

## The Book of Genesis

### Lesson Number 53



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

**TRANSLATION LEGEND:** ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot m(1992); ALT=Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED =Amplified Bible (1965), ABP=Apostolic Bible Polygot with Greek Interlinear (2003); ASV=American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), BRENT=Brenton's English Septuagint; CEB =Common English Bible (2011); CEV=Contemporary English Version (1995); DRA=Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV =English Revised Version (1885), ESV=English Stand Version (2001), GENEVA=Geneva Bible (1599), GNB=Good News (1966), GSNT =Goodspeed (1923), GWN =God's Word (1995), IE= International English (1973), ISV=International Standard Version (1967), JPS=Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV=King James Version (1611), LITV= Literal Translation of the Bible (1976), LIVING=Living Bible (1971), MESSAGE=The Message (1993), MKJV= Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY=Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD=Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB=New American Bible (2002), NASB=New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU=New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version (1984), NJB=New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV=New King James Version (1979), NLT=New Living Translation (1996), NRSV=New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS=J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT=Bishop's New Testament (1595), RSV=Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK=JPS Tanakj (1985), WEB=Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH=Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS=William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE=Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE=Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862)

**----- GREEK LEXICON LEGEND -----**

LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = Barclay-Newman, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS: THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH, MANKIND, SIN, THE FIRST CHOSEN AND BLESSED NATION, THE FIRST CURSE, THE FIRST PROMISE, AND THE FIRST FAITH.

**DISCLAIMER:** The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

# JACOB LEAVES LABAN AND LABAN PURSUES HIM #2

Gen 31:26 <sup>1</sup> "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? <sup>27</sup> 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? <sup>28</sup> And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? <sup>31</sup> "And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> And Jacob was wroth, and chided 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? <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> 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 labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight. <sup>43</sup> 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? <sup>44</sup> Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. <sup>45</sup> And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. <sup>46</sup> And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. <sup>47</sup> And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. <sup>48</sup> And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; <sup>49</sup> And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. <sup>50</sup> 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. <sup>51</sup> And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee; <sup>52</sup> 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. <sup>53</sup> 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. <sup>54</sup> 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. <sup>55</sup> 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 makes false charges against Jacob, who answers them and challenges Laban to find proof of his claims, recounting his faithful service. They make a covenant – Given O. Blakely

## INTRODUCTION

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#### A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE TEXT

Laban charges Jacob with taking his daughter, sons, and animals, also relating how God had warned him not to speak from good to bad to Jacob. He particularly asked about his gods being stolen. Not knowing Rachel had taken them, Jacob challenged Laban to search his camp and find them—which search was in vain, for Rachel was sitting on them. Jacob is angry with Laban and relates his experience with him, stating he had in no way abused his stewardship. None of Laban’s flock had miscarried, he had eaten none of them, and he bore the loss of those who were killed by wild beasts. He was consumed by drought in the day, and frost at night, yet was faithful in his service. He reminded Laban that he had been in his house for twenty years, and Laban had changed his wages ten times, not standing by their agreement. He said God had stood by him, and rebuked Laban the night before. After some dialogue, Laban yielded, and they made a covenant not to harm one another. The next day, after a night’s rest, Laban left.

#### THE PLACE OF TRIAL IN THE LIVES OF THE CHOSEN ONES

Beginning with Abraham, we are confronted more extensively with the fact of the trial of faith trial. There was

a sense in which Noah, so far as the record is concerned, was tried by the test of time. However the record never made a point of being tried. This does not suggest he was not tried. **However, it strongly suggests that the concept of trial would be developed in the lives of others – particularly those to whom more of the Person and purpose of God was revealed. It all began with Abraham.**

#### ABRAHAM’S TRIALS

- ▶ **CONFRONTED FAMINE.** Upon arriving in the promised land, Abraham immediately faced a consuming famine, and had to go to Egypt to survive (Gen 12:10-11).
- ▶ **INTENTIONS OF PHARAOH.** Upon arriving in Egypt the attractiveness of Sarah drew the attention of Pharaoh, and he took her into his household (Gen 12:14-20).
- ▶ **FRICION BETWEEN HIS HERDMEN AND THOSE OF LOT.** After returning with Lot from Egypt, strife arose between their herdmen because the land could not sustain the flocks of both Abraham and Lot (Gen 13:7-13).
- ▶ **NOT KNOWING THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH HE WOULD REALIZE “SEED.”** Although God promised him offspring when he first called him, Abraham did not know he himself would beget the seed until he returned to Canaan from Egypt, and had been there for some time (Gen 15:1-4). This was a special trial.
- ▶ **PERSONAL IMPOTENCE.** After Abraham received the word that he himself would beget the promised see, he had to face the fact of his own impotence (Gen 17:17; Rom 4:18-19). This trial lasted several years.
- ▶ **INTENTIONS OF ABIMELECH.** When Abraham was journeying in Gerar, king Abimelech thought to take Sarah as his wife, and took her into his house (Gen 20:1-18).

▶ **NOT BEING TOLD SARAH WOULD BEAR HIS “SEED.”** It was not until the year before Isaac was born that Abraham was told Sarah was the one who would conceive and give birth to the promised seed (Gen (Gen 17:21; 18:10).

▶ **SARAH’S BARRENNESS.** From the time Abraham married Sarah, she was barren, remaining so until the year before Isaac’s birth, probably about sixty years (Gen 11:30; Rom 4:19).

▶ **TEST OF TIME.** From the time of the promise of a seed (Gen 12:2,7) until Isaac was born was twenty-five years (Gen 12:4; 25:1).

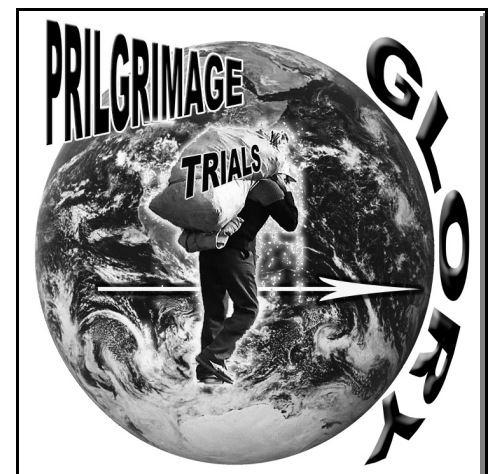
▶ **WHEN COMMANDED TO OFFER UP ISAAC.** When Isaac was a grown man, God commanded Abraham to offer him as a burnt offering (Gen 22:1-19).

▶ **OBTAINING A WIFE FOR ISAAC.** In order to perpetuate his seed, Isaac had to have a wife. Yet, there was no one in Canaan that qualified. He therefore sent his servant to Haran, to his own kindred (through Nahor) to obtain a wife (Gen 24:1-61).

#### ISAAC’S TRIALS

▶ **THE BARRENNESS OF REBEKAH.** Even though God had promised him seed, Isaac’s wife, Rebekah was found to be barren (Gen 25:21).

▶ **THE CONTENTION OF JACOB AND ESAU,**



AND HAVING TO LEARN GOD FAVORED JACOB. Isaac had to deal with difficulties caused by the contention between Jacob and Esau. He also had to learn that God favored Jacob, while he had favored Esau (Gen 25:26-34; 27:1-18:4)

➔ **CONFRONTING A FAMINE.** After the birth and manhood of Jacob and Esau, there was another famine in Canaan, just as their was during the days of Abraham (Gen 26:1-8).

➔ **ENCOUNTERING THE ENVY OF THE PHILISTINES.** God did not permit Isaac to go down into Egypt during this famine, but commanded him to stay in the land, and he did, living in Gerar (Gen 26:1-6). During that time he encountered the envy of the Philistines (Gen 26:12-14).

➔ **THE WELLS PREVIOUSLY DUG BY ABRAHAM HAD BEEN STOPPED UP BY THE PHILISTINES.** Isaac prospered and grew in spite of the fact that the wells that had been dug in the land had been stopped up by the Philistines (Gen 26:15).

➔ **SEEING THE PROSPERITY OF ISAAC, ABIMELECH ASKED HIM TO LEAVE.** Fearing the greatness of Isaac, Abimelech asked him to leave the territory (Gen 26:16-17).

➔ **OPPOSITION THE HERDMEN OF GERAR.** When Isaac again dug the wells that had been stopped, the herdmen of Gerar contended for them, saying they were theirs (Gen 26:18-20).

wells in the valley, the herdmen of Gerar again contended for the wells (Gen 26:19-21).

➔ **UPON THE INSISTENCE OF ABIMELECH, A COVENANT WAS MADE WITH ISAAC.** Not willing to leave them alone, Abimelech insisted on a covenant being made between himself and Isaac, that they would not harm each other – even though Isaac was a peaceful man (Gen 26:26-33).

### JACOB'S TRIALS

➔ **THREAT OF ESAU.** After the birthright blessing was given to Jacob, Esau hated Jacob and threatened to kill him (Gen 27:41).

