

Through the Bible - Genesis 29-31

by Chuck Smith

Jacob's journey is marked by his love for Rachel, his willingness to serve for seven years, and the consequences of polygamy, including jealousy, rivalry, and hurt feelings among the wives.

Scripture: Genesis 29:1-6, Genesis 29:18, Genesis 29:23-27, Genesis 30:1-2, Genesis 30:22-24, Genesis 31:3, Genesis 31:29-30, Genesis 31:48-52, Mark 8:36, Galatians 6:7

Topics: "God's Guidance", "Family Dynamics"

Description

Chuck Smith discusses Jacob's journey to Haran, where he meets Rachel at a well, showcasing God's guidance in his life. Jacob's love for Rachel leads him to work seven years for her hand in marriage, only to be deceived by Laban into marrying Leah first. The sermon highlights the complexities of Jacob's family dynamics, including the rivalry between Leah and Rachel, and the challenges of polygamy. Ultimately, Jacob's faithfulness and God's providence are emphasized as he navigates through trials and deception. The narrative serves as a reminder of God's presence and guidance in our lives, even amidst difficult circumstances.

Transcript

Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. And he looked, behold there was a well in the field, and, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And all of the flocks were gathered together here: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again on the well's mouth in this place. And Jacob said unto the young people that were there, My brothers, where do you come from? And they said, We're from Haran. And he said unto them, Do you know Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, Sure, we know him. And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, Sure: and, look, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep (Gen 29:1-6).

So God had His hand upon Jacob, had guided him to the place of Haran and actually at that very moment, Rachel his cousin was coming with her father's sheep.

Now this well had this big rock over it and they would gather at the well to water their sheep. Well, here it was in the early afternoon and these people were already there. But the rock was so big. Evidently it took a lot of them to move the rock. And so they have to wait till the whole group came, but yet they had sort of a process where first come, first served. And so they'd come early and just sort of lie around and let the sheep lie there while they were waiting to get enough people to move the rock so that they could water it.

And then they would wait until all the flocks that were gathered in turn and each one being watered, and then they would roll the rock back over the well.

So Jacob is talking to them, perhaps cannot understand why they'd just be there so early or being sort of lazy really in their job of watching their sheep and is talking to them, "Where are you from?" "We're from Haran". "Do you know Laban?" "Yeah, we know him and in fact there comes his daughter right now".

And he said, Hey, it's high it's still early afternoon, really about noontime. It's yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water the sheep, and then go out and feed them (Gen 29:7).

Hey, you shouldn't be just sitting around here at this time of the day. Go ahead and water your sheep and then take them out to the pasture, you know. It's too early to have them just standing around here.

And they said, We cannot, until all of the flocks are gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; and then we water the sheep. And while he was yet talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother (Gen 29:8-10).

Probably just showing off a little bit his strength. You know it took a whole group of them to roll that stone back but when you've got incentive, it's amazing what you can do. And so Jacob went up by himself and rolled the stone back.

And so then Jacob [overcome with emotion] kissed Rachel, and lifted up her voice, and wept (Gen 29:11).

She probably thought, "Who in the world is this", you know. He is doing these marvelous feats of strength; now kissing me and crying.

And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, he was Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father. And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him for the space of a month. And Laban said to Jacob, Because you are my brother, should you serve me for nothing? tell me, what should your wages be (Gen 29:12-15)?

Notice Laban is allowing Jacob to set his own wages.

And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. And Leah was tender eyed (Gen 29:16-17);

Some believe that that means she was blue-eyed. Her eyes were not the real deep dark brown which were considered the strong, stronger eyes.

but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured. And Jacob loved Rachel (Gen 29:17-18);

Sort of a love at first sight.

and he said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter (Gen 29:18).

