

# Genesis 31 - Jacob's Flight from Haran; Laban's Pursuit; God Warns Laban; Laban's Covenant with Jacob

## II. Epilogue: Patriarchal history (Gen 11:10—50:26)

- (3) Life of Jacob (Gen 27:1—36:43)
  - (D) The preservation of Jacob (Gen 30:25—33:20)
    - (a) Threat of Laban (30:25—31:45)
      - (i) Flight from Laban (31:1-22)
      - (ii) Confrontation with Laban (31:22-42)
      - (iv) Covenant with Laban (31:43-55)

## Genesis 31

- (a) Threat of Laban (30:25—31:45)
  - (i) Flight from Laban (31:1-22)

1 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."

1 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."

1 Now Jacob used to listen while Laban's sons kept on complaining, "Jacob has taken over everything our father owns! He made himself wealthy from what belongs to our father!"

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.

- Suddenly (in the span of two days, v2) the relationship between Jacob and Laban's sons changed

— Their grievance was that Jacob got rich off of Laban, but that was false; the opposite was actually true...Laban got rich because of Jacob

— The sons were upset because they were Laban's heirs, and there was a lot less for them to inherit. However, no thievery had taken place. In fact, the opposite was true.

2 And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not *friendly* toward him **as it had been before.**

2 Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not *friendly* toward him as formerly.

2 Jacob also noticed that the way Laban had been looking at him wasn't as nice as it had been just two days earlier.

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

- "...as *it had been* before" - Heb. as yesterday and the day before

— Jacob's relationship with Laban had also changed

— As the adopted son, Jacob should have received a part of the inheritance, but Laban intended to give him nothing

3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the **land of your fathers** and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

3 Then the LORD ordered Jacob, "Go back to your father's territory and to your relatives. I'll be with you."

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

- This was the second appearance of God to Jacob, 20 years after the first appearance (Gen 28)

- "...land of your fathers" - according to his ancestry, he was in the land of his fathers (Haran). However now, the land of his fathers was the Land of Canaan, where his father was born

- 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.

4 So Jacob sent *word* and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field,

4 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field,

4 Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to come out to the field where his flock was

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

- Jacob was out in the field, so he called for his two wives to come out from the tents into the field

5 and said to them, "I see your father's attitude, that it is not *friendly* toward me as *it was* before, but the God of my father has been with me.

5 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.

5 and informed them, "I've noticed that the way your father has been looking at us hasn't been as nice as it was just two days ago. But my father's God has been with me.

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.

- Jacob presents his case to leave Haran to his wives: in his self-deception, Laban believed Jacob had taken his wealth away, but God, the true source of his wealth, was with him.

6 You know that I have served your father with all my strength.

6 You know that I have served your father with all my strength.

6 You know I've been serving your father with all my heart.

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

- Jacob's diligence to Laban was something his wives could easily observe

7 Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to do me harm.

7 Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.

7 Even so, your father has cheated me. He broke our wage agreement ten times. However, God didn't allow him to harm me.

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

- The chief deception of Laban was the changing of Jacob's wages (10x!)

— Laban's intent was to disadvantage Jacob, but God's providence intervened

8 If he said this: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock delivered speckled; and if he said this: 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock delivered striped.

8 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.

8 "When Laban said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flock gave birth to speckled ones. Then when he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' all the flock gave birth to streaked offspring.

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

- For each change of wages Laban forced on Jacob, all of which were contrary to the original agreement, God worked accordingly

9 So God has taken away your father's livestock and given *them* to me.  
9 Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given *them* to me.  
9 "So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.  
9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.  
- The final result of God's blessing on Jacob...

10 And it came about **at the time when the flock was breeding** that I raised my eyes and saw in a dream—and behold—**the male goats that were mating** were striped, speckled, or mottled.

10 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.

10 As it was, when it was time for the livestock to breed, I once looked up in a dream, and the male goats that were mating with the flock were producing streaked, speckled, and spotted offspring.

