

Genesis

Chapter 31



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Theme: Jacob flees from Haran; the Mizpah covenant

McGee: In this chapter we find that Jacob leaves Laban without giving notice. They don't even have a farewell party for him. Laban takes out after him and overtakes him. Finally, Jacob and Laban made another contract, this time not to defraud or hurt each other. Then they separate in an outwardly friendly manner.

We will see that God wants to get Jacob out of that land. He recognizes that the influence of Laban's household is not good for Jacob and his growing family. The boys are going to be heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, and God is anxious to get them out from that environment and back into Abraham's country, the country which He had promised to Abraham.

We are in a section of the Word of God which God has given to minister to our needs. It deals with a man who is a very sinful man in many ways and a man whom God would not give up. You and I can take courage from this. The Lord will never give us up as long as we keep coming back to Him. He will always receive us. If He will take a fellow like Jacob and a fellow like I am, He will take you, my friend.

You will recall that Jacob has had a pretty sad ordeal of twenty years with Uncle Laban. Uncle Laban has really given him a course in the college of hard knocks, and poor Jacob is beginning to wince because of all the pressure he has been under. However, since the new deal which he had made with Laban regarding cattle breeding, Jacob is now getting more than Uncle Laban is getting. Uncle Laban doesn't like it, nor do his sons like it.¹

Jacob breaks free of Laban. This chapter marks the final resolution of the even more difficult relationship between the emerging patriarch and his selfish and duplicitous father-in-law. Jacob first persuades his wives to leave their father and then contends with Laban's accusations making a few of his own along the way. Finally at Laban's suggestion the two make a nonaggression pact, solemnly delimiting the terms of their separation and the boundary between their territories.

Christian Ethics, Moral Limits—Those sensitive to the ordinary events of life can recognize when injustice occurs. Refusal to abide by wage agreements is outside acceptable moral limits in all societies. Theft and deception are wrong in themselves and thus are not proper responses to unethical behavior. Agreements are the proper basis for relationships, particularly when the parties represent different cultures. This account relates that Jacob had been sensitive and was becoming more sensitive to the leadership of God. Many of his rough edges were being worn off through his encounters with Laban. Such is the work of God in our lives as others become in God's hands formative instruments for shaping our character. Even these who work for our God need His disciplining hand as they may try to press too far in imposing moral limits upon us.²

¹McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:126). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² Disciple's Study Bible

Torah Class: Here we witness history repeat itself. Jacob had a life in many ways similar to Abraham. He was a man without a country, a wanderer. Did he belong to Mesopotamia, or did he belong to the Land of Canaan?

And we are reminded of the situation between Lot and Abraham when Lot's wealth grew such that it caused tension between those loyal to Abraham, and those loyal to Lot; so the only solution was separation. Jacob and Laban now find themselves in a similar situation.

It is rare in the Bible that we find division and separation occurring on happy terms; something unpleasant was usually at the heart of the matter to cause it. So, perhaps we should take heart that the divisions and separations that have happened in our lives resulting from bad judgment, selfishness, sin, or even something completely out of our control, are normal. It is a Christian cliché that God uses imperfect people to bring about His perfect will. In reality, what other kind of people are there than imperfect for Him to work with?

Just as Lot cut ties permanently with Abraham, and went on to form a new and separate family line that would result in the nations of Moab and Ammon, here we find that Jacob will....due to circumstances that Yehoveh uses to achieve His purposes..... finally cut family ties with the land of Mesopotamia and his in-laws. Although Jacob will eventually lead his family to Egypt for the purpose of survival, it is now clear that the Land of Canaan is home, and no other.³

Genesis 31:1

And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of *that which was our father's* hath he gotten all this glory.

Laban was unjust and covetous, and he treated Jacob shamefully from the beginning. There was no ground for this jealousy, because Laban was wealthy because of Jacob.

And he heard the words of Laban's sons—The multiplication of Jacob's cattle, and the decrease and degeneracy of those of Laban, were sufficient to arouse the jealousy of Laban's sons. This, with Laban's unfair treatment, and the direction he received from God, determined him to return to his own country.⁴

Hath he gotten all this glory—All these riches, this wealth, or property. The original word for glory signifies both to be rich and to be heavy; and perhaps for this simple reason, that riches ever bring with them heavy weight and burden of cares and anxieties.

The complaint of Laban's sons (who are mentioned only here) echoes Esau's charge in 27:36. In this case, however Jacob will not only receive divine validation of his behavior, but also vigorously defend its legality. These sons probably were born to Laban after Jacob had arrived in Haran (30:26). Concerned about their welfare, the sons accused Jacob of being a thief.

³ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

Genesis 31:2

And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.

[**countenance**] "Anger" (Genesis 4:5-6); "jealousy" (Genesis 31:2-5); "greed" (2 Kings 8:11); "sorrow" (Neh. 2:2-3; Eccles. 7:3); "fear" (Daniel 5:6-10; Daniel 7:28); "rebuke" (Psalm 80:16); "merry heart" (Proverbs 15:13); and transfiguration of body are the main causes of changed countenances (Luke 9:29). Below are eight examples of changed countenances:

1. Cain (Genesis 4:5-6)
2. Laban (Genesis 31:2-5)
3. Hazael (2 Kings 8:11)
4. Nehemiah (Neh. 2:2-3)
5. Belshazzar (Daniel 5:6,9-10)
6. Daniel (Daniel 7:28)
7. Christ (Luke 9:29)
8. Moses (2 Cor. 3:7)⁵

And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban—literally, "was not the same as yesterday, and the day before," a common Oriental form of speech. The insinuations against Jacob's fidelity by Laban's sons, and the sullen reserve, the churlish conduct, of Laban himself, had made Jacob's situation, in his uncle's establishment, most trying and painful. It is always one of the vexations attendant on worldly prosperity, that it excites the envy of others (Eccles. 4:4); and that, however careful a man is to maintain a good conscience, he cannot always reckon on maintaining a good name, in a censorious world. This, Jacob experienced; and it is probable that, like a good man, he had asked direction and relief in prayer.⁶

Genesis 31:3

And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

Missler: Jacob left for Canaan for two interrelated reasons: 1) Animosity by Laban's sons was growing against Jacob, and Laban's mood was dangerous; Perhaps God stirred up the nest. 2) God told Jacob to return to his own land: a divine call to leave for the land of promise.⁷

[**Return unto the**] The 42nd prophecy in Genesis (Genesis 31:3, this prophecy is fulfilled). The next prophecy is in Genesis 32:9.

⁵ Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁶ JFB Commentary

⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

[land of thy fathers] The land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 17:8; Genesis 26:3-4; Genesis 28:13-15). God fulfilled this prophecy in Jacob by being with him in all his dangers (Genesis 31:11-49:33). His kindred were Isaac and Esau.

[said unto Jacob]

First Prophecies of Scripture

1. To Adam in an audible voice (Genesis 3:14-19)
2. To Cain in an audible voice (Genesis 4:12)
3. To Enoch (method unknown, Jude 1:14-15)
4. To Adam or Enoch (Genesis 6:3,7)
5. To Noah in an audible voice (Genesis 6:13,17; Genesis 7:4; Genesis 9:9-17)
6. To Abraham in an audible voice, vision, and perhaps other means (Genesis 12:1-3,7; Genesis 13:14-17; Genesis 15:1,4,13-21; Genesis 17:2,4,15-16,19-21; Genesis 18:10,14,17; Genesis 21:12-13; Genesis 22:8,16-18; Genesis 24:7,40)
7. To Rebekah in an audible voice (Genesis 25:23)
8. To Isaac in an audible voice and other means (Genesis 26:2-4,24; Genesis 27:28-29,37,39-40; Genesis 28:3-4)
9. To Jacob in vision and other means (Genesis 28:12-15; Genesis 30:24; Genesis 31:3; Genesis 32:9; Genesis 35:9-12; Genesis 46:2-4; Genesis 48:2-4,15-20; Genesis 49)

Before God raised up prophets, He spoke directly to His people, sometimes by visions (Genesis 15:1; Genesis 46:2) and dreams (Genesis 20:3,6; Genesis 28:12; Genesis 31:10-11,24; Genesis 37:5-10; Genesis 40:5-19; Genesis 41:1-32; Genesis 42:9), and even with an audible voice (Deut. 5:4,22-28). At times He filled messengers with the Holy Spirit and spoke through them in their own language (Acts 3:21; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2 Peter 1:21). Regardless of the method, it was always clear when it was the revelation of God. God made several predictions to men before Jacob's time. See *Twenty-one Men Who Had Visions from God*.⁸

And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return—and I will be with thee—I will take the same care of thee in thy return, as I took of thee on thy way to this place. The Targum reads, My WORD shall be for thy help, see Genesis 15:1. A promise of this kind was essentially necessary for the encouragement of Jacob, especially at this time; and no doubt it was a powerful means of support to him through the whole journey; and it was particularly so when he heard that his brother was coming to meet him, with four hundred men in his retinue, Genesis 32:6. At that time he went and pleaded the very words of this promise with God, Genesis 32:9.⁹

the Lord said . . . Return unto the land of thy fathers—Notwithstanding the ill usage he had received, Jacob might not have deemed himself at liberty to quit his present sphere, under the impulse of passionate fretfulness and discontent. Having been conducted to Haran by God (Genesis 28:15) and having got a promise that the same heavenly Guardian would bring him again into the land of Canaan, he might have thought

⁸Dake's Study Notes, Dake's Study Bible

⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

he ought not to leave it, without being clearly persuaded as to the path of duty. So ought we to set the Lord before us, and to acknowledge Him in all our ways, our journeys, our settlements, and plans in life.¹⁰

The verse recalls the Lord's words to Jacob in 28:15, when he first set out for Haran, and thus suggests that He has indeed been protecting the chosen son of Isaac during his long and painful sojourn outside the promised land all along. Functioning as bookends around the story of Jacob in Haran, these two verses illustrated the principle the, in the psalmist's words, "The Lord will guard your going and your coming now and forever" (Ps. 121:8).¹¹

Chrysostom; "Take to the road with confidence"

Do you see the good man's great meekness on the one hand, and their ingratitude on the other, and how they could not bear to hold their envy in check but even affected their father's attitude? See now God's ineffable care and the degree of considerateness he employs when he sees us doing our best. I mean, when he saw the good man the object of their envy, he said to Jacob "Return to the land of your father and to your birthplace and I will be with you." You have had enough of living in a foreign land, he is saying. What I promised you previously in the words "I will return you to your country, this I now intend to bring to pass. So go back without fear; after all, "I will be with you." You see, to prevent the good man becoming lethargic in departing instead of taking to the road with confidence, he says, "I will be with you." The One who has managed your affairs until now and caused your descendants to increase, "I will be with you" in future as well. (Homilies on Genesis 57:10)¹²

Genesis 31:4

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

[Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah] As husband and father Jacob had the right to make his own plans for the family, but he wisely revealed his plans to his wives, gaining their full cooperation (Genesis 31:5-21).

Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah—He had probably been at some considerable distance with the flocks; and for the greater secrecy, he rather sends for them to the field, to consult them on this most momentous affair, than visit them in their tents, where probably some of the family of Laban might overhear their conversation, though Laban himself was at the time three days' journey off. It is possible that Jacob shored his sheep at the same time; and that he sent for his wives and household furniture to erect tents on the spot, that they might partake of the festivities usual on such occasions. Thus they might all depart without being suspected.⁵

¹⁰ JFB Commentary

¹¹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

¹² Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah—His wives and family were in their usual residence. Whether he wished them to be present at the festivities of sheep shearing, as some think; or, because he could not leave his flock, he called them both to come to him, in order that, having resolved on immediate departure, he might communicate his intentions. Rachel and Leah only were called, for the other two wives, being secondary and still in a state of servitude, were not entitled to be taken into account. Jacob acted the part of a dutiful husband in telling them his plans; for husbands that love their wives should consult with them and trust in them (Proverbs 31:11).

