—Vayetzei—

Saturday Morning Torah Study

Shabbat November 21, 2026

(Plaut pp. 201-05)

Genesis 30:1-8:

א וַתֵּ֤רֶא רָחֵל֙ כִּי֩ לֹ֨א יָלְדָ֜ה לְיַעֲקֹ֗ב וַתְּקַנֵּ֤א רָחֵל֙ בַּאֲחֹתָ֔הּ וַתֹּ֥אמֶר אֶל־יַעֲקֹ֖ב הָבָ֣ה־לִ֑י בָּנִ֕ים וְאִם־אַ֖יִן מֵתָ֥ה אָנֹֽכִי׃ ב וַיִּֽחַר־אַ֣ף יַעֲקֹ֔ב בְּרָחֵ֖ל וַיֹּ֣אמֶר הֲתַ֤חַת אֱלֹהִים֙ אָנֹ֔כִי אֲשֶׁ֥ר־מָנַ֖ע מִמֵּ֣ךְ פְּרִי־בָֽטֶן׃ ג וַתֹּ֗אמֶר הִנֵּ֤ה אֲמָתִי֙ בִלְהָ֔ה בֹּ֥א אֵלֶ֖יהָ וְתֵלֵ֣ד עַל־בִּרְכַּ֑י וְאִבָּנֶ֥ה גַם־אָנֹכִ֖י מִמֶּֽנָּה׃ ד וַתִּתֶּן־לֹ֥ו אֶת־בִּלְהָ֛ה שִׁפְחָתָ֖הּ לְאִשָּׁ֑ה וַיָּבֹ֥א אֵלֶ֖יהָ יַעֲקֹֽב׃ ה וַתַּ֥הַר בִּלְהָ֖ה וַתֵּ֣לֶד לְיַעֲקֹ֖ב בֵּֽן׃ ו וַתֹּ֤אמֶר רָחֵל֙ דָּנַ֣נִי אֱלֹהִ֔ים וְגַם֙ שָׁמַ֣ע בְּקֹלִ֔י וַיִּתֶּן־לִ֖י בֵּ֣ן עַל־כֵּ֑ן קָרְאָ֥ה שְׁמֹ֖ו דָּֽן׃ ז וַתַּ֥הַר עֹ֛וד וַתֵּ֥לֶד בִּלְהָ֖ה שִׁפְחַ֣ת רָחֵ֑ל בֵּ֖ן שֵׁנִ֥י לְיַעֲקֹֽב׃ ח וַתֹּ֤אמֶר רָחֵל֙ נַפְתּוּלֵ֣י אֱלֹהִ֔ים | נִפְתַּ֖לְתִּי עִם־אֲחֹתִ֑י גַּם־יָכֹ֣לְתִּי וַתִּקְרָ֥א שְׁמֹ֖ו נַפְתָּלִֽי׃

When Rachel saw that she had borne Jacob no children, she became envious of her sister; and Rachel said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die." Jacob was incensed at Rachel, and said, "Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?" She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah. Consort with her, that she may bear on my knees and that through her I too may have children." So she gave him her maid Bilhah as concubine, and Jacob cohabited with her. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. And Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; indeed, the Eternal has heeded my plea and given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, "A fateful contest I waged with my sister; yes, and I have prevailed." So she named him Naphtali.

Commentary of ibn Ezra (Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra: 1091/92-1167):

הבה לי בנים. שתתפלל לשם כאשר עשה אביך:

1. **Give me children.** Pray to God as your father did.