**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 ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

- Jacob relates the divine revelation (dream) whereby he finally learned the true source of the multi-colored flocks he gained

- "...at the time when the flock was breeding" - this was the time Jacob would normally use the rods, and Jacob still thought the results would be achieved by the rods

— But the vision he received showed him that it was God Who was doing it; the favorable breeding and yield would have happened whether or not he put the rods out or not

— "...the male goats that were mating" - the rams were leaping, meaning leaping on the back of the females to conceive

— All of those mating with the females in the vision had three characteristics of being ringstreaked, speckled and grizzled

— So regardless of how they appeared physically on the outside, they had the genes of the three characteristics that would end up enriching Jacob

11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob'; and I said, 'Here I am.'

11 Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'

11 "Later, the angel of God spoke to me in a dream, 'Jacob.'

"'Here I am,' I replied

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

- After seeing the vision, Jacob received the interpretation of the vision

12 He said, 'Now raise your eyes and see *that* all the male goats that are mating are striped, speckled, or mottled; for I have seen everything that Laban has been doing to you.

12 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.

12 "'Look around!' he said. 'Go ahead, look! All the male goats have been mating with the flock, producing offspring that are streaked, speckled, and spotted, because I've been watching everything that Laban has done to you.

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

- God did not fault Jacob with anything, only Laban

— Laban's actions against Jacob put him under the cursing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant

— Previously Laban was under the blessing aspect, and was blessed materially, but because his attitude changed toward Jacob in attempting to cheat him, he moved under the cursing aspect.

— As God typically does, Laban was under the curse-for-curse-in-kind principle, God decreased Laban's wealth in the same way

13 I am the **God of Bethel**, where you anointed a memorial stone, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth."

13 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."

13 I am the God of Bethel, the place where you consecrated that stone and made a vow to me. Now get up, leave this territory, and return to your native land."

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" - God identified Himself to Jacob, reminding him of their meeting 20 years earlier (28:18)

— He also reminded Jacob of his vow to God (28:20-22); 20 years had transpired since the anointing of the pillar and the vow in connection with it and now it was time for Jacob to fulfill that vow

- God's direct command for Jacob to return to the Land of Canaan

14 Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any share or inheritance in our father's house?

14 Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house?

14 Then Rachel and Leah asked him, "Do we have anything left of inheritance remaining in our father's house?

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

- The rhetorical questions requires a negative answer

15 Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price.

15 Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price.

15 He's treating us like foreigners. He sold us and spent all of the money that rightfully belonged to us.

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

- This question requires a positive answer

— Now that Laban had sons, his daughters would inherit nothing

- Laban treated his daughters as merchandise, sold them for 14 years of labor, and took away their dowry

— The payment of the 14 years was not treated as a dowry to provide a financial base for his daughters' future; that was not what Laban did with the increase he received from Jacob's labors in the first 14 years

— The custom of that day was that the father of the bride was to give some of the bride price money from the groom to the bride. Jacob did not give money to Laban, but he gave him seven years of labor for each daughter. However, none of the increase in flocks from Jacob's work was given to the daughters.

— Laban cheated Jacob, and he also cheated his own daughters

— Laban would resort to local custom if it were to his benefit, but he would go against it if it did not benefit him

16 Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has told you."

16 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."

16 Furthermore, all of the wealth that God has stripped away from our father belongs to us now and to our children. So do everything that God tells you to do."

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.

- The response of both women was in faith as well. Both wives recognized that all of Jacob's prosperity was the result of divine justice.
- While Laban failed to provide, as he should have, God did it accordingly
- Laban had exploited his daughters' wealth and had lost their good will, so they were willing to leave their father

17 Then Jacob stood up and put his children and his wives on camels;

17 Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels;

17 So Jacob got up, seated his children and wives on camels,

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

- Two wives, 11 sons...

18 and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had acquired, the livestock he possessed which he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

18 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.

18 and drove all his livestock ahead of him, with everything that belonged to him, including the livestock that he had bought and accumulated in Paddan-aram, intending to deliver them to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

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.

- He acquired property by purchase and trade, showing that he was a trader as well as a herdsman

— These were his legitimately acquired possessions, not things he stole from Laban

19 Laban had gone to shear his flock, and Rachel stole the **household idols** that were her father's.

19 When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's.

19 Meanwhile, Laban had been out shearing his sheep. While he was away, Rachel stole her father's personal idols.

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

- Laban was out of the area, sheering his sheep (3 days' journey, 30:35-36?)