Genesis 31:5

And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

Genesis 31:6

And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

ye know that . . . I have served your father—Having stated his strong grounds of dissatisfaction with their father's conduct and the ill requital he had got for all his faithful services, he informed them of the blessing of God that had made him rich notwithstanding Laban's design to ruin him; and finally, of the command from God he had received to return to his own country, that they might not accuse him of caprice, or disaffection to their family; but be convinced, that in resolving to depart, he acted from a principle of religious obedience.¹³

Genesis 31:7

And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

[deceived]

Deceit

Deceit is falsehood (Psalm 119:118). It comes from the heart (Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:22; Romans 3:13). God abhors it (Psalm 5:6) and forbids it (Job 27:4; Job 31:5; Proverbs 24:28; 1 Peter 3:10). All saints are free from it (Psalm 24:4; Isaiah 53:9; Zeph. 3:13; 1 Peter 2:22; Rev. 14:5). It is to be shunned (Psalm 43:1; Psalm 72:14; Psalm 101:7; Psalm 120:2; Ephes. 5:6; Col. 2:8) and laid aside (2 Cor. 4:2; 1 Thes. 2:3; 1 Peter 2:1). Scripture refers to the wicked and deceit (Psalm 10:7; Psalm 35:20; Psalm 36:3; Psalm 38:12; Proverbs 11:18; Proverbs 12:5; Proverbs 20:17; Jeremiah 9:5; Jeremiah 37:9; 2 Tim. 3:13); false teachers and deceit (Job 15:35; Proverbs 12:17; Jeremiah 14:14; Jeremiah 23:26; Romans 16:18; 2 Cor. 11:13; Ephes. 4:14; 2 Thes. 2; 2 Peter 2:13; 2 John 1:7); and evils of deceit (Psalm 10:7; Psalm 24:4-5; Psalm 32:2; Psalm 55:23; Proverbs 14:8,25; Proverbs 26:24; Proverbs 27:6; Jeremiah 8:5; Jeremiah 9:6). God demands absolute truth

¹³ JFB Commentary

in the inward parts and absolute justice and honesty in all dealings between fellowmen. It is in the hidden parts that God wants righteousness and not outwardly only (Psalm 51:6). To this end His program in the gospel is that the inward man be renewed and perfected more and more, day by day (2 Cor. 4:16). This is the acid test of character (Psalm 15).

Ramban: “And your father hath mocked me, and changed my wages ten times”

This was true, even though Scripture did not previously relate it. And so too did Jacob tell Laban: *And thou hast changed my wages ten times*. There are many similar places in the Torah. For example, in this earlier section, Scripture did not relate that Leah gave the mandrakes to Rachel [although the event is referred to later in Verse 16: *for I have hired thee with my son’s mandrakes*].¹⁴

Genesis 31:8

If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstreaked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstreaked.

speckled ... streaked: Apparently, Laban kept on switching the deal as he watched the births of a variety of colored animals. But with every new deal, God always increased Jacob’s herd.

Ramban: “If he said thus: the speckled shall be thy wages”

The meaning thereof is that at first Laban agreed to give Jacob the two appearances the speckled and the spotted – also the brownish lambs. Then he reacted and agreed to give him another color, and thus he changed it every year. The flocks, however, gave birth accordingly. This was not due to the power of the sticks, for he was telling them of the deed of the Great G-d who treated him wondrously each and every year, just as he said, But G-d suffered him not to do me evil.¹⁵

Genesis 31:9

Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me.

Genesis 31:10

And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle *were* ringstreaked, speckled, and grisled.

Ramban: “And, behold, “*Ha’atudim*’ which went up on the flocks”

He-goats and rams are called *atudim* for all the adults in the flocks are so called. This applies also to the mighty ones among men, as in: “*atudei*” (the chief ones) of the earth.

¹⁴ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

¹⁵ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

And Rashi comments: “Although Laban had separated all these so that the sheep should not give birth to young marked similarly to them, angels brought them from the flock which had been placed in charge of Laban’s sons to the flock in Jacob’s charge.”

In line with the simple meaning of Scripture this was a vision assuring Jacob that the flocks would give birth to young, similar to the marked reams and he-goats, and the proof of it is the word *vehinei* (and behold), for this expression is used with respect to all dreams, indicating that it is as if the action is in the presence of the dreamer. In Bereshith Rabbah, the Sages did not mention the angels [bringing the marked ones from the flocks of Laban], but it may be inferred by exegesis. This they said: “It is not written here *olim* (went up) but *ha’olim* (those that mounted),” [meaning those which actually mounted. Thus the dream only indicated the action of the *atudim* which came from Laban’s flocks and that they were ringstraked, speckled, etc. However, the fact that they came was not part of the dream. This really occurred since the angels brought them]. But the plain sense of the verse is as we have said.¹⁶

Rashi: Although Laban had set aside all [the goats], so that the animals would not conceive in their likeness, the angels were bringing them from the flock that had been transferred into the hands of Laban’s sons to the flock that was in Jacob’s hands.¹⁷

Genesis 31:11

And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

The Angel of God may be translated *The Angel of Genuine Deity*. God revealed Himself in Jacob’s **dream** (see 28:13–17; 32:22–30). **Jacob:** Here, God used the positive meaning of the name Jacob “He (the Lord) Supplants.” For the negative sense, see 25:26; 27:36. In the past, Jacob (“He Who Supplants”) had achieved what he wanted by deceit and trickery. Now he had achieved great wealth because of God’s blessing. The Lord is the Great Supplanter! Although Jacob’s name was later changed to Israel (32:28), the name Jacob continued to be a term indicating God’s work in Jacob’s life (46:2; Ps. 114:7).¹⁸

Genesis 31:12

And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstreaked, speckled, and grised: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

[grised] *barod*, (H1261) *baw-rodē’*; from Hebrew 1258 (*barad*); *spotted* (as if with *hail*) :- grised. Signifies hail, and the meaning must be, they had white spots on them similar to hail. Our word grised comes from the old French, *gresl*, hail, now written *gràle*; hence *greslé*, grised, spotted with white upon a dark ground.

¹⁶ Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

¹⁷ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

¹⁸ The Nelson Study Bible

McGee: You probably thought that in the previous chapter I was not giving a satisfactory answer for what had taken place in the breeding of cattle. I was waiting until we came to this portion of Scripture, because God says, “I did it!” We don’t need to look for natural explanations, although I am confident that God used one of them. However, since God didn’t tell us which one it is, we simply do not know. There are several explanations, and you may take the one you want, but I like this one: God says, “I saw what Laban was doing to you, and *I* blessed you.”¹⁹

Chrysostom: “Vengeance is God’s, not ours”

We learn from this that whenever we bear people’s wrongdoing meekly and mildly, we enjoy help from on high in a richer and more abundant measure. Accordingly, far from resisting those bent on abusing us, let us bear it nobly in the knowledge that the Lord of all will not forget us, provided we ourselves give evidence of our good will. “Vengeance is mine, “Scripture says, remember, “I will repay, says the Lord. Hence Jacob also said, “God did not allow him to do me harm.” I mean, since he actually intended to deprive me of payment for my work, he is saying, the Lord gave evidence of his care for us in such marvelous abundance as to transfer all his substance to us. He has shown such care for us, aware that I performed his service with good grace, whereas Laban was not kindly disposed to me. For proof that I do not idly say this or with any intention of accusing him without thyme or reason, I even have God as my witness to what has been done to me by your father. “I have observed all that Laban has been doing to you, “God says, remember – not only that he has deprived you of your wage but as well, instead of being disposed toward you as he was previously; he has a completely distorted attitude. (Homilies on Genesis 57:13).²⁰

Genesis 31:13

I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

God of Bethel. By identifying himself as the God of Bethel, the Lord has reminded Jacob of the vow of Jacob in Genesis 28:20-22. Though it is true that Canaanites would have viewed sacred sites as each having their own separate deities, there is no suggestion in the text that Jacob considers the God of Bethel to be distinct from Yahweh, and certainly the author of the Pentateuch sees them as one (compare Genesis 31:3 and Genesis 31:13).²¹

Although Laban treated Jacob unfairly, God still increased Jacob’s prosperity. God’s power is not limited by lack of fair play. He has the ability to meet our needs and make us thrive even though others mistreat us. To give in and respond unfairly is to be no different from your enemies.²²

¹⁹ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:126). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁰ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

²¹ Bible Background Commentary

²² Life Application Notes

Jacob here presents a different account of the increase in his flocks from the one that appears in 30:25-43. Source criticism can explain the divergence through the attribution of this text to E, whereas 30:25-43 is J. Note that 31:4-13 always uses the E-name (God) and that v.13 seems to be a variant of v.3. Reading the two documents presents us with two options: Is Jacob here dissembling to his wives in order to make himself look innocent or is he giving a profound theological interpretation of the events that happened in the previous chapter on a human plane?²³

Genesis 31:14

And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, *Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?*

Rachel and Leah answered—Having heard his views, they expressed their entire approval; and from grievances of their own, they were fully as desirous of a separation as himself. They display not only conjugal affection, but piety in following the course described—"whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do" [Genesis 31:16]. "Those that are really their husbands' helpmeets will never be their hindrances in doing that to which God calls them" [HENRY].

Rachel and Leah refer to the institution of the bride price, a gift that the groom paid his fiancée's father; this text suggests that in some cases it ultimately went to the bride herself. Laban, they complain (in agreement for once), has consumed the bride-price (probably in the form of Jacob's labor) without concern for them, in effect disowning them.

Genesis 31:15

Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

Are we not counted of him strangers?—Rachel and Leah, who well knew the disposition of their father, gave him here his true character. He has treated us as strangers—as slaves whom he had a right to dispose of as he pleased; in consequence, he hath sold us—disposed of us on the mere principle of gaining by the sale.²⁴

And hath quite devoured also our money—Has applied to his own use the profits of the sale, and has allowed us neither portion nor inheritance.

Leaving home was not difficult for Rachel and Leah because their father had treated them as poorly as he had Jacob. According to custom, they were supposed to receive the benefits of the dowry Jacob paid for them, which was 14 years of hard work. When Laban did not give them what was rightfully theirs, they knew they would never inherit

²³ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

²⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

anything from their father. Thus they wholeheartedly approved of Jacob's plan to take the wealth he had gained and leave.²⁵

McGee: They are saying that certainly, as the daughters of their father, they should receive some inheritance, and that ought to keep Laban from being so antagonistic. But, friend, old Laban cannot be trusted.