Commentary of Nachmanides (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman: 1195?-1270):

וַיִּחַר אַף יַעֲקֹב שֶׁאֵין תְּפִלַּת הַצַּדִּיקִים בְּיָדָם שֶׁתִּשָּׁמַע וְתֵעָנֶה עַל כָּל פָּנִים, וּבַעֲבוּר שֶׁדִּבְּרָה דֶּרֶךְ גַּעֲגוּעֵי הַנָּשִׁים הָאֲהוּבוֹת לְהַפְחִידוֹ בְּמִיתָתָהּ, חָרָה אַפּוֹ, וּלְכָךְ אָמַר לָהּ שֶׁאֵינוֹ בִּמְקוֹם אֱלֹהִים שֶׁיִּפְקֹד הָעֲקָרוֹת עַל כָּל פָּנִים, וְאֵינֶנּוּ חוֹשֵׁשׁ בַּדָּבָר כִּי מִמֶּנָּה נִמְנַע פְּרִי הַבֶּטֶן וְלֹא מִמֶּנּוּ, וְזֶה לְיַסֵּר אוֹתָהּ וּלְהַכְלִימָהּ. וְהִנֵּה הַצַּדֶּקֶת בְּרְאוֹתָהּ שֶׁלֹּא תּוּכַל לְהִסָּמֵךְ עַל תְּפִלַּת יַעֲקֹב, שָׁבָה לְהִתְפַּלֵּל עַל עַצְמָהּ אֶל שׁוֹמֵעַ צְעָקָה, וְזֶהוּ "וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹהִים" (בראשית ל':כ"ב). וְאוּלַי נְתַקֵּן עַל דַּעַת רַבּוֹתֵינוּ כִּי יַעֲקֹב אִי אֶפְשָׁר שֶׁלֹּא נִתְפַּלֵּל עַל אִשְׁתּוֹ הָאֲהוּבָה כִּי עֲקָרָה הִיא, אֶלָּא שֶׁלֹּא נִתְקַבְּלָה תְּפִלָּתוֹ, וּבָאָה עַתָּה רָחֵל לְהִתְעוֹלֵל עָלָיו לֵאמֹר שֶׁיִּתֵּן לָהּ בָּנִים עַל כָּל פָּנִים בִּתְפִלָּתוֹ כִּי לֹא נוֹפֵל הוּא מֵאָבִיו שֶׁעָשָׂה כֵּן, וַיִּחַר אַפּוֹ וְאָמַר לָהּ כִּי הַדָּבָר בְּיַד אֱלֹהִים וְלֹא בְּיָדוֹ, וְאָבִיו נִשְׁמְעָה תְּפִלָּתוֹ שֶׁהוּא צַדִּיק וְעָתִיד לִהְיוֹת לוֹ זֶרַע, אֲבָל הִיא נִמְנַע מִמֶּנָּה פְּרִי בֶּטֶן. וְנָכוֹן הוּא:

2. Jacob was incensed at Rachel. Even the righteous cannot count on their prayers being automatically answered. He was angry that she was trying to play on his feelings for her. **Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb?** Jacob told her that he was not responsible; *she* was denied, not he. He meant to rebuke her and shame her. When she saw that she could not count on Jacob's praying for her, that righteous woman went back to praying for herself to the One who listens when people cry out, as we know from the eventual response, "God heeded her."(v. 22) Perhaps we can modify the opinion of the Sages. For Jacob could not possibly refuse to pray for his own beloved, but infertile wife. His pray was simply not accepted. Then Rachel began to abuse him, begging for children, and insisting that he could get them for her through prayer as his father had done. That is when he got angry at her. The matter was in God's hands, not his. His father's prayers had been answered because he was righteous and was due a son, but she, Rahcel, had been denied fruit of the womb. That is the correct understanding.

Commentary of Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi: 1160?-1235?):

אֲשֶׁר־מָנַע מִמֵּךְ. הוּא מָנַע מִמֵּךְ וְלֹא אָנִי, וּמִמֶּנּוּ תְּבַקֵּשׁ שֶׁיִּתֵּן לָךְ בָּנִים, כִּי אֲנִי נוֹתֵן לָךְ הָעוֹנָה שֶׁעָלַי לָתֵת, וְאִם אַתְּ עֲקָרָה מֵהָאֵל תְּבַקְּשִׁי שֶׁיִּפְתַּח אֶת

