

10.05 Conflict with Laban (Genesis 30:25–31:16)

✓ “*Check*” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- For 3D visuals use small dowel figures or wooden figures for Jacob, Rachel, Leah, Laban. (See Lesson 10:04.)
- A fresh stick from a tree with the bark peeled away so that the white inside of the stick is visible (or the teacher might peel the bark at the appropriate time in the story by scraping a knife on the stick away from the body)
- Again, Nancy Ganz's treatment of this story is excellent.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *vow*: a firm promise
- *speckled*: black animals with white spots or white animals with black spots (Gill in Online Bible)
- *spotted*: animals with larger spots; speckled and spotted were rare colors in sheep and goats (Barnes in Online Bible).
- *kindred*: family; relatives

Scripture: (ESV)

Genesis 30:25 As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you.”

27 But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the Lord has blessed me because of you. 28 Name your wages, and I will give it.”

29 Jacob said to him, “You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. 30 For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?”

31 He said, “What shall I give you?”

Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it: 32 let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and they shall be my wages. 33 So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, shall be counted stolen.”

34 Laban said, “Good! Let it be as you have said.” 35 But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black, and put them in the charge of his sons. 36 And he set a distance of three days’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban’s flock.

37 Then Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks. 38 He set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, 39 the

flocks bred in front of the sticks and so the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. 40 And Jacob separated the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban. He put his own droves apart and did not put them with Laban's flock. 41 Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the sticks, 42 but for the feebler of the flock he would not lay them there. So the feebler would be Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. 43 Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

31:1 Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth." 2 And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before.

3 Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you."

4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was 5 and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. 6 You know that I have served your father with all my strength, 7 yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me. 8 If he said, 'The spotted shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. 9 Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. 10 In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled.

11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' 12 And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. 13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'"

14 Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? 15 Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. 16 All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do."

Introduction/Review:

When Jacob had left home, his mother, Rebekah, had promised, "I'll send you word when it is safe for you to come home." That word never came. Jacob had spent the night at a place he named Bethel—house of God. It was at this place that he had had a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder reaching to heaven. God, at the top of that ladder, had told him, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land" (Genesis 28:13–15).

The next morning Jacob set up a memorial pillar and made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to you" (Genesis 28:20–22).

A lot had happened in those several years since he had left home and had worked for his uncle/father-in-law, Laban. Three of his wives had borne a total of ten sons and one daughter. One wife, the beloved Rachel, however, had borne him none. Finally, ✓when Jacob was older, she had a son and named him Joseph.

Story:

Jacob's desire to go home

As soon as Rachel had birthed Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, his father-in-law, “Let me go back to my own home and country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you so that I may go. You know how all my service has been for you these years and that I have not gotten anything for myself.”

Laban answered, “There is no question that the Lord has blessed me because of you. Tell me what you want for wages, and I will give it.”

Jacob said to him, “Yes, you had little before I came, and now you have increased abundantly. Indeed, the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now it’s time that I provide for myself and my own household.”

Jacob’s deal with Laban

“Okay,” replied Laban. “What shall I give you?”

“Oh, you won’t *give* me anything,” Jacob responded. “Let’s do this: I will continue to pasture your flock. Today I will remove every speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb, and the spotted and speckled among the goats. They shall be my wages. From now on, all the black goats, the white goats, and all the white lambs will be yours. You will be able to check my honesty easily by the color of my flocks in contrast to the color of your flocks. If you find any animal that is not speckled and spotted among my goats and black among my lambs, obviously, they would be stolen.”

This sounded like a good deal to Laban. He said, “Good! Let it be as you have said.”

Jacob’s starting from nothing

But instead of letting Jacob keep the speckled and spotted livestock he had removed, that day Laban and his sons took those animals and left Jacob with only Laban’s livestock. ✓In my opinion, by doing this, Laban stole the wages for which Jacob had already worked. Laban took these animals ✓formerly belonging to Jacob three days’ journey away. Jacob had to start all over with not one single speckled or spotted animal. All he had were animals that obviously belonged to Laban.