Unfortunately, there are many Christians today who demonstrate in the way they handle their own money and the money of others that they cannot be trusted either. This is, I feel, a real test of an individual. I could tell you some stories that would make your hair stand on end. Christians, and Christian leaders, do things with money that ought not to be done.²⁶

Genesis 31:16

For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Missler: The response of both women was in faith as well. Laban had exploited his daughters' wealth and had lost their good will. So they were willing to leave their father.²⁷

Rachel and Leah's complaint. Rachel and Leah express willingness to leave with Jacob because of the way Laban has treated them in his financial dealings. It has been suggested that they are referring to assets that were generally held in escrow for the care of the woman should her husband die or divorce her. Such assets would have been part of the bride price, which, in this case, Jacob had paid in labor rather than tangible assets. If Laban never put aside the value of Jacob's fourteen years of labor, there would be nothing in reserve to provide for the women. As a result they would not enjoy any additional protection in economic terms by staying in the vicinity of their family. They identify this as treating them as foreigners, because Laban had gained from Jacob's labor but had not passed the gain on to them—it is therefore just as if he had sold them.²⁸

Genesis 31:17

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

[rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels] In obedience to God in Genesis 31:3 where God told Jacob to return unto the land.

²⁵ Life Application Notes

²⁶ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:127). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

²⁷ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

²⁸ Bible Background Commentary

Then Jacob rose up—Little time is spent by pastoral people in removing. The striking down the tents and poles and stowing them among their other baggage; the putting their wives and children in *houdas* like cradles, on the backs of camels, or in panniers on asses; and the ranging of the various parts of the flock under the respective shepherds; all this is a short process. A plain that is covered in the morning with a long array of tents and with browsing flocks, may, in a few hours, appear so desolate that not a vestige of the encampment remains, except the holes in which the tent poles had been fixed.

Torah Class: In verse 1, Jacob overhears Laban’s sons grumbling about how Jacob’s herds and flocks really ought to be theirs. Boy, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, does it? Laban’s sons are just like him: jealous, selfish, and greedy.

When the ever-observant Jacob notices the distinct change in demeanor of Laban’s family, he knows its time to leave. That notion is verified by God, who instructs Jacob that now is the time that he will fulfill His promise to bring Jacob back to his home: Canaan.

Jacob consults with his wives. They are MORE than ready to leave. In fact, here they reveal their hurt and anger with their father, Laban, for (in their eyes) he had shown them the greatest disrespect by virtually selling them to Jacob, instead of following the usual betrothal customs. I’d also like to point out something else here: there can be no doubt that Hebrew society was male dominated. However, Hebrew society greatly revered women, and any notion that the Bible promotes the idea that women were then, or are now, of less value than men is just uninformed. Notice here that the Holy Scriptures show that the first thing Jacob did after God told him it was time to leave, was to consult with his wives. And, it’s obvious by the way they responded that Jacob greatly considered their feelings and thoughts on the matter. It’s not that Jacob didn’t lead; it’s that he included his wives in the decision that greatly affected them...leaving their family, forever.²⁹

Toras Menachem: Ya’akov’s (Jacob’s) Departure

What happened to Dinah, Jacob’s daughter? There is no doubt that Jacob must have taken her with him when the family fled from Laban, and yet the verse only mentions that Jacob “lifted up his sons and his wives onto the camels,” without mentioning his daughter. Why does Rashi not address this basic point?³⁰

Genesis 31:18

And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

[Isaac his father] No mention is made here of his mother, Rebekah. Perhaps Jacob knew of her death.

²⁹ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

³⁰ Chumash, The Gutnick Edition, Genesis, Rabbi Chaim Miller, Published by Kol Menachem

he carried the cattle of his getting—that is, his own and nothing more. He did not indemnify himself for his many losses by carrying off any thing of Laban's, but was content with what Providence had given him. Some may think that due notice should have been given; but when a man feels himself in danger—the law of self-preservation prescribes the duty of immediate flight, if it can be done consistently with conscience.³¹

Genesis 31:19

And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's.

Missler: *Rachel stole Laban's household "teraphim," figurines of deities.* This shows the pagan influence in Laban's family. Wordplay shows Rachel to be a true "Jacob," for there were parallel thefts: he stole away and she stole the gods. Perhaps she told herself she deserved them since Laban had turned the tables on her in the name of custom and had deprived her of her right to marry first, but her hardheaded self-interest almost brought disaster.³²

[images] Hebrew: *teraphiym* (H8655), family idols. They were small enough for Rachel to hide them as she did (Genesis 31:34). This proves Abraham's relatives were still idolaters and had served idols in Babylon before settling in Haran (Joshua 24:1-4).

The Nuzi Tablets

Excavations 1925-1931, American; Schools of Oriental Research, with Harvard University Museum. They found written documents yielding detailed insights into the life and culture of the region in the 2nd millennium B.C. Ex: Teraphim could be used by son-in-law as proof of being principal heir; that's why Laban insisted on a boundary stone at Mizpah, to assure property to his sons; "sisterhood" could be elevated to a superior position even over that of a wife; a Hurrian custom unknown to neither Abimelech nor Pharaoh; thus, possibly a misunderstanding rather merely subterfuge; and, slave-wife practices documented for continuance of male heirship; maid servants a common wedding gift from the father-in-laws, etc.

Laban went to shear his sheep—Laban had gone; and this was a favorable time not only to take his images, but to return to Canaan without being perceived.

Many people kept small wooden or metal idols ("gods") in their homes. These idols were called *teraphim*, and they were thought to protect the home and offer advice in times of need. They had legal significance as well, for when they were passed on to an heir, the person who received them could rightfully claim the greatest part of the family inheritance. No wonder Laban was concerned when he realized his idols were missing (Genesis 31:30). Most likely Rachel stole her father's idols because she was afraid Laban

³¹ JFB Commentary

³² Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

would consult them and learn where she and Jacob had gone, or perhaps she wanted to claim the family inheritance.³³

The “household idols” (*teraphim*, Heb.) appear to have been figurines, usually constructed of wood, but sometimes of silver (cf. Judg 17:4). Believed to be the custodians of human happiness, they were often worshipped as gods and consulted as mediums (Ezek 21:21; Zech 10:2). The worship of teraphim was later denounced as idolatry (1 Sam 15:23). The significance of the teraphim to Rachel and her family is unclear. They may have been relied upon in divination, for protection, as a claim to inheritance, or they may have simply represented loyalty and devotion to one’s family. Jacob, whose theological understanding would have been more advanced than that of his wives, later removed them (35:2-4).³⁴

household idols: Laban’s family was either polytheistic—believing in many gods—or henotheistic—believing in Yahweh as one god above all other gods (for Joshua’s recollection of the polytheism of Abraham’s relatives, see Josh. 24:1–3). In this culture, possession of the household idols was the right of the principal heir. Rachel probably did not steal the idols in order to worship them, but to retain the rights of the principal heir for Jacob. Ultimately, the Lord’s blessing on Jacob was more important for him than any rights derived from being Laban’s principal heir.³⁵

The *household idols* (Heb., *teraphim*), which Rachel stole and hid in her saddle (v. 34) and which Laban diligently searched for, were small figurines of female deities. Several suggestions have been made as to why Rachel felt it necessary to have them: (1) they were supposed to guarantee fertility; (2) they guaranteed Jacob’s right to Laban’s estate when he died (though this claim may have been weakened because Laban had not voluntarily given them); (3) they were still in some sense Rachel’s gods on which she depended for religious or divination purposes.³⁶

McGee: Here is a revelation of something that is quite interesting. Jacob rises up and leaves posthaste again. You remember that this is the same way he left home when he was escaping from his brother. Now he is leaving his uncle—but it is not all his fault this time. It is obvious that he is prepared for this. He has all the cattle and the servants ready to march.

“Rachel had stolen the images that were her father’s.” I told you that they were in a home of idolatry. God didn’t want Jacob’s boys to be brought up there. But, you see, Rachel had been brought up in a home of idolatry, and she wanted to take her gods with her. What a primitive notion she had! Even Jacob had thought that he could run away from God when he left his home as a boy. But at Beth-el God appeared to him. He found that he couldn’t run away from God. In fact many years later David wrote: “Whither shall

³³ Life Application Notes

³⁴ Believer’s Study Bible

³⁵ The Neslon Study Bible

³⁶ The Ryrie Study Bible

I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [sheol], behold, thou art there” (Ps. 139:7–8). That is, death won’t separate you. “If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” (Ps. 139:9–10). You won’t get away from God by even going to the moon. You simply cannot get away from Him.

“And Laban went to shear his sheep.” Jacob waited until Laban went out to shear sheep. Probably Laban went quite a few miles away from home because the sheep grazed over a very large area in that day. They still do, for that matter, because it takes a large area to feed them. While Laban is away from home, Jacob just “forgets” to tell him that he is leaving.³⁷

Torah Class: Jacob plans their escape and executes it. He puts his family on camels, separates his property from Laban’s, and in an opportune moment while Laban is off shearing some sheep, they leave; but not before Rachel steals her father’s set of household gods to take with her on their journey. Why would she do that? The verses just before this answer that question: in V14, the two sisters said to Jacob “do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father’s house?” This was a rhetorical question.in other words, they knew full well that their father had no intention of caring for them. Even more, this is an indication that they are breaking allegiance with their father; for in verse 16, they say all that Jacob’s God took from Laban now belongs to “us and our children”.

In Mesopotamia, it was the tradition that he who possessed the family gods was the owner of the family wealth and authority. By Rachel stealing these gods, it was her intent to assure a family inheritance for herself after her father died. Apparently, she planned on keeping them until Laban went to the grave, and then appearing before her family with what amounted to the will, the keys to the safety deposit box, and the right to be executor of the estate.all rolled into one. This was a MOST serious matter that went WAY above petty theft.

But, even more, Laban and his family.and likely Rachel as well.believed these idols were real. That they actually represented real gods. And, those who adhered to this system prayed to these idols for rain, for healing, for children, for protection, and so on. Without his gods, Laban was in a fix.³⁸

Genesis 31:20

And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

³⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:127). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³⁸ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

Genesis 31:21

So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.

[river] The river Euphrates.

[mount Gilead] About three hundred miles south of Haran on the east of Jordan (Numbers 32:40; Deut. 3:12-16; Deut. 34:1; Joshua 12:5; Joshua 13:11; Joshua 17:1; Judges 20:1; 2 Kings 10:33).

Passed over the river—The Euphrates, as the Targum properly notices. But how could he pass such a river with his flocks, etc.? This difficulty does not seem to have struck critics in general. The rabbins felt it, and assert that God wrought a miracle for Jacob on this occasion, and that he passed over dry shod. As we know not in what other way he could pass, it is prudent to refer it to the power of God, which accompanied him through the whole of his journey. There might, however, have been fords well known to both Jacob and Laban, by which they might readily pass.³⁹

The mount Gilead—What the ancient name of this mountain was, we know not; but it is likely that it had not the name of Gilead till after the transaction mentioned Genesis 31:47. The mountains of Gilead were eastward of the country possessed by the tribes of Reuben and Gad; and extended from Mount Hermon to the mountains of Moab—Calmet. It is joined to Mount Libanus, and includes the mountainous region called in the New Testament Trachonitis—Dodd.

Concerning these household idols, see 1 Sam 19:13. “Stealing” (the Heb has a wider range of meaning than the English), in any event, is a recurrent theme in this chapter and points to one of its major ironies. Whereas Jacob vigorously defends himself against the charge that he defrauded Laban (vv.8-12, 39), he, in fact, had “to steal the mind of Laban the Aramean” (see translators’ note b-b) in order to effect his getaway. Unbeknownst to him, his wife had indeed stolen her father’s household idols. Given Laban’s own deceit (29:21-28), the phrase “stole the mind of Laban the Aramean” constitutes a delicious wordplay. In Heb, “mind” (“*lev*”) sounds like “Laban” (“*lavan*”), and “Aramean” (“sounds like “deceive” (“*rima*”).⁴⁰

Genesis 31:22

And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.