➔ **TRICKERY OF LABAN IN GIVING HIM LEAH INSTEAD OF RACHEL.** After working for seven years for Rachel, according to his agreement with Laban, her father, Laban gave Jacob Leah – and did not even tell him he did so. (Gen 29:23-25)

➔ **HAVING TO LABOR SEVEN YEARS MORE FOR RACHEL..** After he had given a convoluted explanation, Laban said he would give Rachel to Jacob for seven more years of labor (Gen 29:29:26-29).

➔ **HAVING TO LABOR SIX YEARS TO OBTAIN SOMETHING FOR HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY.** When it came time to leave, Jacob pointed out that he had gained nothing for his family, and that this ought to be done. Laban agreed he could earn the wages he wanted by serving him for six more

favor of Rachel, and Rachel envied Leah because she had given Jacob children, while she could not (Gen 29:33; 30:1).

➔ **THE CHALLENGE OF OBTAINING A LEGITIMATE FLOCK.** After Laban agreed to giving Jacob the portion or the existing flock, and its increase, that were spotted, speckled, and ringstreaked, Jacob had to think of a way to increase the flocks in his favor (Gen 30:35-43).

➔ **THE CHANGING OF HIS WAGES TEN TIMES.** Although Laban had previously agreed on the wages to be paid Jacob, he changed his wages ten times (Gen 31:7,41).

➔ **FACING LABAN AFTER HE SECRETLY LEFT HARAN.** After Jacob had left Laban with his household and flocks, Laban caught up with him. Jacob had to again face the scoundrel and stand his ground (Gen 31:25-41).

➔ **DURING THE TIME JACOB KEPT LABAN'S FLOCKS HE ENDURED HARDSHIP.** While he was tending Laban's flocks, Jacob was consumed by drought, endured frost at night, and could not sleep. When he was hungry, he did not eat any of Laban's flocks. Additionally, he absorbed the loss of animals that were torn by beasts, or were stolen during the day or night (Gen31:38-40).

### WHAT HAS BEEN MADE KNOWN

➔ That the fulness of the blessing only comes after a period of trial (1 Pet 5:10).

➔ That when a person is called of God, he is at once set at enmity with the world (John 15:18-19; 1 John 3:13).

➔ That trials sift out pretenders and supplanters – like Ishmael and Esau (Jer 6:29-30).

➔ That true faith is, in fact, tried (1 Pet 1:7).

➔ That faith grows stronger through

**There is a reason why these facts have been made known. Remember, In the Scriptural records of God's dealings with men He is teaching is about Himself – particularly as it regards His workings among men.**

➔ **AFTER DIGGING MORE WELLS, THE HERDMEN OF GERAR STILL CONTENDED WITH THEM.** When they dug additional

years (Gen 30:31-36).

➔ **COMPETITIVENESS IN THE HOUSE.** Leah felt as though she was neglected in

trials (1 Pet 1:7).

- ➔ That trials, when addressed in faith, confirm the faithfulness of God (1 Cor 10:13).
- ➔ That fiery and difficult trials are not a “strange thing” (1 Pet 4:12).
- ➔ That faith will carry a person through trial (Heb 11:27).
- ➔ That there are cruel and difficult trials (Heb 11:36-38).
- ➔ A great work for the glory of God can be wrought during a trial (2 Cor

8:2).

There is a reason why these facts have been made known. Remember, In the Scriptural records of God’s dealings with men He is teaching is about Himself – particularly as it regards His workings among men. **In fact, we have no substantial knowledge about God until He created man, together with his environment.** Although God is “eternal” (Deut 33:27), or “everlasting” (Gen 21:33; Psa 90:2; Isa 40:28) we only have factual information about Him **after** the commencement of project-humanity. We know that the purpose being worked out among men is an

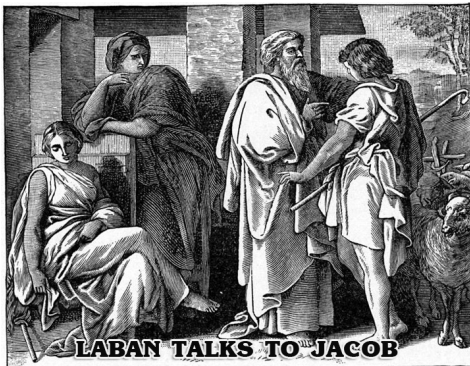
“eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11). It is true that we have a record of the response of the Lord Jesus to that purpose BEFORE He came into the world (Heb 10:5-10). But that revelation was only given after over four thousand years of human history.

All of this is confirmed in the lives of men and women of faith – that is why their record has been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In that record, God is teaching us of His Person and ways. He is confirming why faith is essential, and that it is thoroughly adequate for all of life. The record itself is teaching us about the God of heaven.

## AND LABAN SAID TO JACOB

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? <sup>27</sup> 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? <sup>28</sup> And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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 is a notable example of



religious flesh. He boasted of having some knowledge of God (Gen 24:50; 30:27; 31:51-53), but could not consistently reason with Him in mind. His preeminent interest concerned himself and his possessions. This man has a lot of offspring in the nominal churches – people who think like him.

### LABAN CHARGES JACOB WITH TAKING WHAT BELONGED TO HIM

*“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? Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me . . .”*

Laban charged that Jacob had taken his daughters away like captives, forced to go with him at the point of the sword. Actually, Jacob consulted with Rachel and Leah before leaving, and obtained their willing consent (Gen 31:4-14). Further, they did not have a high estimation of their father, but had witnessed his lack of justice and selfish ways in his conduct toward them.

In Laban’s eyes, he was not lying. He really did not know that he was of a fundamentally different disposition than his own daughters. Further, although he had witnessed the faithfulness and

industry of Jacob, and declared that he had learned by experience that God has blessed him because of Jacob, **yet he was unable to associate all of that with this circumstance.**

In Laban we see the travesty of the carnal mind, or mind of the flesh. **While it makes all manner of judgments and pronouncements, it is always wrong, and out of synch with the mind of the Lord.** There is such a staggering amount of this kind of thinking in the professed Christian world that it defies any attempt to justify it.

### LABAN SAID HE WOULD HAVE SENT HIM AWAY WITH A GREAT FANFARE

*“ . . . that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp? And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. . .”*

To hear Laban, you would have thought he was a caring, generous, and thoughtful man. But this was not the case at all. His statement is a totally false representation of himself.

His agreement with Jacob was that he would work for the wages of flocks for his own. The means of identifying what would be given to

Jacob was clearly spelled out. It would not be a certain percentage of the flock, but all of the flock that met the criteria of being spotted, speckled, and ringstreaked – not solid colored animals. No agreement had been made as to how long the laboring period would be. The number of animals that would be given to Jacob consisted of the ones that were in the flocks being kept for him by Laban’s sons.

Six years had now passed, and Laban had not showed any interest at all in tallying up what was owed to Jacob. His sons had an altogether inappropriate assessment of what had taken place. Laban’s attitude toward Jacob was not the same as it was before – and it was not ideal before. It ought to have been apparent to him that sufficient flocks had been formed for Jacob to leave. However, it appears clear from his actions that he really never planned for Jacob to return to Canaan.

To hear this hypocritical speech, you would have thought Laban had a high regard for his daughters and their children. However, this claim was nothing more than talk. His daughters had properly assessed his real attitude toward them:

- ➔ There was no inheritance left for them (Gen 31:14).
- ➔ Laban had treated them like strangers, or foreigners (Gen 31:15a).
- ➔ He had sold them (Gen 31:15b)
- ➔ He had devoured their money (Gen 31:15c).
- ➔ It was God who took away Laban’s riches and gave them to Jacob (Gen 31:16).

**LABAN SAYS HE COULD HURT JACOB, BUT GOD TOLD HIM NOT TO**

*“ . . . 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.”*

**Now Laban will represent himself as yielding to the word of God, even though he really did not have to do so. However, this was a foolish claim. God was fully able to subdue, and even destroy, Laban with but a word. The warning he issued to Laban was a word of mercy – strictly undeserved mercy!**

**Laban did not realize that God had taken such power from him.**

**It Is In the Power of My Hand to Do You Hurt**

Other versions read, *“I have the power to harm you,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“I have the power to punish you,”* <sup>CEB</sup> *“I am able to do you evil,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“I could destroy you,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“I could crush you,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“and now [is strong my hand] to do evil against you,”* <sup>ABP</sup> *“my hand has power to hurt thee,”* <sup>BRENTON</sup> *“I could easily hurt you,”* <sup>CEV</sup> *“It’s actually in my power to do some serious evil to you,”* <sup>ISV</sup> *“If I had a mind to, I could destroy you right now,”* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> and *“my hand is to God to do evil with you.”* <sup>YLT</sup>

This is a most arrogant claim. There are several ways of viewing the statement.

