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THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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GENESIS 28:10-32:2

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Q1: Now we have seen the adult lives of three generations of the chosen family. What recurring qualities do you notice that stretch out across all three generations? What are their variations?

Q2: In the early, fugitive, stage of Jacob's journey, he has a divine encounter that is unexpected and vividly imagistic. In the wake of that, he makes a vow stipulating the conditions of his relationship with God. Well, what are the conditions of his relationship with God? How is it shaped by a) his family history, and b) his present vulnerable position?

Q3: Compare Jacob's dream of heavenly beings to Abraham's murky vision in chapter 15. How does form relate to content? How are their visions affected by who they are and what they are looking for?

Q4: This is not the first time we've seen important action centered around a well (Pop quiz: where else?). Who owns this well, and how is it organized? What does it mean that Jacob is willing and able to move the rock when no one else is?

Q5: What are the uses and symbolic qualities of rocks in Jacob's journey?

Q6: Make a list of qualities, good and bad, that you can attribute to Laban. Which ones can you identify as having some resemblance to the chosen family?

Q7: These sister-wives bring us a fast-paced, action-packed version of the struggles for childbirth we have seen before. How does the naming of children serve as a platform for expressing their goals and satisfactions? IF YOU KNOW HEBREW: look for double meanings and innuendos in the names.

Q8: Examine the episode with Reuben's mysterious plant. What can the women's negotiation tell us about the nature of their struggle? Who do you think gets the better end of the negotiation?

Q9: Does this story pass the Bechdel test? It depends on whether the women view childbearing as a reflection of their relationship to Jacob, or as an independent enterprise.

Q10: While Leah and Rachel struggle over their own fertility, Jacob and Laban contend over the fertility of beasts. How does Jacob achieve prosperity under indentured conditions? What is going on with his animal husbandry techniques?

Q11: Why does Jacob tell his wives about a dream we never heard about?

Q12: Why does God tell Laban to speak "neither good nor bad" to Jacob? What is the problem with speaking good? Does Laban obey?