However, after some time Jacob was able to breed huge flocks of strong speckled and spotted sheep and goats. The way he did it sounds strange to us, but this is what the Bible says Jacob did: He took fresh sticks of poplar, almond, and plane trees and peeled the bark off of them so that white streaks were exposed. Since the flocks bred when they were at the watering holes, Jacob put those sticks in the water whenever the stronger goats and sheep were breeding, and somehow, those sticks caused fine baby animals to be born that were speckled and spotted.

✓No science verifies this practice, but if the animals drank from the water, perhaps the chemicals in those trees caused the coloration of the animals. In whatever physical way it happened, we know God is the One who blessed Jacob.

When the weaker animals were at the water holes, Jacob would not lay the sticks in the water, and the weaker animals of Laban’s livestock bred weak black goats and weak white sheep and goats. In time Jacob became very wealthy, having large flocks, female servants, male servants, camels, and donkeys, but Laban grew poorer.

Jealousy of Jacob’s brothers-in-law

Even though they were three-days’ journey away, Laban’s sons were aware of Jacob’s increasing wealth. Like so many envious people, they accused him of wrongdoing, saying, “Jacob has taken all that was our father’s, and from that he has gained all this wealth.”

Jacob got news of what his brothers-in-law were saying. Maybe their talk was affecting Uncle Laban, for he certainly was not regarding Jacob with favor as he had before.

Jacob’s message from God

It was at this time that the angel of God called to Jacob in a dream. Jacob answered, “Here I am!”

The Lord said, “Look at all the goats of yours that are speckled and spotted, for I have seen everything that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land, return to the land of your kindred, and I will be with you.”

Jacob’s wives’ response

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and where no one else could hear their conversation. He said to them, “I see that your father does not like me as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength; yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to harm me. God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. Now God has appeared to me in a dream, telling me to return to the land of my fathers.”

Both Leah and Rachel answered with full understanding of the situation, knowing their father had cheated not only Jacob but them. They said, “Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house? Aren’t we regarded by him as foreigners? He has sold us!” How had Laban sold them? [By making Jacob pay for them with fourteen years of work.]

Rachel and Leah continued, “He has indeed devoured our money. All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.”

What will Jacob do? We will find out in our next lesson.

Lessons from this lesson:

- We see Jesus: He said, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Just as God saw Jacob in his trouble, Jesus sees us and will take care of us.
- God blesses those whom he chooses to bless in spite of the hindrances of others.

Activities:

- Play dough: lambs; tree branches; well or watering hole
- Sing all of “Isaac” found on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org.
- Sing first four stanzas of “Jacob” found in Lesson 09.04 or on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org.



- **Snack:** Cut out small circles of dark-colored cookie dough with a 1-inch syrup bottle or similar cap and shape into ovals for sheep heads. Using the same bottle cap, cut more circles and cut into quarters, slightly softening the center corner so that two quarters become a sheep’s ears. Cut circles in half for the tails. Bake. For eyes, put two dots of frosting on each head; put a mini



chocolate chip on each frosting eye. One at a time, frost cupcakes with white frosting and attach the cookie head, ears, and tail to the frosting. Cover the frosting with mini marshmallows that you have flattened with your fingers; add mini chocolate chips for the speckles. For black lambs, cover with mini chocolate chips and no marshmallows. (Personal note: I used $\frac{3}{4}$ of a gingerbread cake mix for my cupcakes and the rest for the cookies, recipes on the box. These instructions are a composite from several internet sites.)

- **Review questions:** (Game: Draw two goats or sheep on a chalk board or a white board. Students who answer questions correctly may draw a spot on the animal for their team. Use the line art image below

for a goat shape.)

1. When did Jacob tell Laban he wanted to go back home? [Right after Joseph was born.]
2. How had it gone with Laban and his livestock since Jacob had been in Haran? [God had blessed him; he had increased.]
3. What wages did Jacob suggest to Laban? [Speckled and spotted goats and sheep and black lambs.]
4. How did Laban cheat Jacob? [He removed all the speckled and spotted goats and sheep and black lambs.]
5. How far away did Laban take Jacob's speckled, *etc.*, sheep and goats? [Three days' journey.]
6. How did Jacob strengthen his flocks? [Bred the strong animals in front of peeled tree branches.]
7. What did Laban's sons say when they envied Jacob? ["He gained all this wealth from our father."]
8. What had Jacob gotten as he grew wealthy? [Large flocks, female servants, male servants, camels, donkeys.]
9. What did the Lord tell Jacob? ["I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Return to the land of your kindred."]
10. What did Leah and Rachel say about leaving their father? [Accept one or two answers: "He has taken our inheritance; we are regarded by him as foreigners; he has sold us and has devoured our money; whatever God has said to you, do."]