- ➔ Laban had made a vow to God to destroy Jacob.
- ➔ Laban’s hand was to him what Jacob’s God was to him – or he could really do so if he wanted to.
- ➔ As the Targum states, *“I HAVE AN ARMY AND A MULTITUDE WITH ME.”* <sup>JOHN GILL</sup>

**Now Laban will represent himself as yielding to the word of God, even though he really did not have to do so.** However, this was a foolish claim. God was fully able to subdue, and even destroy, Laban with but a word. The warning he issued to Laban was a word of mercy – strictly undeserved mercy!

**But the God of Your Father**

Laban does not refer to *“the Almighty God”* (Gen 17:1), *“the God of heaven”* (Gen 24:3), *“the True God”* (2

Chron 15:3), *“the Eternal God”* (Deut 33:27), and surely not to *“my God”* (Gen 28:21). Instead, he refers to *“the God of your father”* [Isaac].

**Spake to Me Yesternight**

Laban actually refers to what God had told him in a dream (Gen 31:24). According to the record, God did not identify Himself to Laban as the God of Isaac. He had, however, identified Himself to Jacob in that manner – *“the God of Isaac”* (Gen 28:13).

Laban states precisely what the Lord had said to him: *“Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad”* (Gen 31:29,24). It takes a deviate mind to think that what Laban had said honored what God had said to him. Yet, I do not doubt that Laban thought not doing physical harm to Jacob fulfilled the word of the Lord. Yet, God did not say to refrain from doing harm, but from **speaking** it!

**Here we see how the carnal mind thinks. It assigns the most virtue and control to self, not to God.** Laban does not confess that what God said was right – only that he feigned himself to give honor to it because He was the God of Jacob’s father.

**YOU LONGED FOR YOUR FATHER’S**

*“And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father’s house. . .”* Other versions read, *“greatly long for your father’s house,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“longed to return to your father’s house,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“you have gone off because you long for your father,”* <sup>CSB</sup> *“because you were so homesick”* <sup>GWN</sup> and *“though you feel you must go, and long so intensely for your childhood home.”* <sup>LIVING</sup>

Laban did not understand Jacob, who thought on a vastly differing level. Jacob no doubt did have longings to be with his father again. However, even that secondary yearning was not for his father's "house," but for Isaac himself.

What Jacob was desiring was the fulfillment of the commission Isaac gave him: find a wife and return to inherit the

We should not be surprised when worldly people think we live as we do because we hope to gain worldly advantage, or because we want to please our parents, live close to them, etc. It is not that such things are wrong. **Rather they are not primary motives, but are in subjection to our desires to serve the Lord.**

ready to dismiss the fact that Jacob left him. To him, there was some, explanation for these things. But he could think of no reason why Jacob would steal his gods. He certainly knew that Jacob did not serve them, nor have any inclination toward them.

#### Lesson to Be Learned

There are some things that even the heathen and unbelieving do not expect the saints to do. **We should give diligence to ensure that these things are not found in our lives.** Their presence negates any testimony we may give.

Apostolic writings have this in mind when they read, "*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men*" (Rom 14:17-18). And again, "*But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*" (2 Cor 4:2). And again, "*Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men*" (2 Cor 8:21). And again, "*Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ*" (1 Pet 3:16).

It is a sad when the wicked can lay a legitimate charge against the saints of God. No one professing identity with Christ should be indifferent about whether or not they are holy. The light of holiness should be so evident in them that all can see it (Phil 2:15-26). Jesus referred to this when He spoke of our light shining (Matt 5"16).

**Laban did not understand Jacob, who thought on a vastly differing level. Jacob no doubt did have longings to be with his father again. However, even that secondary yearning was not for his father's "house," but for Isaac himself.**

land "which God gave unto Abraham" (Gen 28:4). Primarily, he had sensed that the fulfillment of the obtaining of a wife, children, and possessions, was the time for God's promise to be fulfilled: "*And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*" (Gen 28:15). Now he had again heard from God who spoke very pointedly ,to him: "*Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee*" (Gen 31:3).

That was the real reason why Jacob was returning. However Laban did not have a heart that could understand this. He thought Jacob was motivated by self-interests like himself.

#### An Application

#### WHY HAVE YOU STOLEN MY GODS?

" . . .yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?" Other versions read, "Why did you steal my gods?" <sup>NKJV</sup> "Why have you taken my gods?" <sup>BBE</sup> "Why have you stolen my idols," <sup>LIVING</sup> "why did you steal my household gods?" <sup>GW</sup>

You have to admit that a person has certainly fallen on hard times if someone steals his gods! **That surely confirms the absolute helplessness and powerlessness of the gods to keep themselves – much less to keep those who trust in them.** Again, Laban is unable to see the stupidity of the charge – first that Jacob had stolen anything, and secondly that he was wise and strong enough to steal Laban's "gods."

Notice how quickly Laban left the matter of his daughters. He was even

## JACOB ANSWERS LABAN

*"<sup>31</sup> And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.<sup>32</sup> 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."*

#### I WAS AFRAID

*"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 is Jacob's answer to Laban's question, "Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me?" (Gen 31:27)

**"I was afraid"**

Other versions read, "My fear was that you might take your daughters from me by force,"<sup>BBE</sup> "I was afraid and convinced myself that you would take your daughters away from me,"<sup>CEB</sup> "I was afraid; for I said, Lest at any time thou shouldst take away thy daughters from me, and all my possessions"<sup>SEPTUAGINT</sup> "I was afraid, for I said, Lest thou take violently away thy daughters from me."<sup>YLT</sup>

Jacob was not disposed to think of Laban as being kindly disposed to send him and his wives away with feasting and joy. Laban had certainly not left that impression by means of his conduct toward Jacob for the last twenty years.

It is said that Laban "took his brethren with him" when he pursued Jacob (Gen 31:23). Other versions read, "taking several men with him,"<sup>LIVING</sup> and "his kinsmen."<sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> This could have been a considerable number of men, coming to overpower Jacob, which is exactly what he said he feared. In other words, Jacob did not have the manpower to force Laban to let him go, and he was sure Laban would not consent to it. Therefore he left secretly.

It might be argued that this certainly was not an ideal situation, for those in Christ are reminded, "for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb 13:6). **However, this manner of reasoning was in the process of being developed among the godly.** We should not expect saints living in spiritually primitive times to conduct themselves as though they were living in the blazing glory of the Son of God.

This is only the second time in Scripture that some one is reported to have said, "I was afraid." The first took place when Adam said to God, "**I was afraid because I was naked**" (Gen 3:10).

Others have confessed to being afraid.

- ➔ Moses once said to Israel, "**For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also**" (Deut 9:19).
- ➔ When Job thought he had been abandoned by God, or was being punished for some unknown reason, he said, "**For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me**" (Job 3:25).
- ➔ When young Elihu was with other friends of Job, he had something to say. However, because of his youth he said, "**I am young, and ye are very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you mine opinion**" (Job 32:6).
- ➔ It is written of Lot, "**And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters**

to look upon" (Gen 26:7).

- ➔ When Gideon was commanded by God to throw down the altar of Baal and build an altar to God, he "**took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him: and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night**" (Judg 6:27).
- ➔ Several times it is written that fear "fell on" the people (1 Sam 11:7; 2 Chron 17:10; Lk 1:12; Acts 5:5; 19:17).
- ➔ David spoke of people fearing because God was in the generation of the righteous: "**There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous**" (Psa 14:5). Again he wrote of fear coming upon people because of God's judgments (Psa 53:5).
- ➔ When Daniel was confronted by Gabriel the angel, he said, "**So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision**" (Dan 8:17).

**When considering what is involved in fearing, I found an attempt at definition to be very difficult. To me, most academic definitions are not satisfying.**

*with him; for he feared to dwell in Zoar: and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters" (Gen 19:30).*

- ➔ When Isaac was dwelling in Gerar, he asked his wife Rebekah to say she was his sister, "**for he feared to say, She is my wife; lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair**

- ➔ When Jesus cast a legion of demons out of the Gadarene demoniac, the people were "**taken with great fear**" (Lk 8:37).

- ➔ When Ananias and Sapphira were stricken dead for their trespass, "**great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things**" (Acts 5:11).

**What Does It Mean to Fear?**

Precisely what does it mean when it says a person or persons “feared,” or was “afraid?” As used in our text, the word “afraid” itself means, “TO FRIGHTEN, DREAD.” <sup>STRONG’S</sup> In the New Covenant writings, “fear” means “ALARM OR FRIGHT . . . TERROR.” <sup>STRONG’S</sup> When considering what is involved in fearing, I found an attempt at definition to be very difficult. **To me, most academic definitions are not satisfying.** I will therefore make an attempt to define what is meant by “fear.”

- ➔ Fear is a dread that comes over a person when they face something or someone that is obviously bigger and stronger than themselves.
- ➔ Fear can be a dread that comes upon person when they face something or someone that can have a destructive effect upon them, and there is nothing they can do about it, either to neutralize or remove it.
- ➔ When confronting God or a representative of God, fear is sparked by the an acute consciousness of being at variance with the Lord, who is stronger.
- ➔ Fear results when something or someone that cannot be controlled by the individual is confronted.