Now it was a custom in those days for a man to pay a dowry for a wife. And in those cultures today, it is still a cultural thing to pay a dowry. Now what a dowry actually amounts to is alimony in advance. In case you're not treating your wife right and she has to leave you, rather than being destitute, the dowry is to be saved for the wife. It's actually for her and for her future. In case you put her away, in case you divorce her, she has enough to get along on. The dowry was used for that. It was actually alimony in advance and it was the responsibility of the father to keep that for the wife for the future in case something didn't work out in the marriage. It was then to take care of her and to provide for her.

Now Jacob didn't--he came out off from home with nothing. All he had was his walking stick. So he had no dowry. But he was so in love with Rachel, he was willing to become a slave for seven years in order that his seven years of service might become a dowry.

Now in reality, in those seven years that he served Laban for Rachel, because God so blessed Jacob and Jacob's service, that Laban was increased with wealth and goods, that which came to Laban by Jacob's service should have been set aside as the dowry for the daughter. But Jacob didn't do that. I mean, Laban didn't do that. He just, you know, used it for himself and did not really set up a true dowry for his daughters. And so Jacob made the deal. "I'll serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel".

And Laban said, It is better that I give her to you, than I should give her to another man: [go ahead and] abide with me. And Jacob served for seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him just like a few days, because he had such great love for her. And Jacob said to Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her (Gen 29:19-21).

It's sort of the seven years but Laban still just didn't turn her over. I mean, Jacob had to ask for her.

And Laban gathered together all of the men of the place, and he made a great feast (Gen 29:22).

Because actually they would celebrate for about seven days, the wedding feast would last that long. They'd gather together, have big feasting and big parties and all.

And so it came to pass in the evening (Gen 29:23),

It was dark.

he took Leah his daughter (Gen 29:23),

And of course, they were heavily veiled.

and he brought her to him; and he went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for a handmaid. And it came to pass, in the morning [when Jacob saw his new bride], that it was Leah: and he said to Laban, What have you done to me? I served you for Rachel. Why have you beguiled me? And Laban said, It's the custom of the country, that we're not to give the younger before the firstborn. So fulfil her week (Gen 29:23-27).

In other words, the week wedding thing, go ahead and serve you know fulfill her week, sort of the honeymoon,

and then I'll give you the other daughter and you will serve me yet another seven years (Gen 29:27).

Now I am certain that in this Jacob could not help but remember the deception that he had pulled upon his dad disguising as his brother. "As a man soweth, so shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). And this is a classic example. He had disguised himself as his brother, had deceived his father. Had gone in and received the blessing. And now the old switch-a-roo is pulled on him. And his father-in-law does much the same for him. He serves for seven years, created dowry, and the old man switches daughters.

A lot of questions are unanswered: Where was Rachel? You know, I wonder if they had to whisk her away by force. And what was Leah's mental attitude in this whole thing? I mean, surely she knew that in the morning when he wakes up and sees that it's me, you know, it must have been tough on her as he made love to her that night realizing that he was thinking that he was making love to her younger sister and all. And it wasn't easy; I wouldn't suppose for this whole situation and no doubt created a lot of tensions for the time.

But Jacob was a good sport through it all. I mean, that you have to confess. You know, what would you have done? You know, had the switch-a-roo been pulled on you like that. And it could be that it was because of his own past that he was such a good sport and so understanding about the whole thing. But the old man just--Now if that were the custom then Laban should have told him the custom back at the beginning of the seven years. He should have said, "Well, that's fine, son, but we got a custom here". But he's figuring to, you know, to squeeze out from Jacob everything he can.

Now Jacob is a good sport in that he goes on to serve another seven years for Rachel so that Leah would not feel less in his eyes. In other words, had he been making the deal for Leah in the beginning, he probably wouldn't have said seven years 'cause he really wasn't interested in her. But Jacob consenting to go on for another seven years and there isn't really too much about Jacob's explosion or anger or anything else but he's pretty even and cool through the whole thing. Much more than I think I would be under the similar circumstances.

So Jacob went along with it. Spent the honeymoon with her,
and then he gave him Rachel as a wife also (Gen 29:28).

In other words, he didn't have to wait a full seven years to get Rachel. He received Rachel the next week but still he then was obligated to serve another seven years to form her dowry.