Memory Verse[s]:

- John 16:33—[Jesus said,] "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Handwork:

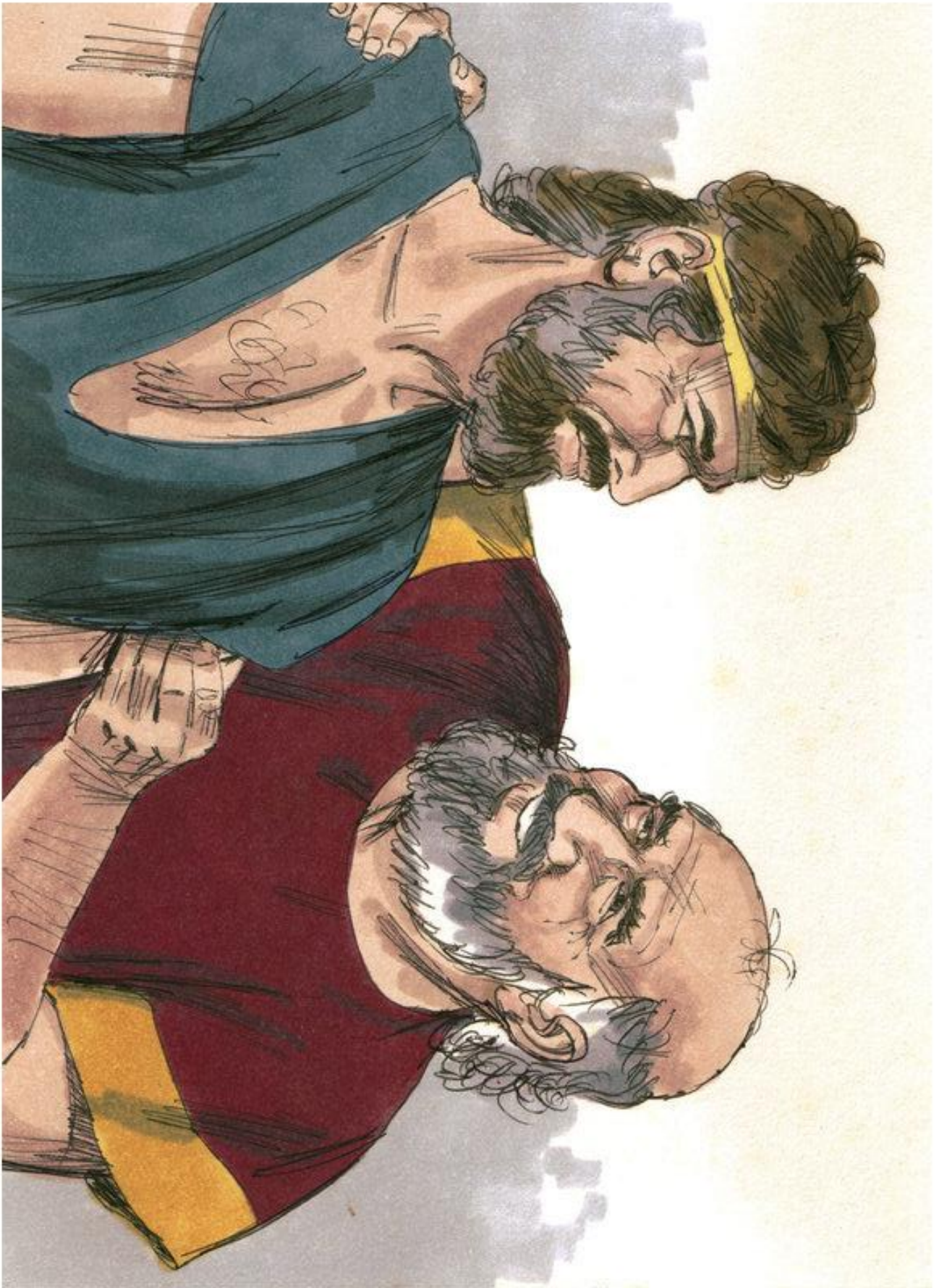
- Color the picture of the goat found below. Make it look like one of Jacob's goats by coloring spots and speckles on it.