**In a nutshell, so to speak, fear is a reaction to something that can be adversarial, yet is absolutely superior to the person.** There is no way to confront such a potential adversary or danger in the energy of self. The person who knows this “fears.”

Jacob was afraid of Laban because he felt himself to be inferior in strength and resources, and unable to successfully defend himself, his wives, his children, and his possessions. One might argue that Jacob should have sought the Lord, or relied upon His promise to be with Him. And, indeed, if he had been living in times like ours, this would certainly have been true.

To the point of our text, Jacob had three encounters with either God or a holy angel.

- ➔ A dream, (a full twenty years before the events of this text) in which God said to him, “*And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the*

15).

- ➔ At the commencement of this episode God said to Jacob, “*And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee*” (Gen 31:3).
- ➔ Around six years previously, when the goats and sheep began to breed, in a dream, an angel said to Jacob “*Jacob . . . Lift up now thine 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*” (Gen 31:12).
- ➔ At that same time, God said to him: “*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*” (Gen 31:13).

Ideally speaking, though very sparse, that should have been enough for allay the fears of Jacob. God did say, “*I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest*” (Gen 28:15). Twenty years later God said to him, “*I will be with thee*” (Gen 31:3).

Reading these texts without an awareness of the time-gaps involved might move a person to marvel that Jacob did not reason that he would be safe. **However, a lack of extended familiarity with God makes it very difficult to draw valid conclusions.** Whereas Abraham excelled in this matter, Jacob, at this time, did not. **That is why Abraham is set forth as the supreme example of faith** – not Isaac, and not Jacob (Rom 4:9,12-13,16; Gal 3:7-9,14). It is not that Abraham was, by nature, more sensitive than Jacob. Rather, it is that **God raised him to be a display of faith**, and thus spoke to him more extensively, and more in detail (Gen 12:1-3,7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-23; 18:1-33; 21:12-13; 22:1-18). **This more wide-ranging revelation enabled Abraham to reason more extensively and to see things with greater clarity.** All of this was because

**In a nutshell, so to speak, fear is a reaction to something that can be adversarial, yet is absolutely superior to the person. There is no way to confront such a potential adversary or danger in the energy of self. The person who knows this “fears.”**

Some related words may assist in deciphering some of the involvements of fear. They include the following: FAINTHEARTED, APPREHENSIVE, DISCONCERTED, DISQUIETED, DISTURBED, JITTERY, JUMPY, NERVOUS, PANICKY, PERTURBED, SKITTISH, UNEASY, UPSET, WORRIED; APPALLED, DISMAYED, SHOCKED, STARTLED; INTIMIDATED, UNNERVED; WARY.

*families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of”* (Gen 28:31-



God raised him up as the premier example of faith. In him we see how faith thrives on what God has said, so that the more a person is exposed the word of the Lord, the more potential there is in faith.

From another perspective, the truth of the matter is that man's natural constitution is very weak. Without some kind of Divine intervention, there are situations that men simply cannot handle. When they are convinced of this they fear, have dread, and sometimes even tremble.

**TAKE YOUR GODS IF YOU CAN FIND THEM**

*" . . . 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. . . "*

Jacob is so confident that the gods to which Laban refers are not with him, that he hurls out an angry challenge to him: *"But if you find anyone who has your gods, he shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it."* <sup>NIV</sup>

Jacob declares that if Laban's images are found with anyone in his camp, they will die. **To Jacob it is odious, and disgustingly objectionable to hear Laban say he had stolen some of his images.** This is not the kind of thing Jacob would do, again confirming that he was not a deceiver and a trickster as some have alleged,

**JACOB DID NOT KNOW**

*" . . . For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them."*

Rachel had managed to conceal the theft from Jacob, else he never would have said what he did. This action also suggests that Rachel did not take the images to remove temptation from her father, as some claim.

It appears as though Rachel still held to the idea that these idols represented real gods from whom direction, or some form of benefit,

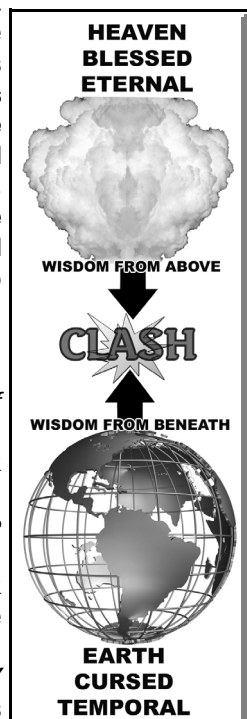
**VIEWS OF RACHEL'S THEFT**

*"Rachel's motive for abstracting her father's teraphim has been variously ascribed to a desire to prevent her father from discovering, by inquiring at his gods, the direction of their flight (Aben Ezra, Rosenmüller), to protect herself, in case, of being overtaken, by an appeal to her father's gods (Josephus), to draw her father from the practice of idolatry (Basil, Gregory, Nazianzen, Theodoret). . ."*

could be received. Of course, this should not surprise us, for in this day of salvation there were some believers in Corinth that were persuaded there were really other gods, even though they should not be worshiped (1 Cor 8:2-7). Although they were not seeking aid from such gods, Paul taught that they could very well do so if the more matured believers did not conduct themselves wisely. For example, if they procured meat from the market that had been offered to idols, these weaker brethren might conclude that the idols were real gods, and that their brethren were worshiping them. **The concept of a false god and the knowledge of the true God, however, cannot be blended.**

**EXPOSURE TO THE LIE**

The human race fell after being exposed to a lie (Gen 3:2-24). Satan himself is a liar, and the father of lies, and he works most intensely in the environment of lies (John 8:44). **It is not possible to be willingly subjected to religious lies, and not in some way be impacted by them.** This is so because Satan works through lies, not God. God, being the *"God of truth"* (Deut 32:4), does not work through a lie. Jesus, being *"the truth"* (John 14:6), does not work through lies. The Holy Spirit, being the *"Spirit of truth"* (John 14:17) does



not do His work through lies. Any influence wrought through a lie can only be traced back to Satan, who blinds men's minds. This ought to be clear enough to require no further explanation.

**Satan works in people today, tempting them to shift the emphasis to man's wisdom instead of God's.** He does this by enticing people to think there is still a place for worldly wisdom in the church, even though it is clearly stated, *"For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God"* (1 Cor 3:19). For it is written, *"He taketh the wise in their own craftiness"* (Job 5:13). And again, *"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain,"* (Job 11:11-12), and yet again, *"Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours"* (1 Cor 3:21).

Let it be clear that there is a wisdom that *"is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic"* (James 3:15, NIV). Such wisdom is most clearly epitomized in the propagation of false gods and their religion. For example, it simply cannot be of any spiritual advantage to rehearse the tenets of false religion, particularly where the Lord Jesus Christ is not viewed as He is declared in the Gospel – the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11).

In spite of the clear statements found in God's Word on this matter, there is a near-total consistency in religious education to subject students to the wisdom of the world in order to broaden their intellectual perspective. While this is a matter that cannot be settled by legislation, there is a crying need for men with spiritual insight to speak up on this issue. In the institutional church, the number of things that are deliberately borrowed from the world are many. They are found at every level of religious activity.

In recent years, since the 9/11 attack on the United States, it has become fashionable for churches to have classes on the Muslim religion and Islam. This would be like Moses holding

classes on the religion of the Egyptians, or Joshua holding classes on the various religions of the nations Israel was to drive out of Canaan. For that matter, who could imagine Jesus or His Apostles giving instruction on the gods of the Romans, the Asians, the Grecians, etc.

Does any person of sound mind really think that receiving information about heathen religions and false gods produces any protection for the

believer, or better equips them to resist the devil and fight the good fight of faith? Is there any person who can affirm that a message Satan uses to delude and finally damn people, can really be read or heard by believers without bringing them within range of his influence? Would the Ephesians have been the better if they did not burn their books of curious arts (Acts 19:19), but kept them in order to show others the errors inherent in the occultism arts?

I respectfully call upon those who follow practices such as I have mentioned to justify submitting the people of God to such things. Precisely what is the reasoning that has brought anyone to the conclusion that this produces any kind of spiritual advantage? Or that it edifies, which is the objective of every Christian assembly (1 Cor 14:26). Are the saints really built up by hearing a delineation of the words and practices of those who worship false gods?

## LABAN MAKES DILIGENT SEARCH

*"<sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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. <sup>35</sup> 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."*

### LABAN COULD NOT FIND THE IDOLS

*"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. <sup>34</sup> 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. . ."*

Persuaded that her was going to find his stolen idols, Laban diligently searches the tents in this apparent order: Jacob, Bilhah, and Zilpah, and last Leah. Upon leaving Leah's tent, the text says that he entered Rachel's tent.

I see the vanity of the search as the result of God's protection of Jacob. This was in fulfillment of His promise to keep Jacob "in all places" wherever he went (Gen 28:15). Even though the circumstances were not ideal, God

**I see the vanity of the search as the result of God's protection of Jacob. This was in fulfillment of His promise to keep Jacob "in all places" wherever he went (Gen 28:15). Even though the circumstances were not ideal, God intended to bring Jacob back to Canaan, the promised land. Laban would not be able to interfere with this return.**

intended to bring Jacob back to Canaan, the promised land. Laban would not be able to interfere with this return.