[third] It was about three hundred miles to the place where Laban caught up with him in seven days (Genesis 31:22-23). This would be an average of about forty-three miles a day on swift dromedaries. It would have taken Jacob ten days at thirty miles a day with his family and stock.

³⁹ Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Old Testament

⁴⁰ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 31:23

And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

Genesis 31:24

And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

And God came to Laban—God's caution to Laban was of high importance to Jacob—Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad; or rather, as is the literal meaning of the Hebrew, *mittob ad ra*, from good to evil; for had he neither spoken good nor evil to Jacob, they could have had no intercourse at all. The original is, therefore, peculiarly appropriate; for when people meet, the language at first is the language of friendship; the command therefore implies, "Do not begin with Peace be unto thee, and then proceed to injurious language and acts of violence." If this Divine direction were attended to, how many of those affairs of honor, so termed, which commence with, "I hope you are well"—"I am infinitely glad to see you"—"I am happy to see you well," etc., and end with small swords and pistol bullets, would be prevented! Where God and true religion act, all is fair, kind, honest, and upright; but where these are not consulted, all is hollow, deceitful, or malicious. Beware of unmeaning compliments, and particularly of saying what thy heart feels not. God hates a hypocrite and a deceiver.

it was told Laban on the third day—No sooner did the news reach Laban than he set out in pursuit, and he being not encumbered, advanced rapidly; whereas Jacob, with a young family and numerous flocks, had to march slowly, so that he overtook the fugitives after seven days' journey as they lay encamped on the brow of mount Gilead, an extensive range of hills forming the eastern boundary of Canaan. Being accompanied by a number of his people, he might have used violence had he not been divinely warned in a dream to give no interruption to his nephew's journey. How striking and sudden a change! For several days he had been full of rage, and was now in eager anticipation that his vengeance would be fully wreaked, when lo! his hands are tied by invisible power (Psalm 76:10). He did not dare to touch Jacob, but there was a war of words.⁴¹

Ramban: The intent of this is to relate that even though he was an Aramean, and the people of his place used teraphim and were soothsayers like the Philistines, yet the prophetic dream came to him in honor of the righteous one [Jacob]. Similarly, And Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramean: [the epithet "Aramean" is mentioned in order to indicate that] even though Laban was the Aramean, the diviner and owner of teraphim [he was still outwitted by Jacob].⁴²

⁴¹ JFB Commentary

⁴² Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

Genesis 31:25

Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

Genesis 31:26

And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives *taken* with the sword?

The sudden departure, Laban charges, was similar to a raiding party that took captives.

Genesis 31:27

Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

[**tabret**] Hebrew: *toph* (H8596), tambourine. It is translated "tabret" (Genesis 31:27; 1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Samuel 18:6; Isaiah 5:12; Isaiah 24:8; Isaiah 30:32; Jeremiah 31:4; Ezekiel 28:13) and "timbrel" (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; 2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chron. 13:8; Job 21:12; Psalm 81:2; Psalm 149:3; Psalm 150:4).

[**harp**] Hebrew: *kinnowr* (H3658), a stringed instrument. See Psalm 33:2.

I might have sent thee away with mirth *besimchah*, with rejoicing, making a feast or entertainment on the occasion; and with songs, *beshirim* odes either in the praise of God, or to commemorate the splendid acts of their ancestors; with tabret, *bethoph* the tympanum used in the east to the present day, and there called *diff*, a thin broad wooden hoop, with parchment extended over one end of it, to which are attached small pieces of brass, tin, etc., which make a jingling noise; it is held in the air with one hand, and beat on with the fingers of the other. It appears to have been precisely the same with that which is called the tambourine and which is frequently to be met with in our streets. And with harp, *bekinno*, a sort of stringed instrument, a lute or harp; probably the same as the Greek *kinura*, a harp; the name being evidently borrowed from the Hebrew. These four things seem to include all that was used in those primitive times, as expressive of gladness and satisfaction on the most joyous occasions.⁴³

musical instruments. Tambourines and harps were the common musical instruments associated with celebrations in the village culture. They were used to mark major events, such as military victories (Exodus 15:20), celebratory and religious dances (1 Samuel 10:5), and, as in this case, feasts of departure.⁴⁴

⁴³ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁴⁴ Bible Background Commentary

Genesis 31:28

And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in *so* doing.

Missler: In the controversy between Jacob and Laban, legal jargon was used to describe their civil suit. In the first “strife” (*rib*; cf. v. 36) or accusation Laban claimed that Jacob had robbed him (vv. 26-27, 30)—but he presented himself as a hurt father (v. 28) and a baffled avenger (v. 29).⁴⁵

Genesis 31:29

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

In reality he had no power to hurt Jacob, for God was protecting him (Genesis 28:15; Genesis 31:3).

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt—Literally, My hand is unto God to do you evil, i.e., I have vowed to God that I will punish thee for thy flight, and the stealing of my teraphim; but the God of YOUR father has prevented me from doing it.

Genesis 31:30

And now, *though* thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father’s house, *yet* wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

Missler: *This is why Laban pursued Jacob.* It was one thing for Jacob to take his flocks and family; but his gods too? Perhaps Jacob would try to steal back to Haran someday and claim all of Laban’s estate. (Failing to find the gods, Laban later, vv. 43-53, made a treaty to keep this troublesome man out of his territory.)⁴⁶

Laban evidently went home to inquire of his gods and found them missing. Perhaps Rachel had taken them so that he could not inquire about their flight. This is the last of his dishonest speech. He had set out to compel Jacob to return. In consequence of the divine warning he had abandoned that intention, so now tried to put Jacob in the wrong.

Laban said . . . What hast thou done?—Not a word is said of the charge (Genesis 31:1). His reproaches were of a different kind. His first charge was for depriving him of the satisfaction of giving Jacob and his family the usual salutations at parting. In the East it is customary, when any are setting out to a great distance, for their relatives and friends to accompany them a considerable way with music and valedictory songs. Considering the past conduct of Laban, his complaint on this ground was hypocritical cant. But his

⁴⁵ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁴⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

second charge was a grave one—the carrying off his gods—*Hebrew*, "teraphim," small images of human figures, used not as idols or objects of worship, but as talismans, for superstitious purposes.⁴⁷

Genesis 31:31

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

This was the cause of Jacob's action.

Genesis 31:32

With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what *is* thine with me, and take *it* to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

Jacob said, . . . With whomsoever thou findest thy gods let him not live—Conscious of his own innocence and little suspecting the misdeed of his favorite wife, Jacob boldly challenged a search and denounced the heaviest penalty on the culprit. A personal scrutiny was made by Laban, who examined every tent [Genesis 31:33]; and having entered Rachel's last, he would have infallibly discovered the stolen images had not Rachel made an appeal to him which prevented further search [Genesis 31:34-35].

Do you remember feeling absolutely sure about something? Jacob was so sure that no one had stolen Laban's idols that he vowed to kill the offender. Because Rachel took them, this statement put her safety in serious jeopardy. Even when you are absolutely sure about a matter, it is safer to avoid rash statements. Someone may hold you to them.

According to a Midrash, it was Jacob's well-intentioned curse that brought about his beloved Rachel's premature death (Gen. Rab. 74-4; see 35:16-20).⁴⁸

Genesis 31:33

And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he found *them* not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

⁴⁷ JFB Commentary

⁴⁸ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 31:34

Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found *them* not.

Missler: But Laban was then deceived by Rachel: She put the idols in her camel's saddle and sat on the saddle in her tent.

The camel's furniture could refer to a couch which was used as a bed at night, or to a chair or cage covered with a canopy and held up by poles between two camels, in travel. The common pack saddle is often used as a seat or a cushion, against which a person squatted on the floor may lean.

The custom of women is upon me—This she knew must be a satisfactory reason to her father; for if the teraphim were used to any religious purpose, and they seem to have been used in this way, as Laban calls them his gods, he therefore could not suspect that a woman in such a situation, whose touch was considered as defiling, would have sat upon articles that were either the objects of his adoration, or used for any sacred purpose. The stratagem succeeded to her wish, and Laban departed without suspicion. It seems very natural to suppose that Rachel did believe that by the use of these teraphim Laban could find out their flight, and the direction they took, and therefore she stole them; and having stolen them she was afraid to acknowledge the theft, and probably might think that they might be of some use to herself. Therefore, for these reasons, she brought them away. Gen 30:27 Laban claimed to have learned by divination that God had blessed him because of Jacob. In other words, he thought his idols had given him this insight.

Genesis 31:35

And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women *is* upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

Rachel's excuse. Rachel's excuse that she had her period would have been sufficient to warn off Laban, for in the ancient world a woman in menstruation was considered a danger because menstrual blood was widely believed to be a habitat for demons.

Note the two-fold satire, against the miserly Laban, vainly rummaging through his own family's tents, and against the household idols themselves, escaping detection only because of Rachel's menstrual period. In the purity system of the Torah, anything on which a menstruant has sat communicates impurity (Lev. 15:22). Whereas Laban refers to his gods, the narrator is careful to call them household idols (Heb "*terafim*"). And where as Laban is fiercely devoted to his gods, it is God who has stripped him of his wealth and given it to his daughters (v.16). Note also the connection of Laban's "rummaging" ("*mishesh*") and Isaac's "feeling" ("*mash*") Jacob in 27:21-22. In each case, Jacob escapes detection, but in each case he also pays a steep price.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

God, One God—Old Testament people lived among people who worshiped many gods. For hundreds of years God struggled with the Israelites, trying to help them see that the gods of the nations were no more than figments of the imagination or fetishes carved out of wood and stone. See Ex 20:1-7, note; Dt 6:4-9, note. The Bible laughs at such “gods” who can be stolen and carried around. People continue to devote their entire energy and attach supreme value to things they can steal and carry around.⁵⁰

Caesarius of Arles: “Let the devil find nothing of his own in you”

As Jacob was returning to his own country, Laban and his companions pursued them. Upon examination of Jacob’s possessions Laban found nothing of his, and therefore he could not hold him. Laban here is not unfittingly said to represent a type of the devil, because he served idols and was opposed to blessed Jacob, who prefigured the Lord. For this reason he pursued Jacob but was unable to find anything of his own with him. Listen to the true Jacob declaring this fact in the gospel: “Behold, the prince of the world is coming, and in me he will find nothing”. May the divine mercy grant that our adversary may find nothing of his works in us, for if he find nothing of his own he will not be able to keep us or recall us from eternal life. Therefore, dearly beloved let us look at the treasury of our conscience, let us examine the secret places of our heart, and if we find nothing there with belongs to the devil let us rejoice and thank God. With his help let us strive as well as we can that the doors of our heart may always be open for Christ but closed forever to the devil. However, if we recognize something of the devil’s works or cunning in our souls, let us hasten to cast it out and get rid of it as deadly poison. Then when the devil wants to ensnare us and can find nothing that belongs to him, he will depart in confusion while we can thank God with the prophet and shout to the Lord: “You freed us from our foes, and those who hated us you put to shame.”⁵¹

Ramban: The correct interpretation appears to me to be that in ancient days menstruants kept very isolated for they were ever referred to as *niddoth* on account of their isolation since they did not approach people and did not speak with them. For the ancients in their wisdom knew that their breath is harmful, their gaze is detrimental and makes a bad impression, as the philosophers have explained. I will yet mention their experiences in this matter. And the menstruants dwelled isolated tents where no one entered, just as our Rabbis have mentioned in the Beraitha of entered, just as our Rabbis have mentioned in the Beraitha of Tractate Niddah: “A leaned man is forbidden to greet a menstruant. Rabbi Nechemyah says, “Even the utterance of her mouth is unclean.” Said Rabbi Yochanan: “One is forbidden to walk after a menstruant and tread upon her footsteps, which are as unclean as a corpse; so is the dust upon which the menstruant studded unclean, and it is forbidden to derive any benefit from her work.” Therefore Rachel said, “It would be proper for me to rise before my lord to kiss his hands, but the way of women is upon me, and I cannot come near you nor walk at all in the tent so that you should not tread upon the dust of my feet.” And Laban kept silent and did not answer her, as it was

⁵⁰ Disciple’s Study Bible

⁵¹ Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Genesis, Thomas C. Oden, Intervarsity Press

customary not to converse with them at all because the speech of a menstruant was unclean.⁵²

Genesis 31:36

And Jacob was wrath, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

Missler: Apparently Laban never dreamed that a woman would dare take a chance to contaminate the idols. [What a blow this was to the teraphim—they became “nothing gods,” for a woman who claimed to be unclean sat on them: cf. Lev 15:20].⁵³

Jacob held his peace until all his stuff had been searched and Laban's anger somewhat cooled down by his failure to find his gods. Then, knowing God had intervened for him, he wasn't afraid to talk back, even though the strength of Laban's band may have been greater.