And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served yet another seven years (Gen 29:29-30).

Now here we find the case of polygamy but even as we read of it, we see the difficulties that exist in a polygamous relationship as there begin to develop jealousies and rivalries and so forth among the wives.

Several years ago in a Sociology class at Orange Coast College, the professor of the class asked if we could see any advantage to polygamy. And of course, I was an older student in the class; most of them were young and unmarried. And they couldn't see any advantages in polygamy but I raised my hand and said, "Well, I can see some advantages in polygamy". I mean, I actually can foresee there could be some advantages in polygamy. You marry a wife that's a real sharp secretary, you send her out to make the living and you know, you get enough of them working, you can just kick back and just enjoy it. But though I can see some advantages or possible advantages to polygamy, I can also see enough disadvantages that I would be discouraged from ever trying to have such a relationship.

And so we find that here there is really no strong biblical injunction against it. It was something that was accepted in that culture at that time. And of course, it came to its maximum under Solomon. But by the time we come to the New Testament and the purposes of God are more clearly defined, when the church is developed, polygamy is definitely prohibited. And those who were to be the overseers of the church were to be husbands of one wife and keeping their homes. And this was still in a time in which mistresses and courtesans and so forth were widely accepted in the Grecian culture and in the Roman culture.

So problems did develop; jealousies and all, Rachel, whom he loved more than Leah; yet, even in that you have a difficult situation. That it's going to create hurt feelings. That's going to create difficult living.

but Rachel was barren. But Leah conceived, and she bore a son, and she called his name [look, a son]: for she said, The LORD hath looked upon my affliction (Gen 29:31-32);

She sees that he doesn't love me so much as he loves my sister. So look, a son.

now therefore my husband will love me (Gen 29:32).

Isn't that rather pathetic? She senses a lack of love from Jacob and she's hoping now that I've born him a son, now will he love me? And reaching out for love. As I say, it's just the tragic by-product of this polygamous relationship.

And she conceived again, and bore another son; and she said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated (Gen 29:33),

And that word "hated" should not be taken literally; I was loved less. He didn't really hate her but he didn't love her as much as he loved Rachel.

he hath therefore given me this son: and so she called his name Hearing (Gen 29:33).

Which the Lord has heard me so she called his name, I've been heard or hearing.

And she conceived again, bore another son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined to me, because I have had three sons for him: and so she called his name Joined. And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Praise; and she left off bearing (Gen 29:34-35).

So the names of the boys were actually indicative of her desires to be accepted, to be loved, and they probably were born within a year of each other.

Chapter 30

Now when Rachel saw that she could not bare Jacob children, Rachel envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I'm going to die. And Jacob was angry with her: and he said, Am I in God's place, who hath withheld thee from the fruit of the womb (Gen 30:1-2)?

So here's some hard feelings and harsh words between husband and wife because Rachel feels the disgrace of not being able to bear children.

And so she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in to her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may have children by her. And so she gave him Bilhah her handmaid as a wife: and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah

conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and so she called his name Judge, Dan (Gen 30:3-6).

Daniel means God is judge. But she called him Dan because she said, God has judged me.

And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again (Gen 30:7),

Now this could have been coinciding this; these boys could be being born at the same time that Leah was having her sons. She conceived again,

bare Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and now I have prevailed: and so she called his name Wrestler. And Leah saw that she had finished bearing or left off bearing, and so she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her to Jacob as his wife (Gen 30:7-9).

This competition; you have to admit that he was a very burrow man.

And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad (Gen 30:10-11).

Now that may be an unfortunate translation. There are those who believe that it should not be translated "A troop," but I forget what it's supposed to be translated so we can look that up.