- "...household idols" - statues of small household gods

- Rachel stole Laban's household *teraphim*, figurines of deities (Cf. Gen 35:2-4)
- This shows the pagan influence in Laban's family
- This was not necessarily because Rachel was an idolatress; rather, in the laws of the day, the one who had household gods could claim the family property. Taking the *teraphim* was Rachel's attempt to gain Laban's property for Jacob
- The irony here is that you could steal a "god"...Rachel was guilty of god-napping

20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing.

20 And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing.

20 Moreover, Jacob had deceived Laban the Aramean, because he had never told him that he was intending to leave.

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

- Wordplay implies Rachel to be like Jacob, for there were parallel thefts: he "stole away" (left) 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 hard-headed self-interest almost brought disaster

21 So he fled with all that he had; and he got up and crossed the *Euphrates* River, and set out for the hill country of Gilead.

21 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.

21 Jacob fled, taking everything that he owned. He got up, crossed the river, and headed to the hill country of Gilead.

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.

- Jacob and family left without notice, crossed the Euphrates, and set their sites on Gilead (located in the Trans-Jordan, the last place to pass through before entering the Land of Canaan)

### (iii) Confrontation with Laban (31:22-42)

22 When Laban was informed on the third day that Jacob had fled,

22 When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled,

22 Three days later, somebody reported to Laban that Jacob had left,

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

- Three days was the separation of the flocks (30:36)

23 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.

23 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.

23 so he took his relatives with him and pursued Jacob. Laban was on the road for seven days when he finally caught up with Jacob in the hill country of Gilead.

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

- It only took Laban seven days to catch up after Jacob had a three-day head start

— Jacob would've moved a lot slower due to his large family and very large flock

24 However, 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.**"

24 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."

24 That night, God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and warned him, "Be careful what you say to Jacob, whether it's one word good or bad."

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.

- Just as God did to Abimelech in 20:3, God came to Laban (an unbeliever) in a dream with a warning against harming the Patriarch

— Thus, this was the second time God appeared to an unbeliever in a dream and warned him against harming a covenanted one

- "...Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad" - Laban was to remain neutral

25 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.

25 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.

25 Meanwhile, Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain, where Laban had caught up with him. Laban and his relatives encamped on that same mountain in the hill country of Gilead, too.

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.

26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?

26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?

26 Then Laban asked Jacob, "What did you do? You deceived me, carried off my daughters like you would war captives,

**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?

27 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 tambourine and with lyre;

27 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;

27 ran away from me secretly, and stole from me by not keeping me informed. Otherwise, I could have sent you off with a party and singing, accompanied by a band playing tambourines and harps.

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?

28 and did not allow me to kiss my grandchildren and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

28 and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

28 As it is, you didn't even allow me to kiss my grandchildren and daughters goodbye! You've acted foolishly.

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

- In the controversy between Jacob and Laban, legal jargon was used to describe their civil suit.

— In the first "strife" (rib; Cf. v36) or accusation Laban claimed that Jacob had robbed him (v26-27,30)—but he presented himself as a hurt father (v28) and a baffled avenger (v29).

29 **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.'

29 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.'

29 It's actually in my power to do some serious evil to you, but last night the God of your father told me, 'Be careful what you say to Jacob whether good or evil.'

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.

- "...It is in my power to do you harm" - this shows that Laban's three questions were false questions. He claimed to have been personally hurt, wounded, but he was not. Laban's real intent was to hurt Jacob.

- Laban recognized Jacob's God, but it was not his God. He only recognized Jehovah God to be one of many gods

30 Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; *but why did you steal my gods?*"

30 Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; *but why did you steal my gods?*"

30 Now, you can go if you must go, because you certainly are longing to go to your father's house. *But why did you steal my gods?*"

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?

- Laban recognizes Jacob's desire to return to his own land, but this was not the real reason Jacob left: it was Laban's dishonesty

— Laban did not wish to take responsibility for any injustice, although all the injustice was done by him

- The real reason for the pursuit finally comes out: Laban wanted his idols back

— 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 (v43-53) made a treaty to keep this troublesome man out of his territory

31 Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.

31 Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.

31 "I was afraid," Jacob replied. "I thought you might take your daughters from me.