And Jacob was wrath, and chode with Laban—The expostulation of Jacob with Laban, and their consequent agreement, are told in this place with great spirit and dignity. Jacob was conscious that though he had made use of cunning to increase his flocks, yet Laban had been on the whole a great gainer by his services. He had served him at least twenty years, fourteen for Rachel and Leah, and six for the cattle; and some suppose he had served him twenty years besides the above, which is not unlikely: see the remarks at the conclusion of this chapter. (See Clarke at Genesis 31:55 (note)) Forty or even twenty years of a man's life, devoted to incessant labor and constantly exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, (see Genesis 31:40), deserve more than an ordinary reward. Laban's constitutional sin was covetousness, and it was an easily besetting sin; for it appears to have governed all his conduct, and to have rendered him regardless of the interests of his children, so long as he could secure his own. That he had frequently falsified his agreement with Jacob, though the particulars are not specified, we have already had reason to conjecture from Genesis 31:7, and with this Jacob charges his father-in-law, in the most positive manner, Genesis 31:41. Perhaps some previous unfair transactions of this kind were the cause why Jacob was led to adopt the expedient of outwitting Laban in the case of the spotted, spangled, ring-streaked, and grisled cattle. This if it did take place, though it cannot justify the measure, is some palliation of it; and almost the whole of Jacob's conduct, as far as relates to Laban, can be better excused than his injuring Laban's breed, by leaving him none but the weak, unhealthy, and degenerated cattle.⁵⁴

Sin, Estrangement—Jacob met a master deceiver in his father-in-law Laban (29:13-25) and continued on the path of deception (30:25-43) he had first practiced with Esau. See

⁵² Ramban, Nachmanides, Commentary on the Torah, Genesis, Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House

⁵³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁵⁴ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

note on 27:41-45. The result was flight (31:1-35) and anger (v. 36). Finally, reason and family loyalty prevailed, producing a treaty or covenant (v. 44). Still, complete separation was the final result of such selfish deception. Sin never improves relationships with other people.⁵⁵

Jacob, in his anger, recited the woes of working for Laban. **Trespass** means to “overstep a boundary.” **Sin** means “to miss a target” (as an archer might do). These words are used more often of actions against God than man, of course.⁵⁶

Genesis 31:37

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set *it* here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

Jacob proposed to settle his differences with Laban in true eastern fashion. He reviewed all the injustices done him while in Haran for twenty years (Genesis 31:38-42). He evidently had a strong case against Laban, for he soon became willing for a peaceful settlement.

Torah Class: Jacob and his family make their break for freedom. But, Laban soon finds out they're gone and mounts a posse to go after him. During his search for them, God comes to Laban in a dream and warns him not to speak either good or bad to Jacob. This simply means that Laban is not to try to harm Jacob. But, it points out something kind of interesting: God speaks to the unbelieving. This isn't the first time we've seen Yehoveh speaking to pagans, and it won't be the last. Laban was a spiritualist. He accepted many gods. So, it was no big deal for him to accept that Jacob's God was quite real; Jacob's god was just another of a seemingly limitless number of gods. Let us never think that Yehoveh only interacts with, or speaks to, Believers. He will communicate with, and use, whomever He wishes; after all, the Scriptures even tell of a time He spoke through a donkey. At the same time, let us also not think that because God has spoken to someone, that THAT is an indication that person is a Believer. Laban loved to invoke Yehoveh's name when speaking to Jacob, but not because he revered God Almighty or bowed down to Him. He did it in hopes of influencing Jacob, or Yehoveh, for his own selfish purposes.

Laban and his men catch up to Jacob in the northern part of Canaan, in an area called Gilead that will someday belong to Gad, one of Jacob's sons. Laban, never at a loss for a good lie, scolds Jacob for leaving in secret, thus not permitting Laban to throw him a farewell party and give his daughters and grandchildren the proper good-bye. Yeah, right. And, of course, immediately upon the insincere words of greeting, Laban inquires about his missing gods, which is the REAL crux of the matter. Jacob says, hey, if you can find them, not only are you welcome to them, but the person who took them will be executed! Uh-oh. Rachel is now in grave danger, and she knows it.

⁵⁵ Disciple's Study Bible

⁵⁶ The Nelson Study Bible

But, Rachel hides them from her father by sitting on them, so that when he searches her tent, he doesn't find them. She tells her father that she isn't standing up because she's on her monthly cycle. And, her father doesn't demand she stand up so he can search NOT because he feels sensitive toward her because of her current condition; rather, it is because he would become ritually impure by coming into contact with her or whatever she is sitting on. The concept of a woman being unclean and transmitting that ritual uncleanness while on her cycle is something that Moses will be instructed on 500 years into the future. But, it was also a law and tradition that was already in existence amongst almost all cultures long before Moses, even before Jacob. That Rachel would intentionally transmit her uncleanness to those gods she was sitting on was unthinkable to Lavan, so it apparently didn't even enter his mind that such was even a possibility. Jacob, having no idea that Rachel actually HAS those idols, now is really angry at Laban's accusation, especially after a thorough search fails to produce them. Jacob has had it. He now lays into Laban, explaining that 20 years of servitude ought to be quite enough, thank you, for two wives and some sheep. And, he tells Laban, he was well aware that Laban had been cheating him, constantly changing the terms of the deal. Jacob is now in his 90's.⁵⁷

Genesis 31:38

This twenty years *have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.*

Missler: Laban, the prosecutor, now became the accused. Ignorant of Rachel's theft of the idols, Jacob angrily made a devastating counterattack.

There is no ground for the theory that Jacob was in Haran two twenty-year periods (Genesis 31:38,41).

The rams of thy flock have I not eaten—Eastern people seldom kill the females for food except they are barren.

Genesis 31:39

That which was torn *of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.*

That which was torn—of my hand didst thou require it—This more particularly marks the covetous and rigorous disposition of Laban; for the law of God required that what had been torn by beasts the shepherd should not be obliged to make good, Exodus 22:10, 13. And it is very likely that this law was in force from the earliest times.

⁵⁷ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee—The shepherds are strictly responsible for losses in the flock, unless they can prove these were occasioned by wild beasts.

By the standards of the law in Exod. 22:12, Jacob went beyond his obligations when he made good that which was torn by beasts.

Genesis 31:40

Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

Eastern shepherds were often away from home for weeks at a time.

in the day the drought . . . and the frost by night—The temperature changes often in twenty-four hours from the greatest extremes of heat and cold, most trying to the shepherd who has to keep watch by his flocks. Much allowance must be made for Jacob. Great and long-continued provocations ruffle the mildest and most disciplined tempers. It is difficult to "be angry and sin not" [Ephes. 4:26]. But these two relatives, after having given utterance to their pent-up feelings, came at length to a mutual understanding, or rather, God influenced Laban to make reconciliation with his injured nephew (Proverbs 16:7).⁵⁸

Genesis 31:41

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

[**six years for thy cattle**] The six years began when Joseph was born (Genesis 30:25-34).

[**ten times**] Used twice by Jacob (Genesis 31:7,41).

Genesis 31:42

Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

[**fear of Isaac**] Perhaps Jacob was warning Laban that Isaac was still alive and could take vengeance on him if his son were harmed.

The fear of Isaac—It is strange that Jacob should say, the GOD of Abraham and the FEAR of Isaac, when both words are meant of the same Being. The reason perhaps was this; Abraham was long since dead, and God was his unalienable portion for ever. Isaac

⁵⁸ JFB Commentary

was yet alive in a state of probation, living in the fear of God, not exempt from the danger of falling; therefore God is said to be his fear, not only the object of his religious worship in a general way, but that holy and just God before whom he was still working out his salvation with fear and trembling, fear lest he should fall, and trembling lest he should offend.⁵⁹

shepherd's responsibility. Herding contracts have been discovered in excavations in Mesopotamia which spell out the responsibilities and the wages of herdsmen. They describe activities in much the same way as in this passage: taking animals to proper grazing areas and water sources, birthing of lambs, treatment of sick and injured animals, protection from wild predators and retrieval of lost sheep. It was expected that losses through neglect or failure to protect the flock would be deducted from the shepherds' wages. Plus, only animals that had been killed or died of natural causes could be eaten by the shepherds.

ancestral Deity. Jacob's use of the terms the "God of my father, the God of Abraham" and the "Fear of Isaac" provide a sense of kinship based on the worship of an ancestral deity by these tribal people (see Genesis 28:12; Exodus 3:6; Exodus 4:5). "The Fear of Isaac" appears only in Genesis and may represent a cognomen (nickname) for the patron God as well as an implied threat against any violence by Laban (see Genesis 31:29). The reference to divine patrons, "Ashur, the god of your fathers," is also found in Old Assyrian texts (early second millennium B.C.).

Jacob made it a habit to do more than was expected of him. When his flocks were attacked, he took the losses rather than splitting them with Laban. He worked hard even after several pay cuts. His diligence eventually paid off; his flocks began to multiply. Making a habit of doing more than expected can pay off. It (1) pleases God, (2) earns recognition and advancement, (3) enhances your reputation, (4) builds others' confidence in you, (5) gives you more experience and knowledge, and (6) develops your spiritual maturity.⁶⁰

Election, Providence—Laban intended to unjustly rob and exploit Jacob, sending him away empty-handed. God's providence in election protected Jacob, turning evil human intention into blessing. God's purposes in election will ultimately prevail over human plans.

Genesis 31:43

And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?*

⁵⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁶⁰ Life Application Notes

[all that thou seest is mine] Laban had no rightful claim on these things, but may have thought he could take them by force if he wanted to.