And Zilpah Leah's maid bore Jacob a second son. And Leah said, Happy am I, for all the daughters will call me blessed: and so she called his name Happy. And Reuben went in the days of the wheat harvest (Gen 30:12-14),

Now Reuben was probably only about seven years old at this time but he was the oldest son. And in the days of the wheat harvest, he went out

and he found mandrakes in the field (Gen 30:14),

Now a mandrake was a little orange-colored fruit that grew on bushes. And the mandrakes were thought to have had aphrodisiac types of powers and also fertility powers. And they were thought, they were called love apples and they were thought to have fertility powers.

and so Reuben brought them into his mother Leah. And then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of your son's mandrakes (Gen 30:14).

Probably hoping that they would make her fertile.

And Leah said unto her, Is it a small matter that you have taken my husband? and would you take also my son's mandrakes? And Rachel said, I'll give you permission to spend the night with him if you'll give me your son's mandrakes. And so Jacob came out of the field, and Leah came out to meet him, and said, You're mine tonight; for surely I have hired you with my son's mandrakes (Gen 30:15-16).

Now again you can see the problems with polygamy. I don't read of Jacob complaining. I imagine it was sort of healthy for his ego to have them fighting over him this way. And so he went into her that night.

And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bore a fifth son. And Leah said, God has given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Hired. And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry;

now will my husband dwell with me, I have born him six sons: and she called his name Dwelling. And afterwards she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah (Gen 30:17-21).

Now how many other daughters were born, we don't know. If there were daughters born in between here, we don't know. We do know that Jacob did have daughters. They are mentioned later but none of them by name. Dinah is the only daughter that is named and she's only named here because she becomes an important part of the story later. The girls weren't named. Girls weren't considered valuable, only the fellows were considered valuable.

In fact, when a woman went into labor, they would gather together with, you know, they'd come together with gather things together for a feast and prepare to have a great big feast. They'd bring in the wine and the meat and everything else. And when the baby was born, if it were a boy they would just have a huge party, a big feast. But with a girl, they just fold up everything and go home. So you've come a long way, baby. And in reality, it is through Jesus Christ that the cultural patterns have been so changed where He has brought us to the place where there is no superior sex. "But Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:11).

And it's so neat that through Jesus Christ we have been able to recognize a total equality, not only of the sexes but of people themselves. And the thing that God hates is the exalting or lifting up of one person above another. Thinking that you are more important, you're more, you know, you're greater or whatever. It's an attitude that God detests. He wants us to all recognize that, the equality.

There is no difference, Paul said. There are similarities in all as we've all sinned; we've all come short of the glory of God. We all need the Savior Jesus Christ and in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). Just an equality all in Jesus and we're one together in Him. So it's a very beautiful thing that Christ has done for us in bringing to us that recognition of the value of all persons and He places tremendous value on each of you.

So much so he said, "What shall it profit a man, if he would gain the whole world, and lose his own soul" (Mark 8:36)? He's talking about you and your soul. It's more important to God than the whole world. And thus He has placed a high value upon each of us and He has prized you dearly.

So problems arose because of this relationship.

But God [verse twenty-two] remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and she said, God has taken away my reproach: and so she called his name Joseph; which means Adding (Gen 30:22-24),

Which she was hoping that God would add now more sons. And so it was--it was his name was sort of expressing the hope of her heart that now I hope I will be able to give my husband more sons.

And so it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto my own place, and to my country (Gen 30:25).

Now at this point, Reuben the oldest could not have been more than twelve years old because Jacob only served six years after the seven years for the second dowry. He served a total of twenty years. So having married in the seventh year, and of course, figuring the nine-month pregnancy and so forth, and now the twenty years are almost over, it means that the oldest of his sons was still quite young. Reuben was at this point at the time that Joseph was born just about twelve-and a-half years old, perhaps twelve years old, somewhere in there.

And so that's a lot of little kids running around. Twelve and under you've got to, you've got twelve kids at least. We don't know how many other girls but there are at least twelve that are running around at this point. And well, of course, Joseph isn't running around yet, but I mean, you got a bunch of them around at least.