**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 shows how unfaithful Laban was in Jacob's eyes

32 The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our relatives point out what is yours among my belongings and take *it* for yourself." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

32 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.

32 Now as to your gods, if you find someone has them in their possession, he's a dead man. Take our relatives as witnesses, search through our belongings, and take whatever belongs to you that's in my possession." But Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

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 promised execution of the person who stole the gods

33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two slave women, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

33 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.

33 So Laban entered Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the tents of the two maid servants, but he didn't find them. Then he left Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

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

34 Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddlebag, and she sat on them. So Laban searched through all the tent, but did not find *them*.

34 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*.

34 Meanwhile, Rachel had taken the idols, placed them inside the saddle of her camel, and sat on them. Laban searched through the whole tent, but found nothing.

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.

- Because of Jacob's promise, her life was now in danger; if the gods were found, she could be executed

— There is no reason to assume that Laban would not execute his own daughter

— Laban's thorough search for these idols marked how important they were to him as a pagan worshipper

35 And she said to her father, "May my lord not be angry that I cannot stand in your presence, because the way of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols.

35 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.

35 Then Rachel told her father, "Sir, please don't be angry that I cannot stand up in your presence. It's that time of the month." So Laban searched for the idols, but never did find them.

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.

- If Rachel's story was true, this would have contaminated these gods, rendering them unclean for coming into contact with menstrual blood

— A women who was menstruating did not need to rise

— Laban was again deceived by local custom, just as he once deceived Jacob by local custom (29:26). This is another example of curse for curse in kind, and it may have saved Rachel's life.

36 Then Jacob became angry and argued with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me?

36 Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me?

36 Then Jacob got angry and started an argument with Laban. "What have I done?" he demanded. "What's my crime that would cause you to come pursue me so violently?

36 And Jacob was wroth, 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?

- After the unsuccessful search, Jacob unloaded on Laban

— This was Laban's chance to pin some misdeed on Jacob's part, but he was unable

— 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)

37 Though you have searched through all my property, what have you found of all your household property? Set *it* here in front of my relatives and your relatives, so that they may decide between the two of us.

37 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.

37 Now that you've searched all my belongings, what did you find that belongs to your house? Set it here in front of our relatives and we'll let them judge between us!

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.

- Of course, Laban produced nothing; he had no evidence

38 For 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.

38 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.

38 Meanwhile, these past 20 years that I've been with you, your sheep and goats never had miscarriages, I never once ate any of the rams from your flock,

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.

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

— Laban's flock was healthy

— Jacob never killed and ate any of Laban's flock, although this was a common sin of shepherds in that day, who frequently used the flocks of their masters to feed themselves

39 I did not even bring to you that which was torn *by wild animals*; I took the loss myself. You demanded it of my hand *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night.

39 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.

39 and whatever was torn by beasts, I never bothered to bring to you. Instead, I bore the losses myself. Even so, you demanded that I provide restitution for anything that was stolen, whether during the day or the night.

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.

- In those days, if a member of the flock was torn by a wild animal, the shepherd could bring the body of the dead animal to the master to show that he was not at fault and that it was not stolen

- In addition, Jacob had to make good for any stolen property

— These points show that Jacob did not demand or make use of his own civil rights under the law in effect in that area at the time. Jacob's attitude was that he could have had an even greater gain if he had resorted to the law of the day for his benefit.

40 *This is how* I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

40 *Thus* I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

40 As it was, I was attacked by drought during the day and by cold at night. I never got any decent rest.

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

- It was a difficult and hard life to be a shepherd; he endured many sleepless nights

41 For 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.

41 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.

41 I've lived in your house these 20 years—serving fourteen years for your two daughters and another six years for your flocks. During all that time you changed my wages ten times.

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.

- Jacob spelled out Laban's unfaithfulness

- The original agreement was one wage for the entire duration of labor

— So in both agreements (for his daughters and Jacob's labor) Laban, not Jacob, proved untrustworthy

42 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 labor of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night."

42 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."

42 If the God of my father—the God of Abraham, the God whom Isaac feared—had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty handed. But God saw my misery and how hard I've worked with my own hands—and he rebuked you last night."

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.

