to see a certain kind of sheep and they're going to breed that way because he's got the spotted he goats and the spotted rams of his own or the brown rams and he wants to keep mixing them in a certain way. So what's he doing? He's using the backdrop. He's creating a backdrop to influence which animals breed with which.

And of course, he's starting out with all monochrome, but he can tell which ones have the true XX in terms of being total monochrome and which ones have an XY, which look monochrome, but have the recessive gene for spottedness because the mixed ones are healthier. They're bigger and beefier. And Jacob knows this.

He's been watching them breed for 14 years just in the flock of Laban. And he knows which ones might have had a spotted one in their ancestry. And even though they're monochrome and Laban says, okay, you can go ahead and keep and work with these, they're healthier.

The crossbred ones are healthier. So he is using selective breeding and he can produce some spotted ones out of the flock. And by using this backdrop, when the weaker ones come up, he takes the backdrop away and lets them just pick their own kind.

And so by manipulating this, and of course, God's blessing is with him. And to take nothing away, God is blessing him as well. But this is not without malice or forethought on Jacob's part.

He knows these animals and knows what he's doing. So it's not, as some have imagined,

a mystical sort of thing or that he's somehow got a wrong idea of just looking at the rod is going to make them have a certain kind of offspring. This is what the he-goats and the rams of the sheep are seeing when they come up to breed.

And this is very smart on his part. And so to make a long story short, he uses what he has learned in his time of sojourning and with the wherewithal and with the blessing of God, prospers. He has the promise from God that he will prosper.

God has given him a keen mind and the ability to perceive how these things work and God blesses him in what you would call his business efforts. In the same way that we in our lives need to operate with wisdom and observe and look for the blessing of God in what we do, but to operate wisely, to use principles that we have learned along the way. He doesn't do anything deceitful, though, does he? He doesn't steal.

Now he's on a much more solid footing and God blesses him because he's not big dealing, he's not cheating, but he is free to use his knowledge. And that's exactly what he does. And God is with him and God blesses him and he becomes quite rich and wealthy and can parlay this into riches of other sorts as we find in verse 43.

So we are to be wise in this life. We're not to just throw ourselves on the mercy and grace of God without making any plans or without trying to make good decisions financially and strategically. But at the same time, we are to rely on the blessing of God.

And as we're going to see when we resume after the break in the next chapter, Jacob knows that this is the blessing of God and he's going to emphasize this to his wives when he talks about them as we start the next episode. But this is a good place for us to stop and take our break. When we come back, we'll begin chapter 31 of the book of Genesis.