And so Joseph--I mean Jacob is coming and he's saying, "Give me my own place, my own country". Beg your pardon? At this point, he doesn't leave. He stays on and serves. So that means that Reuben at this point is probably only seven years old. So you've got all of them born within a seven-year span, all of these that you just read about. So it's even more proud of the little one, because at this point he's just saying send me away and then he contracts for six more years and Joseph is already born. So all of them are born in this short space of time. "Send me away to my own place, to my own country".

Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for you know my service that I have done to thee. And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience (Gen 30:26-27)

The word experience there is "teraphim", I've learned by my little gods--or not "teraphim", but it's enchantments. I have learned by enchantment.

that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake (Gen 30:27).

So he was serving pagan gods, he would have these little enchantments and so forth and seeking counsel off on them. And he had learned by his enchantments that "the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake."

And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it (Gen 30:28).

Just tell me, what do you want? I'll pay your wages.

And so he said unto him, You know how I have served you, and how your cattle were with me. For it was little which you had before I came, and now it is increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for my own household also (Gen 30:29-30)?

In other words, Jacob was saying, "Hey, you remember when I came you really didn't have much". You had just a small flock and now through my diligence, my service, you know you really have a lot of wealth, a great multitude of herds and all.

And he said, What shall I give you? And Jacob said, You will not give me any thing: for if you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flock (Gen 30:31).

In other words, I won't take anything from you but this is the deal I'll make with you.

I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from them all of the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and all such and of such shall be my hire. And so shall my righteousness answer for me in the time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and the brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me. And Laban said, Behold, I would that it might be according to thy word. And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all of the brown among the sheep, and he gave them unto the hand of his sons. And he set three days' journey

between himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks (Gen 30:32-36).

Now Jacob said, "Look, all of those that are born that are ringstreaked, speckled and so forth, they will be my hire. The solid colors will be yours". Laban says, "All right, good deal". And then immediately he goes out and pulls them out of the flock and takes them three days' journey so that they cannot intermingle with the solid colors. So he leaves Jacob with nothing but solid colors. And he takes all of those that were ringstreaked or spotted completely out of the scene so that Jacob is just left with the solid colors.

Now Jacob is saying this is the way I want it so that my righteousness will speak for me. In other words, God will be the One to bless me. He had the promise of God, "Go and I'm going to bless thee". And he had that promise of God of blessing. So he was confident that God would take care of the issue but he was also a little bit knowledgeable of breeding practices. He had spent his life around animals, breeding them and so forth and he was conscious of some of the genetic issues, of the dominant and recessive traits and so forth. And he used some of his knowledge of these things in developing the flocks.

"So shall my righteousness answer for me in the time to come." In other words, he's committing it unto the Lord that God is going to prove that I have been righteous and all. And Laban said, "All right, let it be". And he took the flocks and separated them three days journey.

So Jacob took rods of green poplar, and of hazel and the chestnut tree; and he pilled white streaks in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. The flocks conceived before the rods, and they brought forth cattle ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and he set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstreaked, and all the brown of the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and he put them not unto Laban's cattle. And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before their eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in: and so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger were Jacob's. And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses (Gen 30:37-43).

Now there are those who believe that he was actually trying to give sort of a prenatal thing, you know, by making the streaked the striped boughs and so forth and so there would be sort of a pre-natal impression that would create. The Hebrew word "conceive" is actually to be made hot. And we do know that they, the animals, are by placing stripes in front of them causes them to desire to conceive.

And so it was probably that which he was doing rather than trying to prenatally mark them. That he was just knowing the genetic structures and the recessive genes and so forth, that the recessives combine with the dominant, you know, can come forth spotted and so forth. And he was sharp, even when he was doing no doubt and the stronger ones he had set these things and caused them to conceive, the weaker ones went on to Laban. And anyhow, he was getting the better of the deal.

Chapter 31

And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and all that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory (Gen 31:1).

In other words, they are now saying, "Hey, that really belongs to our dad. Jacob's stolen it from us". Not so. Jacob made the deal. His dad made the deal, but now the brothers are jealous because Jacob has such a large flock. They're so strong and healthy and there's a great jealousy.

And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before (Gen 31:2).