Genesis 31:44

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

[covenant]

Covenants of Scripture

Covenants Were:

1. Sacred (Joshua 9:18; Galatians 3:15-17)
2. Binding (Joshua 9:18; Galatians 3:15-17)
3. Upheld with penalty for breaking (Leviticus 26; Deut. 28; 2 Samuel 21:1-6; Jeremiah 34:8-22; Ezekiel 17:13-19)
4. Covenants Were Ratified by:
 - (1) Oaths (note, [□]Genesis 22:16)
 - (2) Blood of animals (Genesis 15:9-17; Genesis 31:43-53; Exodus 24:8; Hebrews 9:19-22)
 - (3) Feasts (Genesis 21:26-31; Genesis 26:30-31; Genesis 31:46,54)
 - (4) Monuments (Genesis 28:16-22; Genesis 31:43-53)
 - (5) Raising of the hands (Ezra 10:19; cp. Genesis 14:22)
 - (6) Pulling off shoes (Ruth 4:7-8)
 - (7) Blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:11-22; Hebrews 13:11-12,20)

Concerning the old covenant, the Ten Commandments written on stone were kept in the ark which had a mercy-seat on it as a constant reminder of God's presence and of man's obligation to obey it (Numbers 10:33; Numbers 14:44; Deut. 10:8; Joshua 3:3-17; etc.). The new covenant has an eternal ark (Hebrews 8:1-6; Hebrews 9:1-22; Rev. 11:19). See Fifteen Great Covenants. and Twenty-two Man-Made Covenants.

Come thou, let us make a covenant—The way in which this covenant was ratified was by a heap of stones being laid in a circular pile, to serve as seats, and in the center of this circle a large one was set up perpendicularly for an altar. It is probable that a sacrifice was first offered, and then that the feast of reconciliation was partaken of by both parties seated on the stones around it. To this day heaps of stones, which have been used as memorials, are found abundantly in the region where this transaction took place.⁶¹

Witness (“*ed*”) may involve a pun on a similar Semitic word (“*ad*”) that means a “pact” or “covenant”; here, it may even be a variant of it. If the word does mean witness, the reference is unclear. Most likely, it is God Himself who is to play that role, as in v.50.⁶²

⁶¹ JFB Commentary

⁶² The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 31:45

And Jacob took a stone, and set it up *for* a pillar.

[**Jacob took a stone**] Each man present gathered a stone as a personal token of the covenant (Genesis 31:46-52). There were two significant stones in Jacob's life:

1. A monument of his covenant with God (Genesis 28:18)
2. A monument of his covenant with Laban (Genesis 31:45)

Genesis 31:46

And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

Missler: Laban suggested they make a covenant for a boundary between them. Laban instigated it, for Jacob neither needed it nor cared for it! Jacob set up a tall stone and then piled a heap of stones around it.⁶³

[**eat there upon the heap**] Eating was a sign of friendship. If an Arab chief ate with you it was said, "There is salt between us," meaning "We are friends." Refusal to eat would signify that one was an enemy.

Made a heap *gal* translated heap, signifies properly a round heap; and this heap was probably made for the double purpose of an altar and a table, and Jacob's stone or pillar was set on it for the purpose of a memorial.

Genesis 31:47

And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

[**Jegar-sahadutha**] Aramaic, pure Chaldee, for "heap of witnesses" (Genesis 31:48).

[**Galeed**] Hebrew for "heap of witnesses" (Genesis 31:48).

The narrative gives a folk etymology for Gilead (v.23), a mountainous area in Transjordan, southeast of the Sea of Galilee (*Kinneret*). 1 Kings 22:1-38 and 2 Kings 9:14-15 report wars between Israelites and Arameans over one of its major cities in the 9th century BCE. Gen 31:44-54 may reflect a pact between these two peoples Laban's giving *Gal-ed* an Aramaic name is wonderful little touch. According to the Talmud, one should not esteem the Aramaic language lightly, for, as these two words show, it appears in the Torah itself (y. Sat. 7:7).⁶⁴

⁶³ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

⁶⁴ The Jewish Study Bible, Tanakh Translation, Berlin & Brettler, Jewish Publication Society, Oxford Press

Genesis 31:48

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

Torah Class: Laban's answer is typical Laban: everything you have is mine!! He had never been able to accept the idea that Jacob's wealth, which had grown primarily from the high birthrate of discolored animals Lavan didn't want in the first place, had actually equaled or exceeded his own. However, in a rather ingenuous display of graciousness, Lavan says, let's bury the hatchet since he certainly doesn't want to be an enemy of his own daughters. So, basically they make a treaty with one another not to war, put up a pile of stones as a both a testament to their agreement and a sort of boundary marker, and they have the typical covenant meal to seal the agreement. By the way, the setting up of "standing stones", or "stone piles or columns" as boundary markers is in use today. I can remember Uranium prospecting with my father when I was a small child, and we would occasionally run across a pile of stones, or now and then my father would erect his own, as claim markers. Though this passage doesn't go into full detail about the covenant procedure, it does mention a sacrifice, which of course would have been a clean animal, which has been cut up, and the pieces divided, into two piles, with Jacob and Laban walking between the pieces as a sign of agreement. And, no covenant is complete without a sworn oath, which is what we read in V53.

An interesting little aside to all this is that the scriptures tell us that they each named the pile of stones, the boundary markers, according to their native language: Jegarsahudutha is a form of Chaldean, and Galeed is Hebrew. They both mean, "pile of witnesses". The primary terms of the treaty are that Jacob is to treat Laban's daughters well, and that he is to take no other wives. Jacob adhered to this agreement.⁶⁵

Genesis 31:49

And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

Missler: *Mizpah* = beacon, or, watchtower. Laban called them by the Aramaic name *Jegar Sahadutha*, but Jacob called them the Hebrew *Galeed*. Laban explained that the name means a heap of witness but he added the Hebrew name *Mizpah* ("watchtower"), entrusting God to watch over them.⁶⁶

[Mizpah] Hebrew: beacon or watch tower, a place of separation. It was Laban's name for the monument—a place or a witness that the Lord would watch between them while absent from each other. It signified that neither people would pass this boundary to make war on the other (Genesis 31:50-53). History shows that this covenant was broken many times by both peoples.

⁶⁵ Torahclass.com/index.html, Thomas Bradford, Merritt Island, Florida

⁶⁶ Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

Mizpah *mitspah* signifies a watch-tower; and Laban supposes that in consequence of the consecration of the place, and the covenant now solemnly made and ratified, that God would take possession of this heap, and stand on it as on a watch-tower, to prevent either of them from trenching on the conditions of their covenant.

To be binding, an agreement had to be witnessed by a third party. In this case, Jacob and Laban used God as their witness that they would keep their word.

McGee: The words of this contract have been used by young people's groups and other groups as a benediction. I don't think it ought to be used that way because it was a contract made between two rascals who are going to quit stealing from each other and work on somebody else! "The Lord watch between me and thee" is really saying, "May the Lord keep His eye on you so you won't steal from me any more." That is exactly what these men are saying. And after this, they separate. The pile of stones remained at Mizpah as a boundary line between Laban and Jacob. Each promised not to cross over on the other's side.⁶⁷

Genesis 31:50

If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take *other* wives beside my daughters, no man *is* with us; see, God *is* witness betwixt me and thee.

No man is with us—Though all were present at the sacrifice offered, yet it appears that in making the contract Jacob and Laban withdrew, and transacted the business in private, calling on God to witness it.

Jacob had already four wives; but Laban feared that he might take others, whose children would naturally come in for a share of the inheritance to the prejudice of his daughters and grandchildren. Though the Koran allows a man to have four wives if he can maintain them, yet we learn that in many cases where a man takes a wife, the parents or relatives of the woman stipulate that the man is not to take another during the lifetime of that one whom he now espouses; and notwithstanding the permission of the Koran, he is obliged to fulfill this agreement.

Genesis 31:51

And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold *this* pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

pillar as witness. The use of a heap of stones as a boundary marker or a memorial to an event or to bear witness to a covenant appears several places in the biblical text (see Genesis 28:18; Genesis 35:20; Joshua 24:27). In Canaanite religion, the massebah, or standing stone, was erected and considered as a guardian or a dwelling place of a god

⁶⁷ McGee, J. V. (1997, c1981). *Thru the Bible commentary*. Based on the Thru the Bible radio program. (electronic ed.) (1:130). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

(see Deut. 16:21-22; 1 Kings 14:23). The fact that two are erected here and each is given a name is suggestive of an invoking ritual in which the god(s) of each party are called to witness the treaty-making ceremony and to enforce its stipulations. One possible parallel to this may be the twin pillars, Jachin and Boaz, placed in front of Solomon's temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 7:15-22).⁶⁸

Genesis 31:52

This heap *be* witness, and *this* pillar *be* witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

This heap *be* witness—Objects of nature were frequently thus spoken of. But over and above, there was a solemn appeal to God; and it is observable that there was a marked difference in the religious sentiments of the two. Laban spake of the God of Abraham and Nahor, their common ancestors; but Jacob, knowing that idolatry had crept in among that branch of the family, swore by the "fear of his father Isaac." They who have one God should have one heart: they who are agreed in religion should endeavor to agree in everything else.⁶⁹

Genesis 31:53

The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

[**heap**] The heap was gathered by Laban (Genesis 31:46); the pillar was set up by Jacob (Genesis 31:45,52).

[**God of their father**] Abraham and Nahor were sons of Terah (Genesis 11:27). Terah started with Abraham to the land of promise (Genesis 11:31). This proves further that Terah was converted to Abraham's God. Laban's gods were stolen by Rachel and he was left without any (Genesis 31:30-35).

[**fear of his father Isaac**] This was the second time Jacob used this term (Genesis 31:42,53). He either referred to the God whom Isaac feared, or to the power of Isaac who had thousands of servants, among them hundreds of trained soldiers he had inherited from Abraham (Genesis 25:5; note, *Genesis 12:5).

The God of their father—As Laban certainly speaks of the true God here, with what propriety can he say that this God was the God of Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor? It is certain that Terah was an idolater; of this we have the most positive proof, Joshua 24:2. Because the clause is not in the Septuagint, and is besides wanting in some MSS., Dr. Kennicott considers it an interpolation. But there is no need of having recourse to this expedient if we adopt the reading *abichem*, YOUR father, for

⁶⁸ Bible Background Commentary

⁶⁹ JFB Commentary

abihem, THEIR father, which is supported by several of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., and is precisely the same form made use of by Laban, Genesis 31:29, when addressing Jacob, and appears to me to be used here in the same way; for he there most manifestly uses the plural pronoun, when speaking only to Jacob himself.

It is therefore to be considered as a form of speech peculiar to Laban; at least we have two instances of his use of it in this chapter.⁷⁰

nature of agreement. Like other treaty documents in the ancient Near East (such as the seventh-century B.C. Assyrian vassal treaties of Esarhaddon and the thirteenth-century B.C. treaty between Ramses II and Hattusilis III), the gods of each party are invoked as witnesses, a set of exact stipulations is spelled out and a sacrifice and ritual meal conclude the agreement. While the only explicit charge here is that Jacob not take any more wives, it is suggested by the setting up of the pillars that this is also a boundary agreement and territory is now marked. Parallels to this restriction on taking another wife are found in Nuzi legal documents (fifteenth century B.C.). The stipulation is intended to protect the rights and status of the current wife/wives, especially in this context where the wives' family would not be there to assure fair and equitable treatment.

The wording in Laban's oath suggests that Abraham, Nahor, and their father Terah all worshiped the same God, **the God of Abraham**. Possibly, the family believed in the Lord as the one God above many other gods—henotheism (for an indication of Terah's polytheism, compare Josh. 24:1–3).

Genesis 31:54

Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

sacrificial meal. It was apparently standard procedure to use a meal to seal an agreement (see Genesis 14:18; Genesis 26:30; Exodus 24:5-11). Just as food is a part of the hospitality ritual (Genesis 18:2-5), here it functions as a means of drawing each party into a familial, nonhostile relationship. By adding the element of sacrifice, it also insures the participation of the gods and heightens the solemnity of the occasion.⁷¹

Jacob offered a sacrifice: This is the only time Genesis records Jacob engaging in sacrificial worship (compare 12:7, 8; 22:13). **ate bread:** As in other cases, the act of eating together further solemnized the agreement (see 26:30).