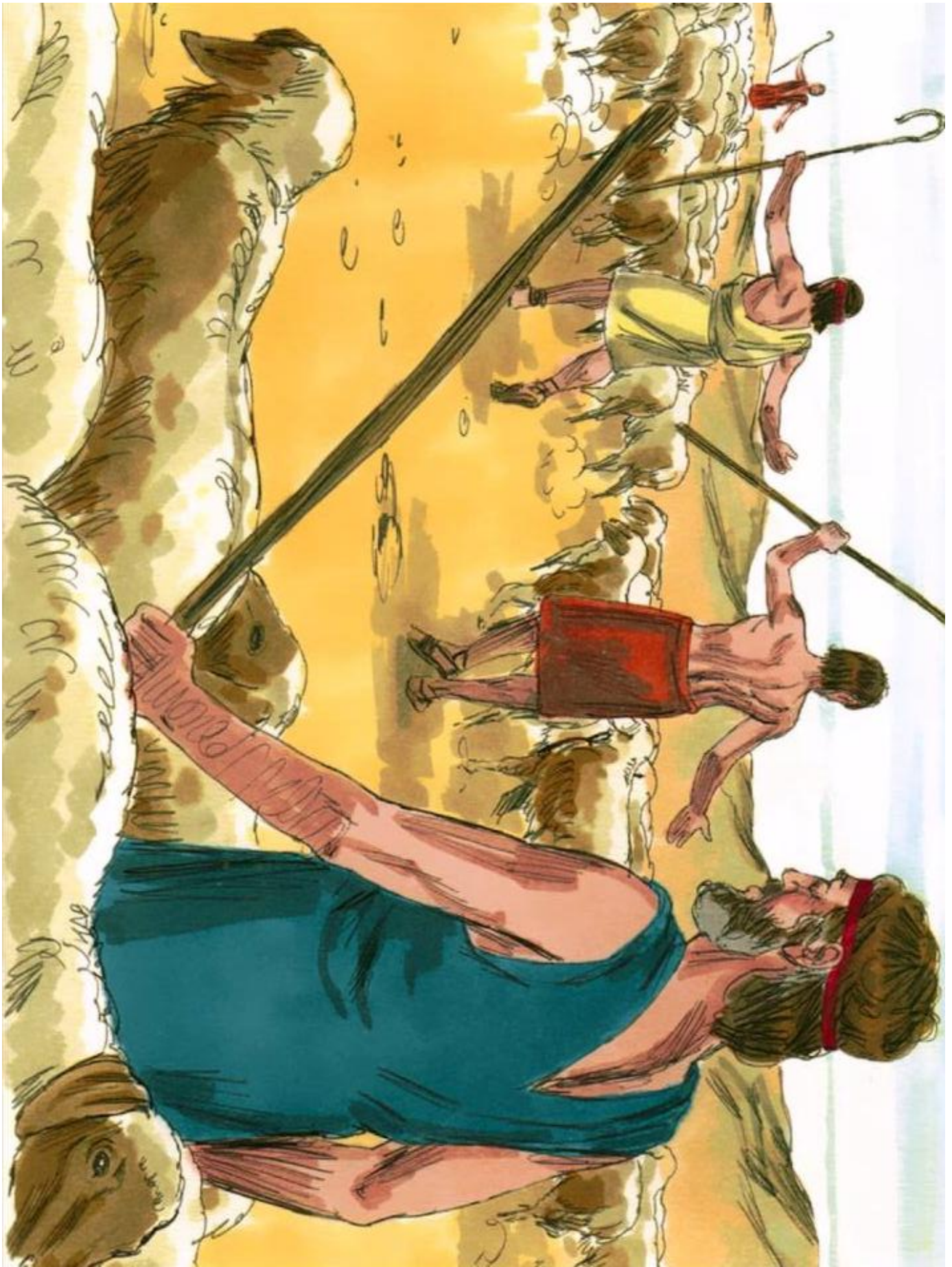
vow

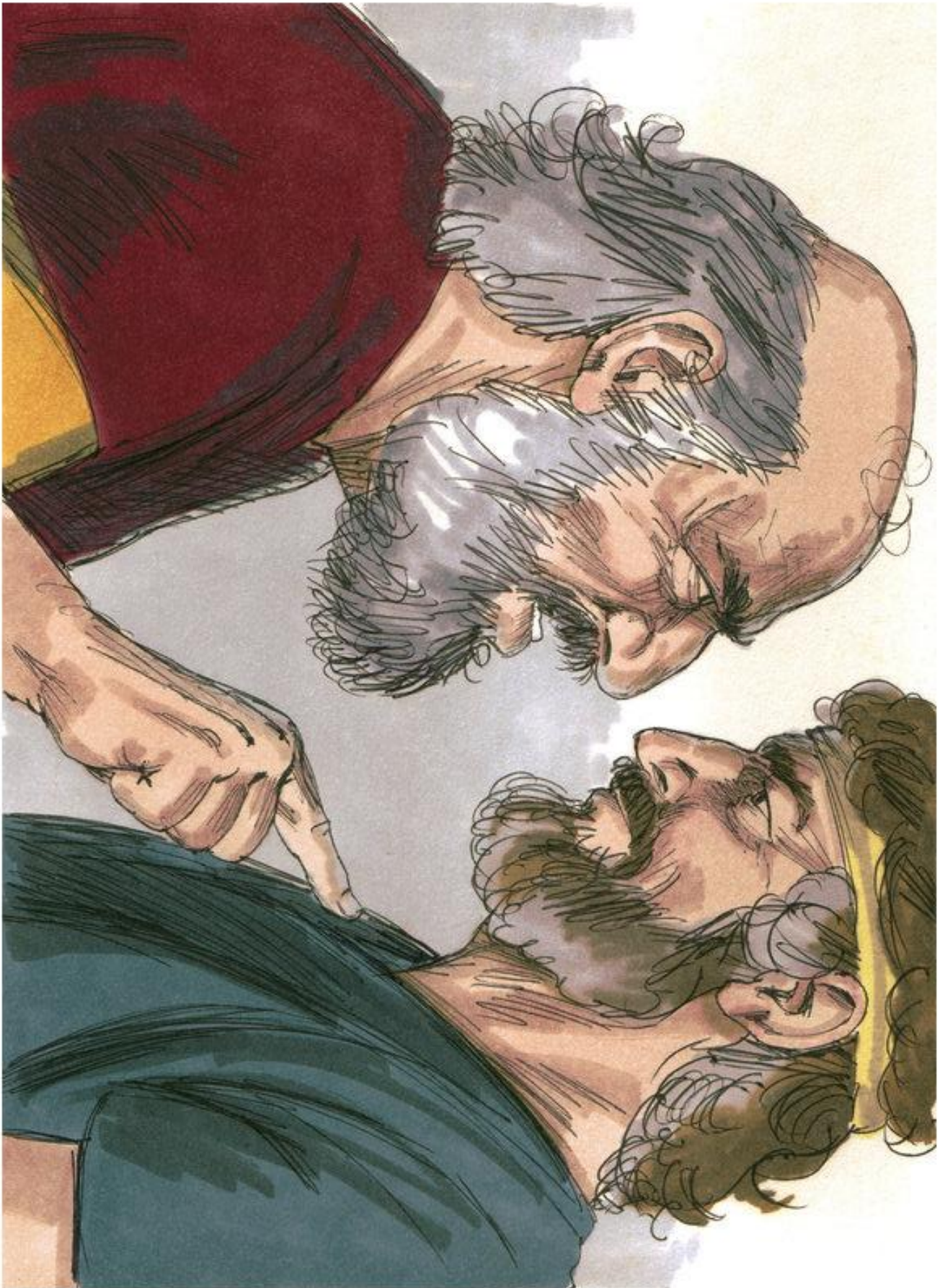
speckled

spotted