It wasn't, "Oh, hi there", you know, and "son", and wasn't the old good buddy anymore but his father-in-law was really changing in his attitude.

And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to your family; and I will be with thee (Gen 31:3).

And so Jacob now hears from the Lord. He sees that the attitude is changing and God speaks to his heart and tells him to go back.

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock (Gen 31:4),

Now he, rather than talking about it in the tent where he might be overheard, he calls them out in the field so that he can talk to them privately.

And he said unto them, I see that your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as it was before; but the God of my father hath been with me. And you know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father has deceived me, and he's changed my wages ten times; but God would not allow him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be your wages; then all the cattle bore speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstreaked shall be your hire; then the cattle all ringstreaked. And thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up my eyes, and I saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstreaked, speckled, and grisled (Gen 31:5-10).

In other words, God showed him really in a dream how and when and so forth to cause them to conceive.

And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. And he said, Lift up now your eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstreaked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. And I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you vowed a vow unto me: now arise, and get thee out from this land, and return to the land of thy family (Gen 31:11-13).

So it is interesting that God announces to him, "I am the God of Bethel. Come back to the place of your family. I am the God that met you there in Bethel".

And so Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house (Gen 31:14)?

In other words, our father has gone ahead and used up our dowry. He's not given us anything. We've got nothing there.

We are counted to him as strangers for he has sold us, and has devoured our money (Gen 31:15).

He spent the dowry. He sold them. He spent the dowry. We're just like a stranger to him.

For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, it's really ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto you, go ahead and do it. Then Jacob rose up, and he set his sons and his wives upon camels; And he carried away all of his cattle, and his goods which he had gotten, and the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan. And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen [the teraphims], the images that were her father's (Gen 31:16-19).

The little idols that they used.

And Jacob stole away unaware to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and he passed over the river, and he set his face toward mount Gilead (Gen 31:20-21).

Now Mount Gilead is about three hundred miles away and Mount Gilead is the mountain range that goes on the West Bank of the sea of Galilee and into that area there, about three hundred miles away. He fled with all of he had towards Mount Gilead. But of course, traveling with that many animals and the family and everything was slow travel. The best you could do would be about fifteen to twenty miles a day. And he had a good start.

Actually his father-in-law was out shearing the sheep and it was three days before Laban even found out that he was gone. He probably had worked his flocks down to the southern extremities anyhow. And probably put about ninety miles distance between at the start of the time before he started driving them away. And then he put three days more journey between him and Laban and Laban couldn't just leave the shearing of the sheep immediately. Probably finished up as fast as he could before he took off to catch Jacob. But because he was forced in a fast march to catch Jacob, he caught him down around the area of Mount Gilead. Just about three hundred miles distance.

So it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled. And so he gathered his brothers with him, and he pursued after him for seven days; until he overtook him at mount Gilead. And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, Take heed that you speak not to Jacob either good or bad. Then Laban overtook Jacob. And now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brothers pitched in the mount of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What have you done, you stolen away unaware to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and did not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with parties, and songs, and the tabret, and the harp? And you've not allowed me to even kiss my grandchildren, my daughters? You've done foolishly in doing this (Gen 31:22-28).

Laban really had other ideas. He had really ideas of taking by force all that Jacob had. He had ideas of perhaps even killing Jacob. But God came to him in the night before and said, "Hey, don't you even talk to him good or bad". Well, that was a hard order and so Laban comes in and he puts on this whole hypocritical thing, you know. "Why did you steal off? I wanted to kiss my grandchildren. We could have had a big party", you know. In reality he would have never let Jacob go. He would have just ripped him off and sent him away without anything. But because God has now put the squeeze on him and won't let him do anything, he's just, you know, acting like he's been hurt and offended and all.

And he said,

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me last night, saying, Take heed that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad. And now, though you would needs be gone, because you long after your father's house, why have you stolen my gods? And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure you would take by force your daughters from me (Gen 31:29-31).

And Jacob had a right to be afraid. The guy probably would have taken the daughters and all of the animals.