### RACHEL'S RESPONSE

*"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." Other versions read, "the manner of women," <sup>NKJV</sup> "I'm having my period," <sup>NIV</sup> "the way of women," <sup>NRSV</sup> "the common condition of women" <sup>BBE</sup> "I'm having my monthly period," <sup>LIVING</sup> "I am having my monthly time of bleeding," <sup>ERV</sup> "It's that time of the month," <sup>ISV</sup> and "the period of women is upon me and I am unwell." <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>*

The literal translation of the text is, "that way of women to me." <sup>INTERLINEAR</sup> The Hebrew words would translate this way: "MANNER" (DEREK) "BELONGING TO WOMAN" (ISHSHAH). <sup>WTM MORPHOLOGY</sup>

### A Point About Translation

Some versions clearly interpret this verse, as compared with translating it. In this case, it may seem to be rather harmless, and I would not contest that observation. However, this once again displays an unacceptable approach to translating the Word of God. **When men insert their understanding into Scripture, however harmless it may appear, the result of their effort is that the text is no longer Scripture.** If, when Scripture was given by the inspiration of God, men were not allowed to put it in their own words. Who would dare to postulate that they are free to use such methodologies now? Peter is quite clear about this. **"Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"** (2 Pet 1:20-21). That is, **what was is written was not the writer's interpretation of what was revealed.** That is, no prophecy that is written

(Scripture) came about by the prophet's own interpretation. He did not pen what he thought the revelation meant.

When Jesus dwelt among men, the scribes and the Pharisees had imposed their own understanding upon the Scripture, binding it upon men as though their understanding was inspired. Jesus said they were *"making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye"* (Mark 7:13). And again, *"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition"* (Matt 15:6).

The intention of Scripture itself is not to communicate the mind of God in the manner that is most easily understood by the people. The intention is to communicate most precisely the mind and intent of the Lord. It is quite possible that the mind of the Lord cannot possibly be comprehended by the hearer or reader—i.e. *"Justification," "sanctification," "holiness," "predestinated," "faith," "atonement," "redemption," "baptism," "reconciliation," "Holy Spirit,"* etc. The purpose of preachers and teachers is to proclaim what God intends by these terms, which are all unique to Scripture.

All of this confirms that worldly wisdom, as reflected in attempts to pawn off an interpreted Bible on the masses, cannot be effectively merged with the wisdom of God. Nor, indeed, can it be an effective filter through which the Word is caused to pass.

Even when it comes to preachers and teachers expounding the Scripture, unlike the words of Scripture itself, their words must be tested, and their message tried (Luke 12:57; 1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

## JACOB WAS WROTH AND CHIDED WITH LABAN

**This is a case where Jacob was angry, but sinned not in an action of aggression or inflammatory words. His retort confirms he did not have a dreadful fear of Laban, else he would have timidly have hung his head.**

*"<sup>36</sup> And Jacob was wroth, and chided 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? <sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> 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. <sup>39</sup> 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. <sup>40</sup> Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. <sup>41</sup> 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. <sup>42</sup> 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 labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight."*

### JACOB WAS WROTH

*"And Jacob was wroth, and chided with Laban . . ."* Other versions read, *"Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban,"* <sup>NKJV</sup> *"contended with,"* <sup>NASB</sup> *"took Laban to task,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"upbraided Laban,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> *"complained to Laban,"* <sup>CEB</sup> *"started arguing,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"became incensed and brought charges"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"disputed,"* <sup>DARBY</sup> *"berated,"* <sup>ESV</sup> *"confronted Laban,"* <sup>GWN</sup> *"strove with,"* <sup>JPS</sup> *"Argued with,"* <sup>NET</sup> *"challenged,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"took up his grievance,"* <sup>TNK</sup> *"got mad . . . demanded of Laban,"* <sup>LIVING</sup> *"provoked to anger . . . quarreled,"* <sup>ABP</sup> *"berated,"* <sup>ESV</sup> *"lost his temper . . . asked angrily,"* <sup>GNB</sup> *and "reproached and argued with."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word translated *"wroth"* means: *"TO BE HOT, FURIOUS, BURN, BECOME ANGRY, BE KINDLED."* <sup>STRONG'S</sup> The word translated *"chided"* means: *"TO STRIVE, CONTEND . . . STRIVE WITH WORDS . . . TO CONDUCT A CASE OR SUIT . . . TO MAKE COMPLAINT . . . TO QUARREL . . . CONTEND AGAINST."* <sup>STRONG'S</sup>

This is a case where Jacob was angry, but sinned not in an action of aggression or inflammatory words. His retort confirms he did not have a dreadful fear of Laban, else he would have timidly have hung his head. In other words, Jacob was not a timid "momma's boy" as some have painted him. Jacob was here infuriated and spoke without any apparent fear or intimidation. It probably surprised Laban, who had been taking advantage of Jacob for years.

### Something About Human Nature

We learn something about human nature here, and of man's capacity to retaliate. It is as though there is some kind of natural limit beyond which a person cannot be pressed. This is, in my view, a Divine arrangement that keeps the race from living in a state of uncontrollable violence and disorder.

Many have learned about this aspect of the human nature the hard way – that men can reach a kind of breaking point where they will retaliate. This accounts for the stunning

retaliatory response of some who have been bullied, and appeared as though were incapable of any kind of aggression. Yet, when pushed beyond some invisible line of demarcation, they became capable of unimaginable things.

This in no way justifies outbreaks of violence. It does teach us that we should not unnecessarily provoke men to anger. **In fact, this capacity of man faintly reflects the nature of God Himself, who can be provoked to anger for which there is no remedy** (Num 14:11,23; 16:30; Deut 4:25; 9:7,8,18,22; 31:20,29; 32:16,19,21; Judges 2:12; 1 Kgs 14:9,15,22; 15:30; 16:2,7,13,26,33; 21:22,53; 17:11,17; 21:6,15,17; 2 Kgs 23:19,26; 2 Chron 28:25; 33:6; 34:25; Ezra 5:12; Neh 4:5; 9:18,26; Job 12:6; Psa 78:17,40, 56,58; 95:8; 106:7,29,33, 43; Isa 1:4; Isa 3:8; Jer 7:18,19; 8:19; 11:17; 25:6,7; 32:29,30,31,32; 44:3,8; Ezek 8:17; 16:26; 20:28; Hos 12:14; Zech 8:14; Lk 11:53; 1 Cor 10:22; Heb 3:8,15,16).

**While this in no way justifies outbreaks of human destructiveness, it is a faint image of God Himself. His anger and destruction are fully justified, and are righteous in every sense of the word.** Further there is a plethora of clear statements concerning men provoking Him to the point where He judged then – sometimes with great harm and awful judgments. I say these things because there is a God being presented today by a considerable percentage of the Christian community that is not so characterized. Such a God is really no god at all, but an intellectual idol perpetrated by shallow academia.

**WHAT IS MY TRESPASS?**

*“ . . . and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both. . . ”*

Jacob’s demand, so far as he is concerned, was a righteous one. There

is no delusion or dishonesty in it, for he was not aware of what Rachel did.

**I HAVE TAKEN CARE OF YOUR FLOCKS**

*“ . . . 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. 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. . . ”*

Here the integrity of Jacob surfaces – and there is no reason to suspect he is not telling the absolute truth.

**The Increase of Laban’s Flocks**

Jacob had cared for the flocks of Laban so that none of the female goats *“miscarried.”*<sup>NKJV</sup> Further, Jacob did not interfere with the increase by eating some of the rams.

Some commentators take an uncomely view of these words, saying Jacob spoke “. . . IN WORDS CHARACTERIZED BY ‘VERBOSITY AND SELF-GLORIFICATION’ (KALISCH), OR ‘ACUTE, SENSIBILITY AND ELEVATED SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS (DELITZSCH, KEIL).”<sup>PULPIT COMMENTARY</sup>

“HE SPEAKS, INDEED, FROM HIS HEART; BUT IF THE TRUTH HAD THEN BEEN DISCOVERED, HE MUST, OF NECESSITY, HAVE BEEN ASHAMED OF HIS RASHNESS. THEREFORE, THOUGH HE WAS NOT CONSCIOUS OF GUILT, HE YET SINGLED THROUGH EXCESSIVE HASTE, IN NOT HAVING DILIGENTLY INQUIRED BEFORE HE PRONOUNCED CONCERNING A DOUBTFUL MATTER. HE OUGHT TO HAVE CALLED BOTH HIS WIVES AND HIS CHILDREN, AND TO HAVE INQUIRED OF EACH HOW THE AFFAIR STOOD. HE WAS, INDEED, PERSUADED, THAT HIS FAMILY WAS SO WELL CONDUCTED, THAT NO SUSPICION OF THE THEFT HAD EVER ENTERED INTO HIS MIND; BUT HE OUGHT NOT SO TO HAVE RELIED UPON HIS OWN DISCIPLINE, AS TO BE FREE FROM FEAR WHEN A CRIME IS ALLEGED AGAINST HIS FAMILY.  
44 JOHN CALVIN

These remarks, in my judgment, are wholly unjustified. This is an inspired account, written by Moses hundreds of years after the event took place. If there were really any dishonorable motives in Jacob, the Spirit would have made a note of it.