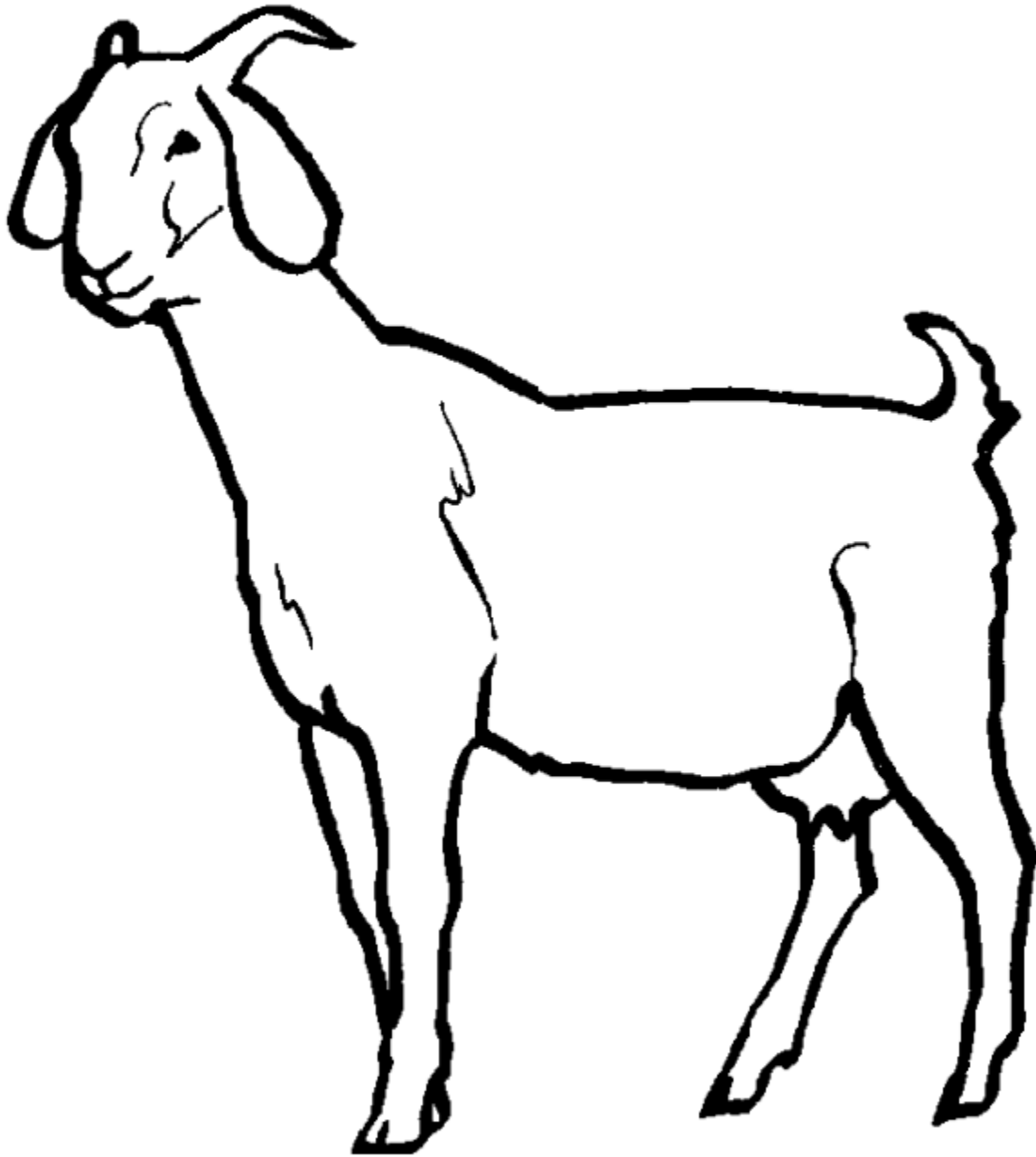
kindred











<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/228276274839347499/?!p=true>

Make this one of Jacob's goats by adding speckles and spots.