רַחְמֵךְ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לַאֲחוֹתֵךְ בְּבַקָּשָׁה מִמֶּנּוּ, וְהַמְנִיעָה הִיא מִלְּתֵת הַהֵרָיוֹן בְּפִתּוֹחַ הָרֶחֶם, לְפִיכָךְ **חָרָה אַף יַעֲקֹב** לְפִי שֶׁתָּלְתָה הַכֹּחַ בּוֹ וְלֹא בָּאֵל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ הַכֹּחַ וְהַיְכֹלֶת "עַד עֲקָרָה יָלְדָה שִׁבְעָה" (שמואל א ב:ה), וְהִיא אָמְרָה "הָבָה לִי בָנִים" (בראשית ל:א) אֲבָל אִם אָמְרָה בַּקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים עָלַי, צָדְקָה בְּמַאֲמָרָהּ וְלֹא חָרָה אַפּוֹ בּוֹ.

2. Can I take the place of God, who has denied you fruit of the womb? "He denied you, not me—I've been doing my part." Had she merely asked him, "Beg mercy for me," she would have been acting correctly, and he would not have gotten so angry.

וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב. זָכַר בְּאַרְבָּעָה בְּנֵי הַשְּׁפָחוֹת **לְיַעֲקֹב**, לְהוֹדִיעַ כִּי הֵם נֶחְשָׁבִים לְיַעֲקֹב כִּבְנֵי נָשָׁיו, וְכֵן הָיוּ בִּבְרָכָה וּבִירֻשָּׁה, גַּם הָיָה בָּהֶם רָאשִׁים וְשׁוֹפְטִים כְּמוֹ בִּבְנֵי הַנָּשִׁים.

5. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. She bore him "to Jacob," as the Hebrew literally says, emphasizing that the four sons of the maidservants were Jacob's sons just as much as those of his wives. They would share in the blessing and the inheritance and produce commanders and magistrates just like the others.

Genesis 30:9-13:

ט וַתֵּרֶא לֵאָה כִּי עָמְדָה מִלֶּדֶת וַתִּקַּח אֶת־זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחָתָהּ וַתִּתֶּן אֹתָהּ לְיַעֲקֹב לְאִשָּׁה: י וַתֵּלֶד זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחַת לֵאָה לְיַעֲקֹב בֵּן: יא וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בָּגָד [בָּא גָּד] וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ גָּד: יב וַתֵּלֶד זִלְפָּה שִׁפְחַת לֵאָה בֵּן שֵׁנִי לְיַעֲקֹב: יג וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה בְּאָשְׁרִי כִּי אִשְּׁרוּנִי בָּנוֹת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ אָשֵׁר:

When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as concubine. And when Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son, Leah said, "What luck!" So she named him Gad. When Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son, Leah declared, "What fortune!" meaning, "Women will deem me fortunate." So she named him Asher.

Genesis 30:14-21:

יד וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן בִּימֵי קְצִיר־חִטִּים וַיִּמְצָא דוּדָאִים בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיָּבֵא אֹתָם אֶל־לֵאָה אִמּוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל אֶל־לֵאָה תְּנִי־נָא לִי מִדּוּדָאֵי בְּנֵךְ: טו וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמְעַט קַחְתֵּךְ אֶת־אִישִׁי וְלָקַחַת גַּם אֶת־דּוּדָאֵי בְּנִי

וַתֹּאמֶר רָחֵל לָכֵן יִשְׁכַּב עִמָּךְ הַלַּיְלָה תַּחַת דּוּדָאֵי בְנֵךְ: טז וַיָּבֹא יַעֲקֹב מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה בָּעֶרֶב וַתֵּצֵא לֵאָה לִקְרָאתוֹ וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלַי תָּבוֹא כִּי שָׂכֹר שְׂכַרְתִּיךָ בְּדוּדָאֵי בְנִי וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּהּ בַּלַּיְלָה הוּא: יז וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶל־לֵאָה וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד לְיַעֲקֹב בֵּן חֲמִישִׁי: יח וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה נָתַן אֱלֹהִים שְׂכָרִי אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי לְאִישִׁי וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ יִשָּׂשכָר: יט וַתַּהַר עוֹד לֵאָה וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן־שִׁשִּׁי לְיַעֲקֹב: כ וַתֹּאמֶר לֵאָה זְבָדַנִי אֱלֹהִים | אֹתִי זֵבֶד טוֹב הַפַּעַם יִזְבְּלֵנִי אִישִׁי כִּי־יָלַדְתִּי לוֹ שִׁשָּׁה בָנִים וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ זְבֻלוּן: כא וְאַחַר יָלְדָה בַּת וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמָהּ דִּינָה:

Once, at the time of the wheat harvest, Reuben came upon some mandrakes in the field and brought them to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." But she said to her, "Was it not enough for you to take away my husband, that you would also take my son's mandrakes?" Rachel replied, "I promise, he shall lie with you tonight, in return for your son's mandrakes." When Jacob came home from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You are to sleep with me, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night. God heeded Leah, and she conceived and bore him a fifth son. And Leah said, "God has given me my reward for having given my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. When Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son, Leah said, "God has given me a choice gift; this time my husband will exalt me, for I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. Last, she bore him a daughter, and named her Dinah.

Commentary of Rashi:

בימי קציר חטים. לְהַגִּיד שִׁבְחָן שֶׁל שְׁבָטִים; שְׁעַת הַקָּצִיר הָיָה וְלֹא פָּשַׁט יָדוֹ בַּגָּזֵל לְהָבִיא חִטִּים וּשְׂעוֹרִים, אֶלָּא דָּבָר הַהֶפְקֵר, שֶׁאֵין אָדָם מַקְפִּיד בּוֹ: **דודאים.** סִיגְלִי, עֵשֶׂב הוּא (סנהדרין צ"ט), וּבִלְשׁוֹן יִשְׁמָעֵאל יַסְמִי"ן:

14. At the time of the wheat harvest. This is said in praise of the tribes. Though it was harvest time, even as a child Reuben did not steal wheat or barley to bring to his mother, but took something that was growing wild, which no one owned. **Mandrakes.** Violets. It is a kind of plant. In Arabic this word means "jasmine."

Commentary of ibn Ezra:

דודאים. אמר המתרגם יברוחין וכן יקראו בלשון ישמעאל ויש להם ריח טוב, וכן כתוב "הדודאים נתנו ריח" (ש"ה ז יד), והם על צורת בן אדם, כי יש להם דמות ראש וידים, ואנכי לא ידעתי למה יועילו להריון בעבור שתולדתם קרה:

14. Mandrakes. Onkelos too translates this word as "mandrakes;" they are called the same in Arabic. They have a beautiful fragrance, as indeed we find in "the mandrakes yield their fragrance."(Song of Songs 7:14) They mimic the human form, having a head and arms. But I do not know why they should be helpful in conceiving, since they are naturally cold.

Genesis 30:22-24:

כב וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־רָחֵל וַיִּשְׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ אֱלֹהִים וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רַחְמָהּ:
כג וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר אָסַף אֱלֹהִים אֶת־חֶרְפָּתִי: כד וַתִּקְרָא
אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר יֹסֶף יְהוָה לִי בֵּן אַחֵר:

Now God remembered Rachel; God heeded her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." So she named him Joseph, which is to say, "May the Eternal One add another son for me."

Genesis 30:25-34:

כה וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר יָלְדָה רָחֵל אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־לָבָן שַׁלְּחֵנִי
וְאֵלְכָה אֶל־מְקוֹמִי וּלְאַרְצִי: כו תְּנָה אֶת־נָשַׁי וְאֶת־יְלָדַי אֲשֶׁר עָבַדְתִּי
אֹתְךָ בָּהֶן וְאֵלֵכָה כִּי אַתָּה יָדַעְתָּ אֶת־עֲבֹדָתִי אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתִּיךָ: כז וַיֹּאמֶר
אֵלָיו לָבָן אִם־נָא מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ נִחַשְׁתִּי וַיְבָרְכֵנִי יְהוָה בִּגְלָלֶךָ:
[חמישי] כח וַיֹּאמֶר נָקְבָה שְׂכָרְךָ עָלַי וְאֶתֵּנָה: כט וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַתָּה
יָדַעְתָּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתִּיךָ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה מִקְנְךָ אִתִּי: ל כִּי מְעַט
אֲשֶׁר־הָיָה לְךָ לְפָנַי וַיִּפְרֹץ לָרֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ יְהוָה אֹתְךָ לְרַגְלִי וְעַתָּה מָתַי
אֶעֱשֶׂה גַּם־אָנֹכִי לְבֵיתִי: לא וַיֹּאמֶר מָה אֶתֶּן־לָךְ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב
לֹא־תִתֶּן־לִי מְאוּמָה אִם־תַּעֲשֶׂה־לִּי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה אָשׁוּבָה אֶרְעֶה צֹאנְךָ
אֶשְׁמֹר: לב אֶעֱבֹר בְּכָל־צֹאנְךָ הַיּוֹם הָסֵר מִשָּׁם כָּל־שֶׂה | נָקֹד וְטָלוּא
וְכָל־שֶׂה־חוּם בַּכְּשָׂבִים וְטָלוּא וְנָקֹד בָּעִזִּים וְהָיָה שְׂכָרִי: לג וְעָנְתָה־בִּי
צִדְקָתִי בְּיוֹם מָחָר כִּי־תָבוֹא עַל־שְׂכָרִי לְפָנֶיךָ כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־אֵינֶנּוּ נָקֹד

וְטָלוּא בָּעִזִּים וְחוּם בַּכְּשָׂבִים גָּנוּב הוּא אִתִּי: לד וַיֹּאמֶר לָבָן הֵן לוּ יְהִי כִדְבָרֶךָ:

After Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Give me leave to go back to my own homeland. Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served you, that I may go; for well you know what services I have rendered you." But Laban said to him, "If you will indulge me, I have learned by divination that God has blessed me on your account." And he continued, "Name the wages due from me, and I will pay you." But he said, "You know well how I have served you and how your livestock has fared with me. For the little you had before I came has grown to much, since the Eternal One has blessed you wherever I turned. And now, when shall I make provision for my own household?" He said, "What shall I pay you?" And Jacob said, "Pay me nothing! If you will do this thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flocks: let me pass through your whole flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted animal—every dark-colored sheep and every spotted and speckled goat. Such shall be my wages. In the future when you go over my wages, let my honesty toward you testify for me: if there are among my goats any that are not speckled or spotted or any sheep that are not dark-colored, they got there by theft." And Laban said, "Very well, let it be as you say."

Commentary of Rashi:

וענתה בי וגו'. אִם תַּחְשְׁדֵנִי שֶׁאֲנִי נוֹטֵל מִשֶּׁלְךָ כְּלוּם, תַּעֲנֶה בִי צִדְקָתִי כִּי תָּבֹא צִדְקָתִי וְתָעִיד עַל שְׂכָרִי לְפָנֶיךָ, שֶׁלֹּא תִמְצָא בְעֶדְרִי כִּי אִם נְקֻדִּים וּטְלוּאִים, וְכָל שֶׁתִּמְצָא בָהֶן שֶׁאֵינוֹ נָקֹד אוֹ טָלוּא אוֹ חוּם, בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁגְּנַבְתִּיו לְךָ וּבִגְנֵבָה הוּא שָׁרוּי אֶצְלִי:

33. Let my honesty toward you testify for me. If you suspect I am taking anything of yours, my honesty will testify for me: **If there are among my goats any that are not speckled or spotted or any sheep that are not dark-colored, they got there by theft.**

Genesis 30:35-43:

לה וַיָּסַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־הַתְּיָשִׁים הָעֲקֻדִּים וְהַטְּלֵאִים וְאֵת כָּל־הָעִזִּים הַנְּקֻדּוֹת וְהַטְּלָאֹת כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־לָבָן בּוֹ וְכָל־חוּם בַּכְּשָׂבִים וַיִּתֵּן בְּיַד־בָּנָיו:

לו וַיָּשֶׂם דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים בֵּינוֹ וּבֵין יַעֲקֹב וְיַעֲקֹב רֹעֶה אֶת־צֹאן לָבָן הַנּוֹתָרֹת: לז וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ יַעֲקֹב מַקַּל לִבְנֶה לָח וְלוּז וְעַרְמוֹן וַיְפַצֵּל בָּהֶן פְּצָלוֹת לְבָנוֹת מַחְשֹׂף הַלְּבָנֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הַמַּקְלוֹת: לח וַיַּצֵּג אֶת־הַמַּקְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר פִּצֵּל בָּרְהָטִים בְּשִׁקְּתוֹת הַמָּיִם אֲשֶׁר תָּבֹאן הַצֹּאן לִשְׁתוֹת לְנֹכַח הַצֹּאן וַיֵּחַמְנָה בְּבֹאָן לִשְׁתוֹת: לט וַיֵּחַמּוּ הַצֹּאן אֶל־הַמַּקְלוֹת וַתֵּלַדְן הַצֹּאן עֲקֻדִּים נְקֻדִּים וּטְלֻאִים: מ וְהַכְּשָׂבִים הִפְרִיד יַעֲקֹב וַיִּתֵּן פְּנֵי הַצֹּאן אֶל־עָקֹד וְכָל־חוּם בְּצֹאן לָבָן וַיָּשֶׁת לוֹ עֲדָרִים לְבַדּוֹ וְלֹא שָׁתָם עַל־צֹאן לָבָן: מא וְהָיָה בְּכָל־יַחֵם הַצֹּאן הַמְקֻשָּׁרוֹת וְשָׂם יַעֲקֹב אֶת־הַמַּקְלוֹת לְעֵינֵי הַצֹּאן בָּרְהָטִים לְיַחֲמֵנָּה בַּמַּקְלוֹת: מב וּבְהַעֲטִיף הַצֹּאן לֹא יָשִׂים וְהָיָה הָעֲטֻפִים לְלָבָן וְהַקְּשֻׁרִים לְיַעֲקֹב: מג וַיִּפְרֹץ הָאִישׁ מְאֹד מְאֹד וַיְהִי־לוֹ צֹאן רַבּוֹת וּשְׁפָחוֹת וַעֲבָדִים וּגְמַלִּים וַחֲמֹרִים:

But that same day he removed the streaked and spotted he-goats and all the speckled and spotted she-goats—every one that had white on it—and all the dark-colored sheep, and left them in the charge of his sons. And he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob was pasturing the rest of Laban's flock. Jacob then got fresh shoots of poplar, and of almond and plane, and peeled white stripes in them, laying bare the white of the shoots. The rods that he had peeled he set up in front of the goats in the troughs, the water receptacles, that the goats came to drink from. Their mating occurred when they came to drink, and since the goats mated by the rods, the goats brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted young. But Jacob dealt separately with the sheep; he made these animals face the streaked or wholly dark-colored animals in Laban's flock. And so he produced special flocks for himself, which he did not put with Laban's flocks. Moreover, when the sturdier animals were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the troughs, in full view of the animals, so that they mated by the rods; but with the feebler animals he would not place them there. Thus the feeble ones went to Laban and the sturdy to Jacob. So the man grew exceedingly prosperous, and came to own large flocks, maidservants and menservants, camels and asses.

Commentary of Nahmanides:

וַיִּקַּח לוֹ יַעֲקֹב מַקַּל לִבְנֶה כֵּיוָן שֶׁהִסְכִּימוּ לִהְיוֹת שְׂכָרוֹ בְּאֵלֶּה הָיָה רַשַּׁאי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל מַה שֶּׁיּוּכַל לְהוֹלִידָם כֵּן. וְאוּלַי הִתְנָה יַעֲקֹב שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה בָּהֶן כָּל מָה שֶּׁיִּרְצֶה, כִּי לָבָן לֹא הָיָה יוֹדֵעַ בַּתּוֹלָדָה הַזּוֹ, וְהָרוֹעִים לֹא הָיוּ מַרְגִּישִׁים בַּדָּבָר