**The Violent Loss of Some**

During the years Jacob kept the flock, some were killed by wild animals, and some were apparently stolen. Yet, Jacob absorbed the loss himself. How he did this is not specified. However, in some way he made sure that Laban incurred no loss among his flocks.

**I ENDURED HARDSHIP**

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

**Keeping the flocks was not an easy task. For Jacob, it sometimes involved going without water, enduring cold nights, and depriving himself of sleep.** You may recall that when David kept his father’s sheep, he rescued some of the flock by killing an intruding bear and a voracious lion (1 Sam 14:34-37). Jacob had this kind of care for the flocks of Laban, willing to do whatever was necessary to ensure they were kept safely, and that Laban sustained no losses.

**FOURTEEN PLUS SIX**

*“ . . . 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 spells out the details of his tenure with Laban. He served Laban fourteen years for his two daughters, and six years for an agreed portion of Laban’s flock. Those years were attended by both diligence and hardship. **It appears from the dialog that Laban never inquired about Jacob’s welfare or possible needs during that period of time – twenty years.**

As Jacob had already stated to Rachel and Leah, Laban had changed his wages ten times during that period – an average of once every two years (Gen 31:7). So doing, Laban had broken the agreement made with Jacob, confirming that he was fundamentally dishonest.

**IF THE GOD OF MY FATHER HAD NOT BEEN WITH ME**

“ . . . 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.”

**Except the God of . . .**

Jacob does not give credit for his increased wealth to Laban, even though he had worked diligently for him under a covenanted agreement. He does not thank Laban for his flocks, for they were not a gift from him, but due wages. However, when it comes to God, he did not consider the flocks wages.

The manner in which Jacob refers to God is intriguingly thorough. **“The God of my father, the God of Abraham,”** is a covenantal view of God. It is not that Isaac decided to have the same God as his father. It was God’s choice of, and revelation to, Isaac that made Him his God. Eight times in Scripture, God is referred to as **“the God of Isaac”** (Gen 28:13; Ex 3:6,15; 4:5; Matt 22:32; Mk 12:26; Lk 20:37; Act s 7:32). God Himself quoted seven of those references, and Jesus is depicted as quoting three of them. In other words, this identity was not something determined by Isaac, but was rather the result of God’s own choice. **It linked Isaac with the promises that God has made to Abraham.**

From Isaac’s point of view, God was **“the Fear of Isaac.”** Other versions read, **“the awesome one of Isaac,”** <sup>CEB</sup> **“The One whom Isaac fears,”** <sup>CJB</sup> **“the One whom Isaac fears,”** <sup>NET</sup> **“the Kinsman of Isaac,”** <sup>NJB</sup> **“the fearsome God of Isaac,”** <sup>NLT</sup> **“the glorious God of Isaac,”** <sup>LIVING</sup> **“the God of Abraham and Isaac,”** <sup>GNB</sup> **and “the Dread [lest he should fall] and Fear [lest he offend] of Isaac.”** <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word translated **“fear”** has the following lexical meaning: **“TERROR, DREAD, OBJECT OF DREAD.”** <sup>STRONG’S</sup> **This was not a fear that moved Isaac to draw back from God, but a fear that kept him from drawing back!** In referring to God as **“the Fear of Isaac,”** the intention is to confirm that the God of heaven, the **“true God”** (Jer 10:10; John 17:3; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 John 5:20) is the only One

Isaac feared in this manner.

By preceding that expression by referring to **“the God of Abraham,”** the Spirit is emphasizing that the God Isaac feared was precisely the same God that called Abraham, and made a covenant with him.

**False Gods**

While this may appear very

point, he had obeyed God who said, **“get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred”** (Gen 31:13).

**GOD HATH SEEN**

**“ . . . God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands. . . ”**

This is Jacob’s conclusion concerning his circumstance – the

**He concludes that God has “seen” his affliction and his labor. That is, in strict accord with His promises God has kept His eye on Jacob.**

obvious, it ought to be noted that there are other gods who were being served at that time, and in our day as well. Even in the domain of Christendom, there is a God that is proclaimed and served that is not the **“God is Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”** (Ex 3:6). Nor, indeed, is it **“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (1 P:et 1:3). It is a God having traits that are at variance with the God declared in Scripture. It is a God that allows for the presentation of **“another Jesus,” “another Spirit,”** and **“another gospel”** (2 Cor 11:4). This is precisely why John wrote, **“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen”** (1 John 5:20-21).

**Laban Would Have Sent Him Away Empty**

Jacob affirms that if the true God had not been with Him, Laban would have sent him away empty. **Even though Laban did not realize it, he was not in charge of Jacob’s circumstance – God was!** In this case, God kept him safe by increasing his flocks, and by directing him when to leave that area. When it was told Laban that Jacob had **“fled,”** that was not a total view of the situation. **From the higher vantage**

obvious increase of his flocks, and the safety with which he had traveled to Mount Gilead. **He has taken the promises of God, mixed them with faith, and viewed his circumstance.** He does not conclude that he was especially wise, or that Laban was especially obtuse.

He concludes that God has **“seen”** his affliction and his labor. **That is, in strict accord with His promises God has kept His eye on Jacob.** He has particularly noted his affliction and hard work, and consequently has done something for Jacob, increasing his herds and providing him safety.

**GOD REBUKED YOU**

**“ . . . [God] and rebuked thee yesternight.”** Other versions read, **“rebuked you last night,”** <sup>NKJV</sup> **“He rendered judgment last night,”** <sup>NASB</sup> **“He kept you back,”** <sup>BBE</sup> **“reprimanded you,”** <sup>CEB</sup> **“passed judgment in my favor,”** <sup>CJB</sup> **“He issued His verdict,”** <sup>CSB</sup> **“He made it right,”** <sup>GWN</sup> **“reproached you,”** <sup>NAB</sup> **“delivered judgment,”** <sup>NJB</sup> **and “reproveth yesternight.”** <sup>YLT</sup>

The lexical meaning of the word translated **“rebuke”** is: **“TO PROVE, DECIDE, JUDGE, REBUKE, REPROVE, CORRECT, BE RIGHT . . . TO SHOW TO BE RIGHT, PROVE.”** <sup>STRONG’S</sup>

**Let it be clear that God hates injustice and inequity.** He has spoken on

this matter.

➔ **GOD SEES THE ABSENCE OF JUDGMENT.** *"The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace" (Isa 59:8).*

*oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry" (Isa 5:7).*

➔ **HE WILL ACT FAVORABLY WHERE THERE IS SOUND JUDGMENT.** *"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that*

speak, with Jacob.

### Something to Learn

Most of God's people have at some time been treated unfairly, and in an unjust manner. While God wants them **not** to be vindictive, taking matters into their own hands (Rom 12:14,17,19), this by no means suggests He is indifferent to their situation. **He will decide in favor of those whom He has called, and who are trusting in Him.** He may even do so in this world, as He did with Jacob, Job (Job 42:7,8), Israel (Ex 8:22; 9:4;10:23), Aaron (Ex 7:12; Num 17:6-8), Elijah (1 Kgs 18:37-38), etc. Scripture frequently has God siding with one person, and against another, as with Israel and Pharaoh and his armies; David and Goliath; Samson and the Philistines, etc.

When there are controversies or disagreements involving the children of God, the real question is not "Who is right?" Rather, it is, "Whose side will be found favorable with the Lord?" When it is over, what will God say? That is something weighty to ponder.

**Yet, God took note of his behavior, and seeing the controversy between Laban and Jacob sided, so to speak, with Jacob.**

➔ **GOD NOTES THE DETERIORATION OF JUDGMENT.** *"And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter" (Isa 59:14).*

*executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it" (Jer 5:1).*

### What God Did In This Case

Thinking that he had the upper hand, Laban took advantage of Jacob, treating him unjustly. He broke his covenant with him and was dishonest with him. Yet, God took note of his behavior, and seeing the controversy between Laban and Jacob sided, so to

➔ **GOD HE LOOKS FOR JUDGMENT.** *"For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and He looked for judgment, but behold*

## LABAN ANSWERS JACOB

*"<sup>43</sup> 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?<sup>44</sup> Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee."*

Those who are estranged from God cannot think properly – even when they are faced with the facts. Here is a man who has been rebuked by God, and has been faced with some incontrovertible facts. Yet, like a beast with no understanding, he continues to reason as though his view was right.