⁷⁰ Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament

⁷¹ Bible Background Commentary

Genesis 31:55

And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

Missler: Both the boundary settlement and the wives' rights show that Laban and Jacob wanted to confirm the status quo. But the treaty also marked a break with the East for the family of Israel. This border treaty marked out the frontier in the hill country of Gilead. [This account later had great significance for Israel: God would deliver and protect Israel as He brought them back to the land from Egypt. All this became important for later Israelite-Aramean relations (*Laban was an Aramean, or Syrian, 25:20*).]⁷²

Kissed his sons and his daughters—That is, his grandchildren, Jacob's eleven sons with Dinah their sister, and their mothers Leah and Rachel. All these he calls his children, Genesis 31:43. And blessed them—prayed heartily for their prosperity, though we find from Genesis 31:29 that he came having bound himself by a vow to God to do them some injury. Thus God turned his intended curse into a blessing.

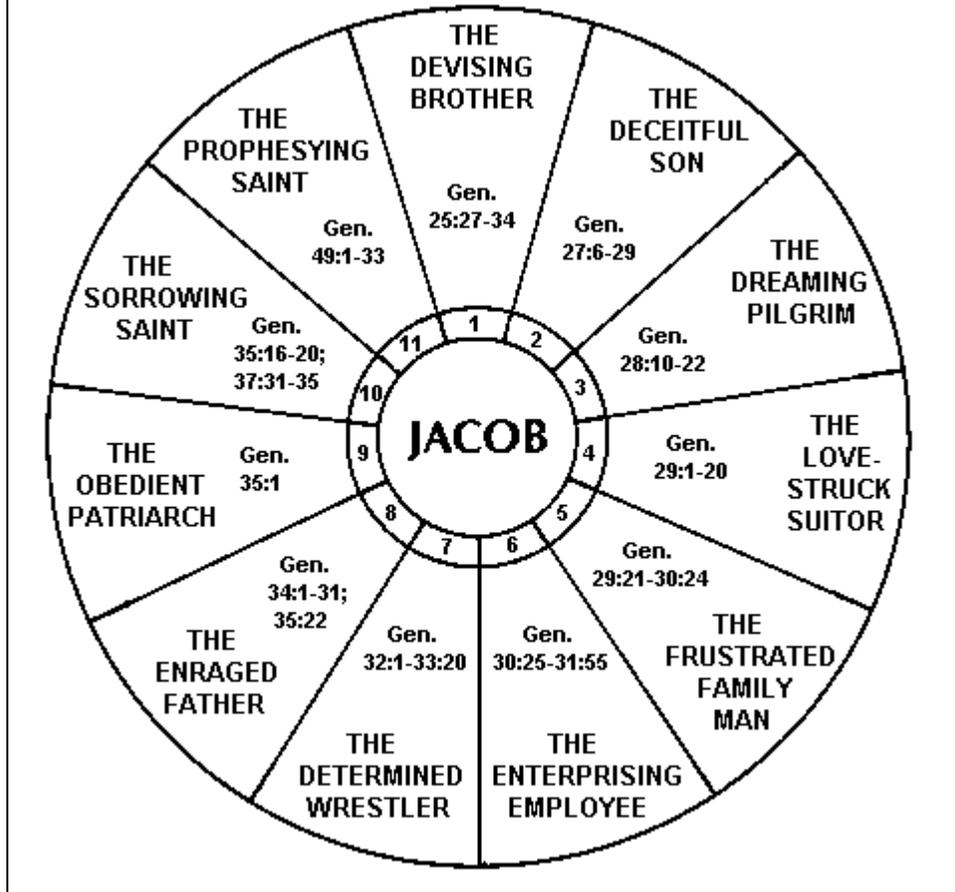
Laban disappears from the narrative at this point, and there is no further recorded contact between Jacob's family and his relatives in Mesopotamia.

Adam Clarke's Summary:

THE most important topics in this chapter have already been considered in the notes, and to those the reader is referred. Jacob's character we have already seen, and hitherto have met in it little to admire; but we shall soon find a blessed change both in his mind and in his conduct. Laban's character appears in almost every instance to disadvantage; he does not seem to be what we commonly term a wicked man, but he was certainly both weak and covetous; and covetousness extinguished in him, as it does in all its votaries, the principles of righteousness and benevolence, and the very charities of human life. Provided he could get an increase of property, he regarded not who was wronged or who suffered. In this case he hid himself even from his own bowels, and cared not that his own children should lack even the necessaries of life, provided he could increase his own store! How watchful should we be against this destructive, unnatural, and degrading vice! It is impossible for a man who loves money to love either God or man; and consequently he must be in the broad way that leads to destruction.

⁷² Chuck Missler, Notes on Book of Genesis Commentary, Genesis Study, KHouse.org

THE LIFE OF JACOB



Gleanings in Genesis by Arthur W. Pink

JACOB'S DEPARTURE FROM HARAN

GENESIS 31

Before Jacob had ever set foot in Padan-Aram Jehovah, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, had said to him, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Gen. 28:15.) And now the time had drawn near when our patriarch was to return to the promised land. He was not to spend the remainder of his days in his uncle's household; God had a different purpose than that for him, and all things were made to work together for the furtherance of that purpose. But not until God's hour was ripe must Jacob leave Padan-Aram. Some little while before *God's time had* come, Jacob assayed to leave: "And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, *send me away*, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country." (30:25.) Apparently Laban was reluctant to grant this request, and so offered to raise his wages as an inducement for Jacob to remain with him, "And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favor in shine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake. And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it." (30:27, 28.) Ere proceeding with the narrative the above words of Laban deserve to be noticed. This was a remarkable confession of Jacob's uncle—"The Lord hath blessed me *for thy sake*." Laban was not blessed for his own sake, nor on account of any good deeds *he* had done; but he was blessed "for the sake" of another. Was not God here setting forth under a figure the method or principle by which He was going to bless sinners, namely, for the sake of another who was dear to Him? Do not these words of Laban anticipate the Gospel, and point forward to the present time when we read "God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32), and again in 1 John 2:12 "your sins are forgiven you *for His name's sake*." Yes, this is the blessed truth foreshadowed in Gen. 30:27: god blessed Laban for Jacob's sake. So again we read in Gen. 39:15 concerning Potiphar, "The Lord blessed the Egyptian's house *for Joseph's sake*." And again we have another beautiful illustration of this same precious fact and truth in 2 Sam. 9:1: "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness *for Jonathan's sake*." Reader, have you apprehended this saving truth? *That for which we are accepted and saved by God* is, not any work of righteousness which we have done, nor even for our believing—necessary though that be—but simply and solely *for Christ's sake*.

The sequel would seem to show that Jacob accepted Laban's offer, and decided to prolong his stay. Instead, however, of leaving himself at the mercy of his grasping and deceitful uncle, who had already "changed his wages ten times" (see Gen. 31:7), Jacob determined to outwit the one whom he had now served for upwards of twenty years by suggesting a plan which left him master of the situation, and promised to greatly enrich him. (See Gen. 30:31–42.) Much has been written concerning this device of Jacob to get the better of Laban and at the same time secure for himself that which he had really earned, and varied have been the opinions expressed. One thing seems clear: unless *God* had prospered it Jacob's plan had failed, for something more than sticks from which a part of the bark had been removed was needed to make the cattle bear "ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted" young ones. (Gen. 30:39.)

The outcome of Jacob's device is stated in the last verse of Gen. 30: "And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses." This intimates that some little time must have elapsed since our patriarch suggested (30:25) leaving his simile. Now that prosperity smiled upon him Jacob was apparently, well satisfied to remain where he was, for though Laban was no longer as friendly as hitherto, and though Laban's sons were openly jealous of him (31:1, 2) we hear no more about Jacob being anxious to depart. But, as we have said, God's time for him to leave had almost arrived; and so we read, "And the Lord said unto Jacob, *Return* unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." (31:3.)

God timed this word to Jacob most graciously. The opening verses of Gen. 31 show there was not a little envy and evil mindedness at work in the family against him. Not only were Laban's sons murmuring at Jacob's prosperity, but their father was plainly of the same mind and bore an unkindly demeanor toward his nephew—"And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and behold, it was not toward him as before." The Lord had promised to be with Jacob, and to keep him in all places whither he went, and he now makes good His word. Like a watchful friend at hand, He observes his treatment and bids him depart. As another has well said, "If Jacob had removed from mere personal resentment, or as stimulated only by a sense of injury, he might have sinned against God, though not against Laban. But when it was said to him 'Return unto the land of thy fathers and to thy kindred, and I will be with thee,' his way was plain before him. In all our removals, it becomes us to act as that we may hope for the Divine presence and blessing to attend us; else, though we may flee from one trouble, we shall fall into many, and be less able to endure them." (Andrew Fuller.)

"And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee." (31:3.) What a showing forth of God's wondrous grace was this! In all that is told us about Jacob during the twenty years he spent at Padan-Aram there was not a word which intimates he had any dealings with God during that time. There is no mention of any "altar," no reference to prayer, nothing to distinguish him from a thorough worldling. It needs to be remembered that the "altar" speaks not only of sacrifice but of *communion* too. The altar pointed forward to Christ, and it is only in Him that God and the redeemed sinner meet and commune together. Jacob, then, had no altar in Padan-Aram because he was out of communion with Jehovah. "Although God in His faithfulness be with us, we are not always with Him." (J. N. D.) But if Jacob had forgotten the Lord, Jehovah had not forgotten him; and now that Jacob begins to be in real need the Lord spoke the suited word. Yet mark the other side.

Having been warned of God to depart, Jacob sends for his wives into the field, where he might converse with them freely on the subject, without danger of being overheard. (See 31:4-13.) The reasons he names for leaving were partly the treatment of Laban, and partly the intimations of God—"I see your father's *countenance* that it is not toward me as before." Mr. Fuller's practical observations on these words are so good we cannot refrain from quoting them: "It is wisely ordered that the countenance should, in most cases, be an index to the heart; else there would be much more deception in the world than there is. We gather more of men's disposition toward us from their looks than their words; and domestic happiness is more influenced by the one than by the other. Sullen silence is often more intolerable than contention itself, because the latter, painful as it is, affords opportunity for mutual explanation. But while Jacob had to complain at Laban's

cloudy countenance he could add, 'The God of my father hath been with me.' God's smiles are the best support under man's frowns; if we walk in the light of His countenance we need not fear what man can do unto us."

Having talked the matter over with his wives, and obtained their consent to accompany him, the next thing was to prepare for their departure. Had Laban known what was in his nephew's mind there is reason to fear he would have objected, perhaps have used force to detain him, or at least deprived him of the greater part of his possessions. Acting with his usual caution, Jacob waited until Laban was a three days' journey away from home, absent at a sheep shearing. Taking advantage of this, Jacob, accompanied by his wives, his children, and his flocks, "stole away unawares to Laban." (31:20.) How little there was of Divine guidance and of faith in Jehovah in this stealth! Not of him could it be said "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor by flight; for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward." (Isa. 52:12.) That the Holy Spirit was not here leading is made still more evident by what is told us in verse 19: "And Rachel had stolen the seraphim that were her father's." It may be of interest to some of our readers if we here digress again and contemplate these seraphim in the light of other scriptures.

