

Genesis Chapter Thirty One

Genesis 31:1-9

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you." So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and said to them, "I see your father's attitude that it is not friendly toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me. If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth striped. Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me.

- Laban's sons murmur at Jacob's prosperity—Laban is also at odds toward Jacob
- Jacob does not leave based on these offenses—but at the Word of the Lord
- This is the first time we hear God speak since Bethel—in has been 20 years.
- Jacob built no altars in Paddan-aram and experienced no communion there—until it is time to leave—then he receives direction concerning the flocks in a dream and is urged to leave
- He converses with wives in the field—away from their father's tents
- Two reasons given for leaving—direction from the Lord –Gen 31:3, and Laban's attitude—Gen 31:2, desire—Gen 30:25
- Jacob is justifying his plans to Laban's daughters—points to the hand of God being involved

Genesis 31:10-13

"And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating were striped, speckled, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Lift up, now, your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that

Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth."

- Shares that his ideas concerning the flocks came from God in a dream
- Ascribes the Lord's blessing as a justice bestowed
- God identifies Himself by the last location where He and Jacob had communed.
- God refers to Jacob's sacrifice—worship—vows
- Instruction for Jacob's departure—return to the land of your birth

Genesis 31:14-16

And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."

- Laban has lost his daughter's good will at this point—seeing covetousness as his motivation (which is always selfish at root)
- Custom at the time was to hold onto bride price—and since daughters were not included as heirs among sons—it is what they received at their father's death.
- Daughters do not see their father give them any worth in his dealings
- They are now called to leave and cleave

Genesis 31:17-21

Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels; and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the Euphrates River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

- Jacob chooses to leave when Laban has gone 3 days journey away.
- Rachel stole household idols—or teraphim—used for making inquiry of the gods. Perhaps Rachel thought this would interrupt her father's ability to

- pursue and find them. (This word shows up again in Judg 17:5 and Judg 18)
- The fact that Laban housed these idols shows that Babylon still had influence on the family
 - It is possible that Balaam is a future descendant of Laban—Num 23:7—he came from Aram—son of Beor, the son of Laban.
 - He walked into town 20 years ago without family or fortune. He leaves with all he has acquired in servitude.
 - This is his last deception with Laban—leaving secretly (missing idols are Rachel's deception)
 - Gilead=heap of witness

Genesis 31:22-25

When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, then he took his kinsmen with him, and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. And God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad." And Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead.

- It requires divine intervention to truly accomplish this division of families. God displays both the prospering and protection of Jacob.
- Laban is now 10 days separated—but not traveling with women and children, livestock
- God appears to a pagan—speaks—curbs Laban's violence—if not his tongue
- We see God declaring the power words have

Genesis 31:26-30

Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre; and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly. It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, "Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob." And now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"

- Laban vents—claims ownership of daughters—states he would have thrown a party
- Declares that Jacob acted foolishly—yet—Jacob made his move at the command of the Lord
- Name for God—God of your father
- Final accusation—you plundered me (same thing takes place in Exodus)

Genesis 31:31-33

Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you would take your daughters from me by force. The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take it for yourself.'" For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

- Left by stealth due to fear—takes no account of God's promise to be with him
- Jacob's ignorance leads to reckless assurances—with less than true defenses.
- Enters tents based on level of suspicion
- Allowing relatives to witness proceedings

Genesis 31:34-37

Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me." So he searched, but did not find the household idols. Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.

- Size of idols—they fit in saddles
- Begged off from dismounting by claiming to be on her period
- Indicates lack of reverence on Rachel's part for the idols
- Jacob gains boldness when accusation not justified by Laban.

Genesis 31:38-42

"These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. That which was torn of beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. You required it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so he rendered judgment last night."

- Recounts his integrity of service to Laban—in every possible situation
- Shares how blessed Laban has been due to his presence
- He acknowledges God: God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac—the presence of this God is the one who has intervened and acted on Jacob's behalf
- God took into account Jacob's affliction and work—then responds by speaking to Laban

Genesis 31:43-50

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me." Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed; and Mizpah, for he said, "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other. If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see God is witness between you and me."

- Jegar-sahadutha=a heap of witness—in Chaldean
- Covenant of Peace is proposed—then ratified by a sacrifice, then commemorated by a feast (same pattern in Egypt—promise to Moses—then lamb slain—then a feast is eaten)

- Laban declares that daughters and children—flocks and territory—belong to him.
- Laban makes an oath—first time we really see him act on daughter's behalf
- Covenant amounts to more of a truce—to guard the two schemers from continuing in this way toward one another.

Genesis 31:51-55

And Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain. And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

- They make a boundary between themselves—establish a truce—may not act in any way—from now on—that would be detrimental for the other.
- Vowed by each of their fathers—and their common grandfather
- Swore by the fear of his father Isaac—keeping what his father would think in the forefront of his mind as he deals with Laban