

# GENESIS 31

Written and Compiled by Gary Kukis

**Genesis 31:1–55**

**Jacob Leaves Laban's Compound**

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10).

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Links to each chapter of word-by-word, verse-by-verse studies: **Genesis Links** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) (that is what this document is). This incorporates 2 previous studies done in the book of Genesis. Since much of this material was thrown together without careful editing, there will be, from time to time, concepts and exegetical material which will be repeated, because there was no overall editing done once all of this material was combined.

This study makes reference to a wide-range of sources. There are quotations from doctrinal teachers, of course; but from Catholic commentaries and from other sources as well. Wherever I found relevant truth, I quoted from it or was inspired by it. Even though it is clear that some churches have a better understanding of God's plan and Bible doctrine, that does not mean that there is no truth to be found anywhere else. So, from time to time, I will quote from John Calvin, even though I do not subscribe to 5-point Calvinism; I will quote from some Catholic sources, even though there are significant problems with some Catholic doctrines. The intention is for this to be the most thorough and accurate study of Genesis available anywhere.

Also, **it is not necessary that you read the grey Hebrew exegesis tables**. They are set apart from the rest of the study so that you can easily skip over them (based upon the suggestion of a friend). However, if you ever doubt the translation of a word, phrase or a verse, these translation tables are then available to examine.

**Preface:** Jacob has worked for Laban for 20 years and it has become clear to him that his work and his faithfulness are not really valued by his employer. Furthermore, God has told Jacob to take his family back to the land of Canaan. Genesis 31 is all about Jacob moving his family back to the Land of Promise using his tried and (un) true approach of deception and sneakiness. He convinces his wives to leave with him (which does not require much convincing); so they sneak out of Haran, having a 3-day head start. However, Laban, when he sees that Jacob has left with his family, and that his deity figurines are missing as well, chases down Jacob and catches up to him in the hill country of Gilead (which is east of the Jordan River). The end of this chapter is their final confrontation where both men air out their grievances with one another, and then manage to find a way to go their separate ways, establishing a non-aggression pact between them.

There are many **chapter commentaries** on the book of Genesis. This will be the most extensive examination of Genesis 31, where you will be able to examine in depth every word of the original text. Every attempt has been made to make this both a complete and self-contained study. Therefore, all references, vocabulary, and related concepts should be found within this extensive study. Easy access links to more in-depth studies of some vocabulary words, concepts and doctrines are also provided.

#### Quotations:

#### On Envy:

**Socrates on Envy** (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#); accessed October 22, 2017.

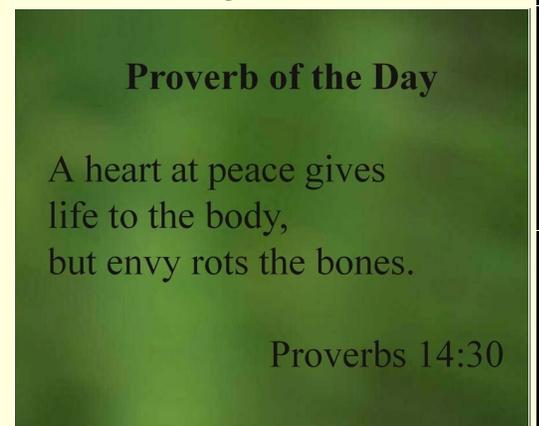
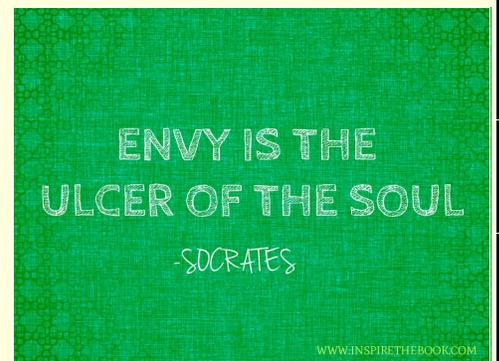
Marilyn Monroe: *Success makes so many people hate you. I wish it wasn't that way. It would be wonderful to enjoy success without seeing envy in the eyes of those around you.*<sup>1</sup>

Gretchen Rubin: *Negative emotions like loneliness, envy, and guilt have an important role to play in a happy life; they're big, flashing signs that something needs to change.*<sup>2</sup> For the believer, this change would be **rebound**.