**THESE ARE MY DAUGHTERS, MY CHILDREN, AND MY CATTLE**

*"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 looks at Rachel and Leah and sees them as still belonging to him: *"These daughters are my daughters."* Technically, this was true, but Laban is not speaking technically. He should have said, "These my daughters are now your wives" – for he had given them to Jacob following an unfair agreement. He speaks, however, just as though that transaction had never taken place. **Furthermore, they had been Jacob's wives for several years – twenty, to be exact.** Yet, he speaks of them as though they still belonged in

his house.

He even claims the children as his own: *"These children are my children."* He looks at the flocks he had agreed belonged to Jacob, and said, *"these flocks are my flocks."* As though he were a sovereign king he boldly asserts, *"all that thou seest is mine."* **I take it that this is a fleshly attempt to be congenial.** Laban does not say he was wrong. He does not ask for forgiveness for treating Jacob unjustly, and his daughters as though they were slaves. Instead he presents himself as not wanting to act in total disinterest of what he said belonged to him. He will agree to pursue the matter no further – not because he really desired to do what is right, but, it appears, because he did not want Jacob to think of him as unfair and unthoughtful. So he presents himself as being gracious.

If God had not rebuked him, there is no doubt that Laban would have continued in his devious ways. At this time, he was simply not able to proceed as he preferred. God would not let him do so. Here we have a classic example how God can cause even our enemies to be at peace with us:—i.e. *"When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"* (Prov 16:7).

### The Nature of the Flesh

It is the nature of flesh, when its back is against the wall, so to speak, to pretend as though it is reconciled to the situation. **However, flesh cannot adapt to the truth.** It will speak in a compromising manner, yet will continue to think as it did before. It only appears to have accepted what it hates. However, in the thought processes, it

continues to reason just as though it was right.

### LET US MAKE A COVENANT

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

Laban's motive was not that of making a lasting friendship. He was not, so to speak, calling for a truce. Rather, by his own admission, he knows that Jacob's God, the God of Abraham, has blessed him. Further, he has not been able to interfere with that blessing in any way. While in his employ, and under his watchful eye, Jacob had prospered to a staggering degree. **He had, in the end, obtained what he wanted, in spite of Laban's lies and deceptions.** Thus Laban thinks to put

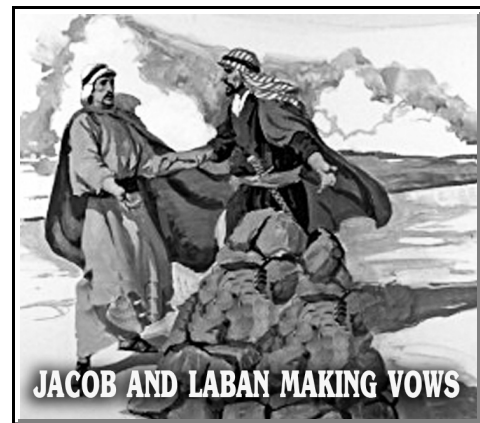
himself in a more favorable stance by making a covenant with Jacob. I do not doubt that his conscience was annoying him at this point. However, he refused to give heed to it, choosing this action.

Mind you, he is not thinking of Jacob's God, or of that very God blessing Jacob. Now, purely out of self-interest, he hopes to continue his gain because of Jacob. It was with Laban like it was when Abimelech said to Isaac, *"Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we"* (Gen 26:16).

As I have stated before, *"When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"* (Prov 16:7). **This was nothing less than God making Laban to not only be at peace with Jacob, but to formalize that peace with a covenant.**

## JACOB SETS UP A PILLAR

*"<sup>45</sup> And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar."<sup>46</sup> And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.<sup>47</sup> And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.<sup>48</sup> And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;<sup>49</sup> And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."*



JACOB AND LABAN MAKING VOWS

JACOB TOOK A STONE, AND THEY MADE A HEAP

*"And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. . ."*

Jacob now establishes a visible attestation to the agreement they will make. This physical memorial will be a witness to the future generations of both Jacob and Laban concerning this agreement.

Jacob's *"brethren"* were probably the servants that were with him, that had assisted him in keeping Laban's flocks. It might have included the servants of Laban as well. Moses might be using the word *"brethren"* to refer to those related to him through Abraham and Nahor. When he first arrived in Haran, he referred to the shepherds that were there as *"brethren"* (Gen 29:4). Therefore, he could also be using the word in reference to kindred flock-keepers. They were to join in the making of a visible sign of the covenant Jacob and Laban would make. **They were to know by the same sign that they were expected to be peaceable as well.**

Among other things, this confirms that Jacob, like Abraham and Isaac, was a peacemaker. Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech to be peaceable (Gen 21:27). Isaac made a covenant with Abimelech and Phichol to maintain peace with them (Gen 26:28-29).

These patriarchs fulfilled a word that has been delivered to those in Christ Jesus: *"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"* (Rom 12:18).

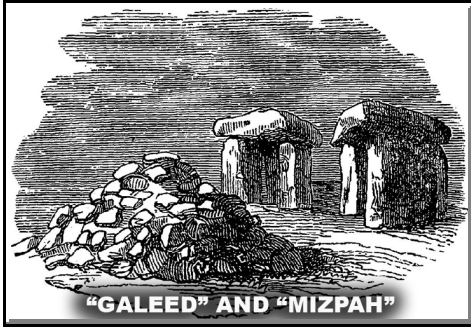
### BOTH LABAN AND JACOB NAME THE HEAP

*" . . . And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day . . ."*

Each man named the pillar in their own language, for the names mean the same thing. *"Jegarsahadutha"* is Syrian, and *"Galeed"* is Hebrew.

➡ JEGARSAHADUTHA and GALEED. "HEAP OF THE TESTIMONY," STRONGS "HEAP OF WITNESS," HITCHCOCK "A PILE OF TESTIMONY," EASTON "WITNESS HEAP," SMITH "THE MOUND

WITNESS,<sup>ISBE</sup> AND "PILE OF THE TESTIMONY,"<sup>MCCLEINTON/STRONG'S</sup>



The raising of this "heap" of stones was like making the covenant effective from generation to generation. Think of it as a visible way of making an oath.

#### THE DIVINE PERSPECTIVE AND JACOB'S WORDS

*" . . . " Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; and Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. "*

Although Laban had given the place a Syrian name, that is not how it would be known hereafter. It would be identified by the Hebrew name "Galeed." This statement represents the Divine perspective of the matter. **God identified himself with Jacob, not Laban, and this comment, added by the Holy Spirit, confirms that to be the case.**

#### MIZPAH

This name is pointed both ways in the Hebrew, and is found usually with the article. The meaning seems to be "outlook" or "watchtower." It is natural, therefore, to look for the places so named in high positions commanding wide prospects.<sup>ISBE</sup>

A second name was assigned to the pillar by the Holy Spirit: "Mizpah," which means "WATCHTOWER."<sup>STRONG'S</sup>

Thus, a permanent witness of this covenant was established. **Whenever this heap of stones and pillar were seen, this event could be rehearsed, signifying that the nation of Israel, through the sons of Jacob, would have a legitimate beginning. It would not be the result of a battle, or of the dominance of human wit. It was a matter of Divine guidance, even though it was wrapped in the package of a human covenant.**

The text states that the name was called "Mizpah, **FOR** [or because] *he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.*" **This refers to what Jacob said, who was the one designating the name "Galeed."** Several respectable commentators have Laban saying these words, however I see this as reflecting what Jacob said. The text does not state that either Jacob or Laban gave the name "Mizpah" to the place. I take this verse as an editorial remark on Jacob giving the name "Galeed" to the place. **I cannot see God adding the name "Mizpah" because of something Laban said.** Notwithstanding, I am not willing to be contentious about whether or not it was Jacob who was speaking. This is my personal persuasion.

Jacob's words express his reliance upon God to see that this covenant was kept. Other versions read, *"May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other,"*<sup>NIV</sup> *"May the Lord keep watch on us when we are unable to see one another's doings,"*<sup>BBE</sup> *"The LORD watch between you and me, when we are out of one another's sight,"*<sup>ESV</sup> *"Let Yahweh act as watchman between us when we are no longer in sight of each other,"*<sup>NJB</sup> and *"May the Lord see to it that we keep this bargain when we are out of each other's sight."*<sup>LIVING</sup>

To me, the clear implication is that Jacob, knowing of the treachery of Laban here expresses his desire that God Himself would watch over them both – but particularly over Laban. **Here, as I see it, "watch" does not refer to care, but to Divine superintendence of the situation.** To "watch between" would signify not only the monitoring of any thoughts or intentions Jacob and Laban had toward each other, but that God would turn the circumstances in favor of Jacob, with whom He had made a covenant that would impact future generations – even the entire world.

As used here, the word "watch" means, "TO LOOK OUT OR ABOUT, SPY, KEEP WATCH, OBSERVE, WATCH."<sup>STRONG'S</sup> **So far as Jacob is concerned, this was an expression of his reliance upon the Lord to thwart any evil intentions of Laban, who had already conducted himself dishonorably toward Jacob.**

- Initially giving Jacob Leah instead of Rachel.
- Insisting that Jacob work seven additional years for Rachel.
- Changing his wages ten times.
- Pursuing him as though he had acted unrighteously in leaving with his wives and flocks.