בְּרֹאשָׁם הַמַּקְלוֹת בָּרָהָטִים פַּעַם אַחַת בַּשָּׁנָה בִּימֵי נִיסָן, כִּי בְּהַעֲטִיף הַצֹּאן בִּימֵי תִּשְׁרֵי לֹא יָשִׂים, שֶׁלֹּא יִשָּׁאֵר לְלָבָן עַד פַּרְסָה. וְיֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים (הרד"ק) כִּי הַשָּׁנָה הָרִאשׁוֹנָה נוֹלְדוּ לְיַעֲקֹב נְקֻדִּים וּטְלוּאִים רַבִּים בְּבִרְכַּת הַשֵּׁם אֲשֶׁר הֵרָאָה לוֹ הַמַּלְאָךְ, וְשָׂם הַמַּקְלוֹת בִּפְנֵי אֵלּוּ שֶׁהָיוּ שֶׁלּוֹ שֶׁיּוֹלִידוּ בִּדְמוּתָם, שֶׁלֹּא יֹאמַר לָבָן כַּאֲשֶׁר יִוָּלְדוּ כִּי גָּנוּב הוּא אִתּוֹ. וְזֶה פֵּרוּשׁ "בְּכָל יַחֵם הַצֹּאן הַמְקֻשָּׁרוֹת", שֶׁהֵם הַנּוֹלָדִים לוֹ, "וּבְהַעֲטִיף הַצֹּאן" שֶׁל לָבָן, "לֹא יָשִׂים, וְהָיָה הָעֲטֻפִים לְלָבָן" אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִוָּלְדוּ נְקֻדִּים "וְהַקְּשׁוּרִים" כֻּלָּם "לְיַעֲקֹב" כִּי יִוָּלְדוּ נְקֻדִּים:

37. Jacob then got fresh shoots of poplar. Once they had agreed on his wages, he was entitled to do whatever he could to produce animals of those kinds. Jacob may even have made this condition explicit; Laban does not seem to have known about these procedures. The shepherds would not pay attention to shoots of poplar being in the water troughs on a single occasion during the year. For Jacob did this only in Nisan with the earlier breeding as v. 44 is to be interpreted, not with the later breeding, in Tishrei, described in v. 42. But some understand that the marked animals were born for Jacob during the first year strictly through God's blessing, and that vv. 41-42 describe him doing the procedure only with his own animals and not with Laban's.

Commentary of Rashi:

ויצג. תַּרְגּוּמוֹ וְדָעִיץ, לְשׁוֹן תְּחִיבָה וּנְעִיצָה הוּא בִּלְשׁוֹן אֲרַמִּי, וְהַרְבֵּה יֵשׁ בַּתַּלְמוּד דָּצָה וּשְׁלָפָהּ, דָּץ בֵּיהּ מִידֵי, דָּצָה כְּמוֹ דָּעָצָה, אֶלָּא שֶׁמְּקַצֵּר אֶת לְשׁוֹנוֹ: **ברהטים.** בִּמְרוּצוֹת הַמַּיִם, בַּבְּרֵכוֹת הָעֲשׂוּיוֹת בָּאָרֶץ לְהַשְׁקוֹת שָׁם הַצֹּאן: **אשר תבאן וגו'.** בָּרָהָטִים אֲשֶׁר תָּבֹאנָה הַצֹּאן לִשְׁתּוֹת שָׁם הִצִּיג הַמַּקְלוֹת לְנֹכַח הַצֹּאן: **ויחמנה.** הַבְּהֵמָה רוֹאָה אֶת הַמַּקְלוֹת וְהִיא נִרְתַּעַת לַאֲחוֹרֶיהָ וְהַזָּכָר רוֹבְעָהּ וְיוֹלֶדֶת כַּיּוֹצֵא בּוֹ. רַבִּי הוֹשַׁעְיָה אוֹמֵר, הַמַּיִם נַעֲשִׂין זֶרַע בְּמֵעֵיהֶן וְלֹא הָיוּ צְרִיכוֹת לְזָכָר, וְזֶהוּ וַיֵּחַמְנָה וְגוֹ' (בראשית רבה):

38. He set up. More precisely, as Onkelos translates, he "stuck" them in the ground. **In the troughs.** The water channels; pools made in the ground to water the flock. **Their mating occurred when they came to drink.** The female would see the rods and back up in alarm, and the male would mount her from behind; she would then bear offspring that resembled the rods. R. Hoshiah says: The

water became seed within them, so there was no need for males. That would explain the combined masculine and feminine form of the Hebrew verb.