- In spite of what Laban claimed in v27, he would have sent Jacob away in the same manner in which he arrived: empty-handed, with no possessions

#### (iv) Covenant with Laban (31:43-55)

**43** Then Laban replied to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my grandchildren, the flocks are my flocks, and everything that you see is mine. But what can

I do this day to these daughters of mine or to their children to whom they have given birth?

**43** Then Laban replied 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?

**43** But Laban answered Jacob, "These women are my daughters. These children are my children. The flocks are mine. In fact, everything that you see belongs to me. But what would I do today to my daughters and the children they have borne?

**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?

- Laban made an unreasonable claim, but he was bluffing

— He also made a claim to power, but he knew God's warning that he could not do what he thought he could do

**44** So now come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and it shall be a witness between you and me."

**44** So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

**44** Come, let's make a covenant just between you and me. And let it serve as a witness between you and me."

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

- Instead of causing harm to Jacob, Laban offers a covenant with him

**45** Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial stone.

**45** Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.

**45** So Jacob took a stone and raised it as a pillar.

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

**46** Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.

**46** Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.

**46** Then Jacob told his relatives, "Go gather some stones." So they picked up stones and stacked them one on top of the other. Then they had a meal together there by the stack of stones.

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.

- 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.
- They then had a customary meal in conjunction with the covenant

47 Now Laban called it **Jegar-sahadutha**, but Jacob called it **Galeed**.

47 Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.

47 Laban named the place Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Galeed.

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

- "...Jegar-sahadutha" - an Aramaic word meaning "the heap of witness"

- "...Galeed" - a Hebrew word meaning "the heap of witness"

48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed,

48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed,

48 Then Laban said, "This stack will serve as a witness between you and me today." That's how the place came to be named Galeed.

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

- This covenant was a warning between two men who could not trust each other

- The "pillar" and "heap" were to mark a border over which neither was to cross over

— The real point of this covenant was that Laban did not want Jacob to cross back over into Paddan-Aram with the *teraphim* and claim his property

49 and **Mizpah**, for he said, "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.

49 and Mizpah, for he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.

49 It was also called Mizpah, because Laban said, "May the LORD watch between you and me, when we are estranged from each other.

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

- "...Mizpah" = beacon, or watchtower

— Laban explained that the name means a heap of witness but he added the Hebrew name Mizpah ("watchtower"), entrusting God to watch over them

50 If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, *although* no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me."

50 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."

50 If you mistreat my daughters or if you take other wives besides them, though no one is watching us, keep in mind that God stands as a witness between you and me."

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.

51 Laban also said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the memorial stone which I have set between you and me.

51 Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me.

51 "Look!" Laban added, "Here is the stack of stones and here is the pillar that I've set up between you and me.

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

- 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)

52 This heap is a witness, and the memorial stone 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 memorial stone to me, for harm.

52 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.

52 This stack is a witness, and so is this pillar, reminding me not to cross beyond this stack of stones, and reminding you not to pass by this stack in my direction, intending to cause harm.

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.

- So to cross the boundary would break the covenant, which would render possession of the *teraphim* useless because the covenant would be broken

— However, Jacob didn't care because he didn't know about the *teraphim* yet

53 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**.

53 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.

53 May Abraham's God and Nahor's god judge between us."

So Jacob made an oath by his father's Fear,

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

- "...Nahor" - Abraham's brother

- "...fear of his father Isaac" - *pachad*, used as a name for God

— The fear of the Lord was so central to Isaac's concept of God that one of his names for God was *pachad*, or fear

54 Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his relatives to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

54 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.

54 offered sacrifices there on the mountain, and called on his relatives to eat some food. So they ate the food and spent the night on the mountain.

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.

- Since the "brethren" were his sons, and this was a covenantal meal, it subjugated the sons to the same covenant

— This is likely the reason the sons did not go to Haran to find wives for themselves, since they could not cross that boundary

55 Then early in the morning Laban got up, and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

55 Early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

55 Early the next morning, Laban woke up, kissed his grandchildren and daughters, blessed them, and then left for home.

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.

- Laban does not bless Jacob; in fact, he appears to ignore Jacob

— This is in contrast with their first meeting (29:13)

— Upon Laban's departure, the family at Paddan-Aram disappears from the biblical record