**Proverb of the Day** (a graphic); from [Pinterest](#), accessed October 22, 2017.

Buddha: *Do not overrate what you have received, nor envy others. He who envies others does not obtain peace of mind.*<sup>3</sup>

Evander Holyfield: *People who make the choice to study, work hard or do whatever they endeavor is to give it the max on themselves to reach to the top level. And you have the people who get envy and jealous, yet are not willing to put that work in, and they want to get the same praise.*<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> From <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marilynmon499749.html> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> From <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/g/gretchenru619371.html> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> From <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/b/buddha118038.html> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> From <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/e/evanderhol481973.html> accessed October 22, 2017.

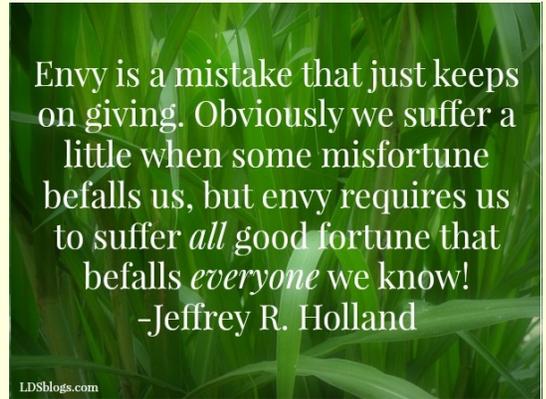
Robert Kraft: *Envy and jealousy are incurable diseases.*<sup>5</sup> For the unbeliever.

Victor Hugo: *The wicked envy and hate; it is their way of admiring.*<sup>6</sup>

**Jeffrey Holland quote** (a graphic); from [LDSblogs](#); accessed October 22, 2017. Let me reassure you that this is *not* an LDS study.

Theodore Roosevelt: *Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty... I have never in my life envied a human being who led an easy life. I have envied a great many people who led difficult lives and led them well.*<sup>7</sup>

Shannon L. Alder: *Anger, resentment and jealousy doesn't change the heart of others-- it only changes yours.*<sup>8</sup>

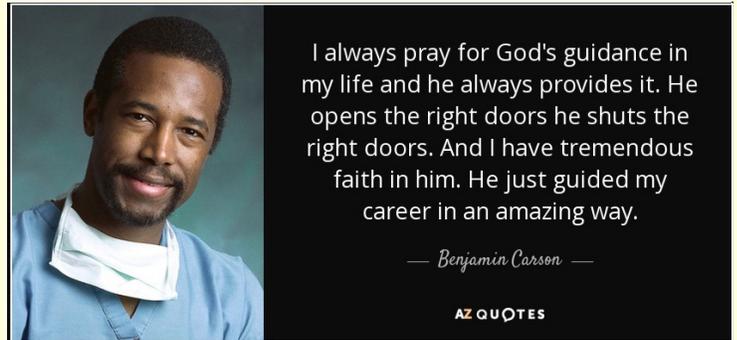


### Divine Guidance quotations:

Ben Carson Quotation (a graphic); from [AZ Quotes](#); accessed October 22, 2017.

Kukis: Our guidance in the Church Age is having the Word of God in our thinking.

Psalm 32:8 *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.* (NIV)



Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* (NIV)

### Miscellaneous quotations:

Genesis 2:24 *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.* (HCSB)

Jacobus: *How often men reprove in others the very wrong of which they are guilty themselves. Often God punishes sin in kind, allowing the deceiver to be deceived.*<sup>9</sup>

Carrie Fisher: *Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> From <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/r/robertkraf823218.html> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> From <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/v/victorhugo400711.html> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/envy> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/envy> accessed October 22, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:6–7 (suggestive comments).

<sup>10</sup> From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/envy> accessed October 22, 2017.

F. Scott Fitzgerald: *Nothing is as obnoxious as other people's luck.*<sup>11</sup>

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. (NIV)

### Outline of Chapter 31:

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<sup>11</sup> From <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/envy> accessed October 22, 2017.