Commentary of Gersonides:

39. **Since the goats mated by the rods, the goats brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted young.** The colors operate respectively on the various humors (e.g., black on the black humor, red on the red); see the medical books.

Commentary of Radak:

וַתֵּלַדְן הַצֹּאן. כִּי כֹּחַ הַדְּמְיוֹן בַּמֹּחַ וְהַזֶּרַע תְּחִלָּתוֹ מֵהַמֹּחַ, לְפִיכָךְ יָלְדוּ לְפִי הַדְּמְיוֹן.

39. The goats brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted young. The imaginative faculty resides in the brain, which is also the source of semen; that is why they gave birth to young that resembled the rods.

וְהַכְּשָׂבִים הִפְרִיד יַעֲקֹב. הִפְרִידָם מִן הַתְּיָשִׁים, וְהָעִנְיָן שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה מַשְׁקֶה אוֹתָם עִמָּהֶם כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא יֵצְאוּ עֲקֻדִּים, כִּי אוֹתָם לֹא הָיוּ לְיַעֲקֹב, אֶלָּא הַשְּׁחוֹרִים מִן הַכְּשָׂבִים הָיוּ לוֹ, לְפִיכָךְ הָיָה מַשְׁקֶה אוֹתָם לְבַדָּם הַכְּשָׂבִים וְהָרְחֵלוֹת, וְלָאוֹתָם לֹא הָיָה מֵשִׂים מַקְלוֹת כִּי לֹא הָיָה לוֹ מַקְלוֹת שְׁחוֹרוֹת, אֶלָּא אִם כֵּן הָיָה צוֹבֵעַ אוֹתָם, וְאִם הָיָה עוֹשֶׂה כֵּן הָיָה נִכָּר הַדָּבָר וְנוֹדָע כִּי בַּמִּדְבָּר לֹא הָיָה יָכוֹל לְצָבְעָם. אֶלָּא הָיָה נוֹתֵן פְּנֵי הַצֹּאן אֶל עָקֹד, פְּנֵי הָעִזִּים וְהַתְּיָשִׁים מִצֹּאן יַעֲקֹב נָתַן אוֹתָם בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהָיוּ שׁוֹתִים כְּנֶגֶד הָעָקֹד וְהַטָּלוּא אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ בְּצֹאן לָבָן מִלְּבַד הַמַּקְלוֹת שֶׁהָיוּ כְּנֶגְדָּם, וְכֵן הָיָה נוֹתֵן פְּנֵי הַכְּשָׂבִים וְהָרְחֵלוֹת בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהָיוּ שׁוֹתִים כְּנֶגֶד כָּל חוּם שֶׁהָיָה בְּצֹאן לָבָן כְּדֵי שֶׁיּוֹלִידוּ כְּמוֹתָן; וְזָכַר **עָקֹד** וּבְכָלְלוֹ נָקֹד וְטָלוּא.

40. But Jacob dealt separately with the sheep. Because the streaked ones among the sheep did to belong to him, but the dark-colored ones did. That is why he watered them separately and not facing the rods. He did not have any dark-colored rods. He would have had to paint some, and then what he was doing would have been obvious. There was no way to paint them out in the wilderness anyway. **And so he produced special flocks for himself, which he did not put with Laban's flocks.** He got other shepherds for them and did not pasture them along with Laban's sheep. For Laban was stingy. Even though he changed the

conditions every year, he always found Jacob's share greater that his own, and was always arguing with Jacob about it.