

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

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

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

In this chapter Jacob is feeling the hostility of Laban and his sons. They resented his success. The Lord tells Jacob to go back home, and He will be with him. How did He speak to Jacob? In a dream (vs. 11).

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

Gen. 31:5 And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

Gen. 31:6 And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

Gen. 31:7 And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

Gen. 31:8 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.

Gen. 31:9 Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me.

Gen. 31:10 And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle *were* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

Gen. 31:11 And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, *saying*, Jacob: And I said, Here *am* I.

Gen. 31:12 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.

Gen. 31:13 I *am* the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, *and* where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

So Jacob sends for Rachel and Leah. They come and he tells them how Laban's attitude has changed toward him. He reminds them how the Lord has protected him and caused him to prosper—in spite of Laban's attempts to cheat him. He then told them that God had told him in a dream that he had caused him to prosper after seeing how Laban had treated him. God reminded him of his vow at Bethel and the pillar he had made in response to his meeting with God there. Then he told them that God wanted him to return to his native land, his home.

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

Gen. 31:15 Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

Gen. 31:16 For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that *is* ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Rachel and Leah told him to do what God had told him. There was no love lost between them and their father. They felt he had sold them for profit and squandered what he had been paid. They felt that they and their children deserved the wealth that God had taken from their father.

Gen. 31:17 Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

Gen. 31:18 And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

Gen. 31:19 And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that *were* her father's.

Gen. 31:20 And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

Gen. 31:21 So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face *toward* the mount Gilead.

So Jacob took his wives and children and all that he owned and headed home to Isaac in the land of Canaan. Jacob left without telling Laban. Before they left, however, Rachel had stolen her father's household gods. This is confusing too. Even though he knew that God was the reason for Jacob's prosperity, Laban still chose to have other gods. Even though Rachel knew that it was God who opened and closed wombs, she wanted to take these gods with her. Maybe it was more to spite her father.

Gen. 31:22 And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled.

Gen. 31:23 And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

Gen. 31:24 And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Gen. 31:25 Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead.

Gen. 31:26 And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives *taken* with the sword?

Gen. 31:27 Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

Gen. 31:28 And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in *so* doing.

Gen. 31:29 It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Gen. 31:30 And now, *though* thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, *yet* wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

Three days later Laban learned they had left. He gathered his relatives together and pursued Jacob for seven days until he caught up with him at Gilead. God had warned Laban in a dream not to speak to Jacob either good or bad. Laban didn't obey very well. First, he chided Jacob for taking off secretly without letting him say proper goodbyes to his daughters and grandchildren. He would have rather given them a going away party. He lets Jacob know that he could yet

overpower him, but “the God of your father” told him not to. Laban even expresses understanding that Jacob would long to go home and see his family. Then he questioned why Jacob had stolen his gods.

Gen. 31:31 And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

Gen. 31:32 With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what *is* thine with me, and take *it* to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

Gen. 31:33 And Laban went into Jacob’s tent, and into Leah’s tent, and into the two maidservants’ tents; but he found *them* not. Then went he out of Leah’s tent, and entered into Rachel’s tent.

Gen. 31:34 Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel’s furniture, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found *them* not.

Gen. 31:35 And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women *is* upon me. And he searched, but found not the images.

Jacob told him he left without notice because he thought Laban would try to keep his daughters by force. Then he boldly stated that anyone found with Laban’s gods would be killed. He challenged Laban to search with all his relatives as witnesses for anything that belonged to him. Jacob did not know that Rachel had taken the gods. So Laban began searching the tents—Jacob’s, Leah’s, and the two maidservants’. When he got to Rachel’s tent, she was sitting on her camel’s saddle where she had hidden the gods. She asked her father to excuse her for not getting up since she was having her “time of the month.” Laban never found the gods.

Gen. 31:36 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?

Gen. 31:37 Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set *it* here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

Gen. 31:38 This twenty years *have* I *been* with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

Gen. 31:39 That which was torn *of* beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night.

Gen. 31:40 *Thus* I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

Gen. 31:41 Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Gen. 31:42 Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

Jacob was very angry for being falsely accused. He reminded Laban that he had been with him for twenty years. He had endured Laban's accusations of stealing and paid for the losses. He worked fourteen years for his two wives and six more years for his flocks—even though Laban had changed his wages ten times. He let Laban know that it was the God of his father and Abraham and “the fear of Isaac” that had been with him and protected him from Laban. That God had seen his hardship and toil and that was why He had rebuked Laban.

It's interesting to me that he identified God as “the fear of Isaac.” It's probably the most telling statement we have of the respect and awe that Isaac must have tried to instill in his sons for God Almighty.

Gen. 31:43 And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, *These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born?*

Gen. 31:44 Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

Gen. 31:45 And Jacob took a stone, and set it up *for* a pillar.

Gen. 31:46 And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

Gen. 31:47 And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

Gen. 31:48 And Laban said, This heap *is* a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;

Gen. 31:49 And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

Gen. 31:50 If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take *other* wives beside my daughters, no man *is* with us; see, God *is* witness betwixt me and thee.

Gen. 31:51 And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold *this* pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

Gen. 31:52 This heap *be* witness, and *this* pillar *be* witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

Gen. 31:53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

Laban declares that all that Jacob has is his. What a prideful statement. He has come a long way from the loving uncle who worried about Jacob working so hard without wages in the beginning. Not only that, he was refusing to recognize that Jacob had earned the right to claim ownership of all that he had with him. Even though he is making this claim, I think he realizes he has no power against Jacob with God on his side. So he asks Jacob to make a covenant with him. So Jacob and Laban built a heap of stones as a witness to their covenant.

Jegarsahadutha = heap of witness; heap of the testimony; an Aramaic (Chaldee or Syriac) word

Galeed = the heap of witness; heap of testimony; a Hebrew word

It is interesting to me that they first ate on the heap of stones. (I wonder if this was based on some kind of custom.) Laban called on God to keep watch when they were apart that Jacob would not mistreat his daughters or take any other wives besides them. The promise included that neither would go past this heap of stones to cause harm to the other. Laban swore by the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor (Laban's grandfather) and Jacob swore by "the fear of his father Isaac."

Gen. 31:54 Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

Gen. 31:55 And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

Now Jacob offers a sacrifice and calls his relatives to eat with him. So they ate and then spent the night together. (Maybe this is the meal referred to in verse 46 since oftentimes things are presented and then expounded upon as scripture continues.) The next morning Laban kissed his daughters and grandchildren and blessed them before returning home.