With whomsoever you find your gods, let him not live: before our brothers discern thou what is thine with me, take it to thee (Gen 31:32).

Whatever I have, search through everything. Whatever I have that belongs to you, take it. Let these guys be a witness. I don't want anything of yours. And so he's accusing him of stealing his gods.

But he did not know that Rachel had ripped off these two little teraphims, these two little idols. And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents; but he did not find them. And so he went out of Leah's tent, and he entered into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and she was sitting on them. And Laban searched all the tent, but he did not find them. And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up; for the custom of woman is upon me. [I'm weak; I'm in my menstrual period.] And so he searched, but he did not find the images. And Jacob (Gen 31:32-36).

At this time had his little chance to spout off.

He was angry and he chided with Laban: and Jacob answered and said unto Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued after me? Whereas you've searched all my stuff, what have you found of all of your household stuff? set it here before the brothers, let them judge between us both. For twenty years I've been with you; the ewes and the she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of the flock have I not eaten (Gen 31:36-38).

In other words, there were--he was careful there were many times when the animals were pregnant. They would have miscarriages because they weren't taken care of properly. But he had so carefully watched over them, had been so diligent. There were no miscarriages of the animals while he was serving. Not only that, it was the right of the shepherd to eat, you know, to kill a lamb and to eat it occasionally. But he never once killed any of the animals for his own eating. And so he's just telling, you know, how honestly and how diligently he was serving the old man for twenty years.

That which was torn by the beasts I brought it not unto thee (Gen 31:39);

Now if a shepherd was watching over a flock and a beast would tear it, he would bring the carcass to the owner and give him the carcass, and thus he proved that he had driven off the wild beast and captured the animal. But he didn't have to pay for it. Actually the owner suffered the loss. But he said, I didn't bring any carcasses to you.

I bore the loss of it; of my hand did you require it, whether it was stolen by day, or stolen by night (Gen 31:39).

Laban, you know, charged him for everything.

And thus I was; and in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night (Gen 31:40);

He was out there in the hot sun. And he was out there in the cold nights. And for twenty years he had really gone through all of the miseries of the outdoors and all.

and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus have I been for twenty years in your house; and I have served you for fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your cattle: and you have changed my wages ten times. And except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely you would have sent me away empty. But God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and he rebuked you last night. 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 you see is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, and unto their children which they have born? Now therefore come, let's make a covenant, you and I; and it'll be a witness between me and thee (Gen 31:40-44).

I can't do anything; I feel it's all mine. I don't know by what right but yet,

So they took a stone, and they set it for a pillar. And Jacob said to his brothers, Gather stones; and they took the stones, and they made a heap of them. And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed (Gen 31:45-47).

He called it by the Hebrew name whereas Laban called it by the Aramaic name. And it's a heap of the heap of witness.

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and you this day. So we'll call it Galeed; and Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch over you, when we are absent one from the other. And if you will afflict my daughters, or if you will take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; let God watch over you and witness between me and thee. And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, this is the pillar that I have cast between me and you; This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you shalt not pass over this heap and pillar unto me (Gen 31:48-52).

In other words, you don't come my way, I don't go yours. This is it. This is the separation.

The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of thy father, judge between us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac. And 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. And early in the morning Laban rose up, kissed his sons and daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned to his place (Gen 31:53-55).

Now this Mizpah, verse forty-nine, has been used sometimes as sort of a Christian greeting. That's tragic. It isn't a very pleasant thing. It sounds beautiful to read that the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from the other. Like God watch over you, you know, my beloved friend, while we're absent. But that isn't the idea of the context at all. The idea is "I think you're a crook, I don't know what to do about it. You're leaving me; I can't watch you anymore. May God watch over you and if you do anything wrong, may God smite you".

So next time one of your Christian friends says Mizpah, you might not be so willing to just smile. It isn't a pleasant departure but it has one intention, the Lord watch you, I can't.

So we'll start in chapter thirty-two next Sunday and we did pretty well tonight. Moving along.

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