Scholars tell us that the word "seraphim" may be traced to a Syrian root which means "to enquire."* This explains the reason *why* Rachel took with her these family "gods" when her husband stole away surreptitiously from her home—it was to *prevent* her father from "enquiring" of these idol "oracles" and thus discovering the direction in which they had gone. Clark that Laban calls these seraphim his "gods." (31:30.) The next reference to the "seraphim" in Scripture confirms the idea that they were used for oracular consultation. In Judg. 17:5 we read: "And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and seraphim, and consecrated one of his sons who became his priest;" next we are told "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" and "Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah." (Verse 6, 12.) Then, in the chapter that follows, we read of the tribe of Dan seeking an inheritance to dwell in, and sending out spies to search out the land; and they came to "the house of Micah (who had the seraphim) and said to his priest, *Ask counsel*, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." (Judg. 18:6.) That it was of the "seraphim" they wished him to enquire, and not of the Lord, is clear from what follows, for when the spies returned to their tribe and made their report (which was adopted), the tribe on going forth to secure their inheritance carefully saw to it that Micah's "priest" with his "graven image, and the ephod, and the seraphim" accompanied them, so that we are told he became their "priest." (See 18:8-20.) Next we read in 1 Sam. 19:13: "And Michal took a seraphim and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth." This scripture not only reveals the sad fact that Saul's daughter was an idolator and practiced necromancy, but also intimates that by this time the "seraphim" were *fashioned after the human form*—hence Michal's selection of one of these to appear like the figure of her sleeping husband.* Ezek. 21:21 also makes it clear that the

* Probably the name "*teraphim*" was originally a corruption of cherubim.

* This one must have been much larger than those which Rachael concealed under her saddle.

“seraphim” were used for oracular consultation—“The king of Babylon... consulted with teraphim.” Later scriptures indicate that after Israel had apostatized from Jehovah they turned to the “seraphim” more and more—“For the seraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain.” (Zech. 10:2.) Hence it was in pronouncing sentence on recreant Israel, God said: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without a *seraphim*.” What a terrible analogy to all this we behold in our own day! Just as in olden time Israel turned from Jehovah to the “seraphim” of the heathen, so today, now that Christendom has apostatized, men on all sides are turning away from the Holy Scriptures which are the Oracles of God, and are giving heed to seducing spirits and the deceptions of Satan.

That Laban harbored in his home these “seraphim” shows that the idolatry of Babylonia still clung to his family, notwithstanding he had some knowledge of the true God. (See 31:53.) Laban appears to have been a man much after the order of those of whom it is written: “They aware by the Lord and by Malchom” (a heathen god). (Zeph. 1:5.) This strange contradiction in Laban’s religious life appears to throw light upon a passage and person that has long puzzled Bible students. We refer to Balaam. This mysterious prophet seems to have been a heathen soothsayer, and yet it is evident he also had some dealings with Jehovah. If Balaam was a descendant of Laban this would account for this religious anomaly. Now in Num. 23:7 we learn that Balaam came from “Aram,” which may possibly be identical with Padan-Aram where Laban dwelt. Balaam prophesied only some 280 years after Jacob’s departure from Laban’s home, and may then have been an old man, at any rate in those days 280 years covered only about two generations. The Targum of Jonathan on Num. 27:5, and the Targum on 1 Chron. 1:44 make Balaam to be Laban himself; and others say he was the son of Beor, the son of Leban. Bearing in mind that Laban employed the “seraphim” as his “gods,” if Balaam were one of his descendants then it would explain why he did not utterly disown Jehovah while yet practicing the abominations of the heathen.

To return to the narrative. It was not long after Jacob’s stealthy departure that Gabon heard of what had taken place, and gathering together what was, no doubt, a considerable force, he immediately set out in pursuit. But on the night before he overtook Jacob’s party, God appeared to him in a dream, and warned him against even speaking to Jacob “good or bad.” Thus did Jehovah, once again, make good His original promise to our patriarch and manifest His preserving Presence with Jacob. The measure in which Laban respected the word of God is seen in the charges he brought against Jacob when they met the next day. We refrain from commenting on the lengthy colloquy between Jacob and his uncle. Though considerable feeling was evidenced by both parties, the interview terminated happily, and the final leave taking was quite affecting. But it is remarkable that at the close of their interview each man revealed himself and his true condition of heart. It is by the seemingly little things that our characters are shown—“By thy *words* thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Matt. 12:37.) So it was here. When Jacob took a stone and “set it up for a pillar” to be a witness of the covenant made between them (31:44–46) *Laben* called it “*Jegar-sahadutha*” which is *Chaldean* for “heap of witness,” thus speaking in the language of *heathendom*; whereas, Jacob termed it “*Galead*” which was *Hebrew* for “heap of witness.” Only the true believer can speak the language of God’s people; of the worldling, the godless idolater, it

must be said of him as the maid said of Peter when he was *deny* his Lord, “Thy *speech* betrayeth thee.” (Matt. 26:73.)

The closing verses of our chapter present briefly another beautiful typical picture: “Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethern to eat bread; and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount. And early in the morning Urban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them; and Laban departed and returned unto his place.” First a covenant of peace was proposed, then it was ratified by a sacrifice, and last it was commemorated by a feast. So it was in Egypt. God made promise to Moses, then the lamb was slain, and then the people feasted upon his roasted flesh. Thus it is with us. God entered into a covenant of peace before the foundation of the world, in the fullness of time the great Sacrifice was offered and accepted, and this is now commemorated at the “feast” of the Lord’s Supper. (1 Cor. 5:8.) Note, too, it was not Laban the elder, but Jacob his nephew who “offered sacrifice upon the mount.”

One practical observation on the circumstance of Jacob leaving Padan-Aram and we conclude. It has been suggested by Dr. Griffith Thomas that this incident supplies us with valuable principles for regulating the believer in his daily life when in doubt concerning the will of God. How often one is puzzled to know whether God would have us take a certain course or not. How may I be sure of God’s will concerning some issue which confronts me? An important question; one that is frequently met with, and one which must find answer in the Word alone. Surely God has not left us without something definite for our guidance. Not that we must always look for a passage of Scripture whose terms are absolutely identical with our own situation, but rather must we search for some passage which sets forth some clearly defined *principles* which are suited to meet our case. Such indeed we find here in Gen. 31.

Jacob was in a strange land. He had been there for twenty years, yet he knew he was not to spend the remainder of his days there. God had assured him he should return to Canaan. How much longer then was he to tarry at Padan-Aram? When was he to start out for his old home? How could he be sure when *God’s time* for him to move had arrived? Pressing questions these. Note how the answer to them is found here in three things: first, a definite *desire* sprang up in Jacob’s heart to return home—this is evident from Gen. 30:25. But this in itself was not sufficient to warrant a move, so Jacob must wait a while longer. Second, *circumstances* became such that a move seemed the wise thing; the jealousy of Laban and his sons made his continued stay there intolerable. (Gen. 31:1, 2.) This was ordered of God who makes all things “work together” for the good of His own people. But still something more was needed ere Jacob was justified in leaving. So, in the third place there was a clear *word from God*—“The Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers.” (Gen. 31:3.)

It is not always that God gives us a manifestation of these three principles, but whenever they *do* combine and are evident we may be sure of His will in any given circumstance. First, a definite conviction in our hearts that God desires us to take a certain course or do a certain thing. Second the path He would have us take being indicated by outward circumstances, which make it (humanly) possible or expedient we should do it. Then, third, after definitely waiting on God for it, some special word from the Scriptures which is suited to our case and which by the Spirit bringing it manifestly to our notice (while waiting for guidance) is plainly a message from God to our individual heart. Thus may we be assured of God’s will *for us*. The most important thing is to *wait*

on God. Tell Him your perplexity, ask Him to prevent you from making any mistake, cry earnestly to Him to make “plain His way before your face” (Ps. 5:8), and then “wait patiently” till He does so. Remember that “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Rom. 4:23.) If you are sincere and patient, and pray in faith, then, in His own good time and way, He will most certainly answer, either by removing the conviction or desire from your heart, and arranging your circumstances in such a manner that your way is blocked—and then you will know *His time* for you to move has not arrived—or, by deepening your conviction, so ordering your circumstances as that the way is opened up *without your doing anything yourself*, and by speaking definitely through His written Word. “Commit thy way unto the word, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. (Ps. 37:5.) The *meeek* will He guide in judgment; and the *meeek* will He teach His way” (Ps. 25:9.) “He that believeth shall not make haste.” May writer and reader be permitted by Divine grace to enjoy that blessed peace that comes from knowing we are in the will—that “good and perfect and acceptable will”—of God.⁷³

The Book of Jasher: Chapter 31

35 And in the course of time he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and of that which was our father's has he acquired all this glory.

36 And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban and of his children, and behold it was not toward him in those days as it had been before.

37 And the Lord appeared to Jacob at the expiration of the six years, and said unto him, Arise, go forth out of this land, and return to the land of thy birthplace and I will be with thee.

38 And Jacob rose up at that time and he mounted his children and wives and all belonging to him upon camels, and he went forth to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

39 And Laban did not know that Jacob had gone from him, for Laban had been that day sheep-shearing.

40 And Rachel stole her father's images, and she took them and she concealed them upon the camel upon which she sat, and she went on.

41 And this is the manner of the images; in taking a man who is the first born and slaying him and taking the hair off his head, and taking salt and salting the head and anointing it in oil, then taking a small tablet of copper or a tablet of gold and writing the name upon it, and placing the tablet under his tongue, and taking the head with the tablet under the tongue and putting it in the house, and lighting up lights before it and bowing down to it.

42 And at the time when they bow down to it, it speaketh to them in all matters that they ask of it, through the power of the name which is written in it.

43 And some make them in the figures of men, of gold and silver, and go to them in times known to them, and the figures receive the influence of the stars, and tell them future things, and in this manner were the images which Rachel stole from her father.

⁷³Pink, A. W. (2005). *Gleanings in Genesis* (271). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

44 And Rachel stole these images which were her father's, in order that Laban might not know through them where Jacob had gone.

45 And Laban came home and he asked concerning Jacob and his household, and he was not to be found, and Laban sought his images to know where Jacob had gone, and could not find them, and he went to some other images, and he inquired of them and they told him that Jacob had fled from him to his father's, to the land of Canaan.

46 And Laban then rose up and he took his brothers and all his servants, and he went forth and pursued Jacob, and he overtook him in mount Gilead.

47 And Laban said unto Jacob, What is this thou hast done to me to flee and deceive me, and lead my daughters and their children as captives taken by the sword?

48 And thou didst not suffer me to kiss them and send them away with joy, and thou didst steal my gods and didst go away.

49 And Jacob answered Laban, saying, Because I was afraid lest thou wouldst take thy daughters by force from me; and now with whomsoever thou findest thy gods he shall die.

50 And Laban searched for the images and he examined in all Jacob's tents and furniture, but could not find them.

51 And Laban said unto Jacob, We will make a covenant together and it shall be a testimony between me and thee; if thou shalt afflict my daughters, or shalt take other wives besides my daughters, even God shall be a witness between me and thee in this matter.

52 And they took stones and made a heap, and Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee, therefore he called the name thereof Gilead.

53 And Jacob and Laban offered sacrifice upon the mount, and they ate there by the heap, and they tarried in the mount all night, and Laban rose up early in the morning, and he wept with his daughters and he kissed them, and he returned unto his place.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The Book of Jasher, Faithfully Translated 1840, Hebrew to English, J.H.Perry & Co, Salt Lake City UT