**Laban had given Jacob no reason to expect that he would be any different in the future.** Therefore, appealing to any sensitivity that might remain in Laban, he makes it plain that this is a matter in which God Himself will be included. Perhaps that thought will move Laban to think more soberly in the future. The lack of Laban's spiritual understanding will surface later, but Jacob no doubt speaks this with the future in mind.

## LABAN SPEAKS

*" 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.* <sup>51</sup> *And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;* <sup>52</sup> *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."*

Laban now speaks as though Jacob was the same as himself – devious and untrustworthy. This is the manner of the ungodly.

#### THIS HEAP AND PEOPLE ARE A WITNESS

*"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. . ."*

#### "Afflict my Daughters"

Laban had absolutely no reason to suspect that Jacob would afflict his daughters, or in any way do them harm. Neither Rachel nor Leah had reported any abuse. Leah had seen herself as being "*hated*," and God had recognized this to be the case (Gen 29:31,33). That, however, had to do with preference, not with afflicting or doing harm. Further, it was owing to Laban's own deception. He had agreed to give Jacob Rachel after seven years of labor, but gave him Leah instead. Jacob had received and cared for Leah, as well as Rachel. Both of them had stated that it

**God's purpose had been served. Jacob was not prepared to be more immediately involved in the purpose of God.**

was their father who had treated them as slaves, and been unmindful of them (Gen 31:14-16).

#### "Take Other Wives"

The only other wives available to Jacob were heathen wives from his homeland. He had made clear that this is why he came to Laban's house in the first place – to avoid taking other wives. Laban's suggestion was thoroughly hypocritical.

#### "See, God Is Witness"

Here, Laban feigns to rely upon God. His flagrant hypocrisy is seen in the fact that he had pursued Jacob because he thought he had taken "*stolen*" his "*gods*" (Gen 31:30). His gods were not able to watch between himself and Jacob, ensuring that he and his goods were protected. His gods could be appropriately described as "*the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but*

*they walk not: neither speak they through their throat"* (Psa 115:4-7).

#### WE WILL NOT DO EACH OTHER HARM

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

**Actually, unbeknown to Laban, this would be a final separation from his daughters and their sons.** They would never see each other again. After Laban's departure, there are three more mentions of Laban in the book of Genesis (32:4; 46:18,25) – and all of them are references to previous contacts with Laban. Not only would neither one of them pass by this heap to harm one another, neither one would ever pass by it again. God's purpose had been served. Jacob was not prepared to be more immediately involved in the purpose of God.

## LABAN AND JACOB SWEAR

*"<sup>53</sup> 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. "*

#### LABAN SWEARS

*"The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. . ."* Other versions read, "

Notice how Laban swears. He calls upon:

- "*The God of Abraham.*"
- "*The God of Nahor.*"
- "*The God of their father*" (Terah).

Laban is referring to the gods Terah and his family served prior to the calling of Abraham. Joshua referred to that time when Israel had entered into Canaan. "*Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods*" (Josh 24:2).

By using "*the God of Abraham*," then adding the God of Nahor and Terah, Laban is attempting to include other than the true God of Abraham. The true God is the "*God of Abraham Isaac, and Jacob*" (Ex 3:6,15,16; 4:5; Matt 2:32; Acts 3:13). Laban does not recognize either Isaac or Jacob. **This is because he neither knew nor worshiped the true God.**

#### The Continued Practice of Blending Gods

Uninformed men still attempt to

blend false gods with the true God. Most recently, many have alleged that the Muslims worship the same God as we do – the God of Abraham. Such people are more related to Laban than to Jacob. Others, in the name of Christ, attempt to mingle human concepts of God with *“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph 1:3). Whether it is accommodating views of heathen religions, or accepting the propagation of the intellectual gods of the pseudo-Christians, God will not share his glory with another (Isa 42:8; 48:11), and neither will we!

#### JACOB SWEARS

*“ . . . And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.”* Other versions read, *“the awesome One of his father Isaac,”* <sup>CEB</sup> *“the one his father Isaac feared,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“the Kinsman of his father Isaac”* <sup>NJB</sup> *“the fearsome God of his father Isaac,”* <sup>NLT</sup> and *“But Jacob swore [only] by [the one true God] the Dread and Fear of his father Isaac.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

It appears that Jacob referred only to God as “the Fear of Isaac,” omitting Abraham, so there would be no doubt that he was serving the God that was later revealed to Abraham, long after he

was identified with his father, Terah. This omission, in my opinion, was for Laban’s sake, to take from him the notion that there was another legitimate God besides the one he (Jacob) was serving.

#### Something To Consider

There does come a time when we must cease to speak in generalities, making it all the more difficult for people to draw the wrong conclusions about what we say. We can also express our selves in Babylonian cliches that lead people to wrong conclusions.

## THEY EAT, TARRY, AND LABAN DEPARTS

*“ 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. 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.”*

#### JACOB OFFERED SACRIFICE

*“Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount . . .”*

Confirming that he was primarily a servant of God, and sought His approval rather than that of Laban; and substantiating the fact that he was thankful to God for what he had, rather than to Laban, Jacob offers a sacrifice. Some commentators are of the opinion that this does not refer to a sacrifice offered to God, but merely the slaughter of an animal for eating– i.e. *“THEN JACOB OFFERED SACRIFICE UPON THE MOUNT, ETC.] ON MOUNT GILEAD, NOT IN A RELIGIOUS WAY, IN WHICH HE COULD NOT JOIN WITH LABAN, OR ADMIT HIM TO IT; BUT IN A CIVIL WAY HE “SLEW A SLAUGHTER,” OR RATHER MADE ONE; THAT IS, AS JARCHI EXPLAINS IT, HE SLEW CATTLE FOR A FEAST, AS IT WAS USUAL TO MAKE FEASTS FOR THE SEVERAL PARTIES CONCERNED IN COVENANT.”* <sup>John Gill</sup> **I do not concur with this view.** The Hebrew word used here for “sacrifice” is “zebach.” It is used one hundred and seventy-four times in Scripture, and is always used in a religious sense of sacrifices made either to the true God, or to idols–i.e.

**As I see it, this was a sacrifice to God – the “Fear of Isaac.” It was an open demonstration of His thankfulness to, and reliance upon, the true God. He was not depending upon the covenant with Laban for safety.**

Gen 46:1; Ex 10:25; Lev 3:1; Num 6:17; Deut 12:6; Josh 22:23; Judges 16:23; 1 Sam 1:21; 2 Sam 15:12; 1 Kgs 8:62; 2 Kgs 5:17; 1 Chron 29:21; Neh 12:43; Psa 4:5; Prov 21:3; Eccl 5:1; Isa 1:11; Jer 6:20; Ezek 20:28; Dan 9:27; Hos 3:4; Amos 4:4; Jonah 1:16; Zeph 1:7).

**As I see it, this was a sacrifice to God – the “Fear of Isaac.” It was an open demonstration of His thankfulness to, and reliance upon, the true God. He was not depending upon the covenant with Laban for safety.**

#### JACOB CALLED HIS BRETHREN

*“ . . . and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount. . .”*

In ratification of the covenant, and in a display of thoughtfulness and

kindness, and above all in the context of an offering made to God, Jacob called everyone together to eat of the offering. They then spent the night in the place where the covenant was made, and a sacrifice was offered to God. Certainly this was a most suitable place for reflection.

#### LABAN LEAVES

*“ . . . 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’s spirit had been tamed *“upon the mount.”* There, in the presence of a man of God who conducted himself as one who knew he was before the Lord, Laban became a peaceable man – at least for the moment.

He did not insist on taking his daughters and their children with him. Nor, indeed, did he hurl epithets at them in anger. Instead, he *“kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them.”* This

is the only Scriptural example of Laban blessing anyone.

Laban and those with him then returned *“to his place”* – which was

not with Jacob. Other versions read, *“returned home.”*<sup>NIV</sup> Thus the record confirms that Jacob belonged in Canaan, the promised land, while Laban belonged in Haran.

**Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 3/8/13. We will continue our series of lessons in the book of Genesis. The fifty-fourth lesson will cover verses 1 through 32 of chapter thirty-two: “JACOB PREPARES TO MEET ESAU.”** Jacob meets the angels of God, then sends messengers to Esau reporting how he had been with Laban, also seeking grace in Esau’s sight. It is reported that Esau was coming to meet Jacob with four hundred men, causing Jacob great distress. He also prepared a large gift for Esau. Jacob divides his people and prays to God for deliverance. That night he wrestled with an angel. The meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.



**2013**  
**REFRESHING WATERS**  
**RENEWAL**

**Location:**

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**THE IDENTITY AND  
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**Dates: August 6-8, 2013**

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**Adah Hutchcraft ([adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com](mailto:adahhutchcraft@hotmail.com)), Jason Hutchcraft ([hutchcraftj@hotmail.com](mailto:hutchcraftj@hotmail.com))**

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