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Many who read and study this chapter are 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation students of R. B. Thieme, Jr., so that much of this vocabulary is second nature. One of Bob’s contributions to theology is a fresh vocabulary along with a number of concepts which are theologically new or reworked, yet still orthodox. Therefore, if you are unfamiliar with his work, the definitions below will help you to fully understand all that is being said. Also, I have developed a few new terms and concepts which require definition as well.

In addition, there are other more traditional yet technical theological terms which will be used and therefore defined as well.

Sometimes the terms in the exegesis of this chapter are simply alluded to, without any in-depth explanation of them. Sometimes, these terms are explained in detail and illustrated. A collection of all these terms is found here: ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

| Definition of Terms   |  |
|---|--|
| <a href="#">The 5<sup>th</sup> stage of national discipline</a> | The 5 <sup>th</sup> stage of national discipline involves complete loss of personal and national sovereignty, the destruction of the family and the nation. Offerings to God are unacceptable. Nations which have undergone this destruction have experienced slavery, cannibalism, and the assimilation of its surviving citizens into other cultures. The <b>Five Cycles of Discipline</b> ( <a href="#">BDR—probably Thieme</a> ) ( <a href="#">Mark Perkins</a> ) ( <a href="#">L. G. Merritt</a> ). |
| <a href="#">Antitype</a>  | A type is a person, thing or circumstance which looks forward into the future and finds its fulfillment in an antitype, which may be a person, thing or circumstance. Example: Moses striking the rock and from it flows waters of life is a type; Christ being judged on the cross for our sins and from Him flows living waters is the antitype.   |
| <a href="#">Genealogy, linear</a>                               | A linear genealogy (also called a <i>straight-line genealogy</i> ) follows one particular line for 3 or 4 or more generations. Very rarely is more than one son named in any generation.   |

| Definition of Terms                                       |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Genealogy of promise, The</b>                          | This is the line that goes through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and eventually leads to Jesus Christ.  |
| <b>Isagogics</b>  | Isagogics is a branch of theology which examines the particular literary and external history of the Bible. <sup>12</sup> The Bible must be understood and interpreted within its historical context and isagogics provides us with that context. See the <b>Doctrine of I.C.E. Teaching (Bible Doctrine Resource)</b> ( <a href="#">Hermeneutics—Gene Cunningham</a> )  |
| <b>JEPD Theory (also known as Documentary Hypothesis)</b> | Documentary Hypothesis simply asserts that the Pentateuch was not authored by Moses but written 1000 years after Moses by several authors who wrote portions here and there and then other men have performed extensive revisions, colating and editing after them. See <b>Documentary Hypothesis</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).  |
| <b>Laws of Divine Establishment</b>                       | Since the world appears to be made up of mostly unbelievers, God must have some kind of plan for the unbelievers while they are alive. These are called the laws of divine establishment, and they are applicable to both believers and unbelievers. These are the laws which protect the freedom of a nation, and allow for evangelism and for the teaching of the Word of God. See the <b>Laws of Divine Establishment</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).   |
| <b>Protocol Plan of God</b>                               | God's protocol plan is a rigid, long-established code and procedure, prescribing complete deference to superior rank and authority, followed by strict adherence to due order and precedence, coupled with precisely correct procedure. ( <a href="#">PPG—BDresource</a> ) ( <a href="#">PPG1—BDresource</a> ) ( <a href="#">PPG—He Ekklesia</a> )   |
| <b>Rebound (Restoration to fellowship with God)</b>       | In the New Testament, this is naming your sins to God, so that you are both restored to temporal fellowship with God and are then filled with the Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, naming your sins to God would result in a restoration of fellowship and, in some cases, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit once again (the Holy Spirit was not given to all Old Testament believers). See the <b>Doctrine of Rebound</b> ( <a href="#">HTML</a> ) ( <a href="#">PDF</a> ) ( <a href="#">WPD</a> ).  |
| <b>The Revealed God (or, the Revealed Lord)</b>           | We all come to a time of God-consciousness where we understand the concept and possibility of the existence of God. At that point, we face 2 great questions: (1) do we want to know this God and (2) are will willing to believe in God as He has revealed Himself or do we make a god in our own image and worship that? In both the Old and New Testaments, God will make Himself known (He reveals Himself) to those who will believe in Him and to others as well. We know Him firmly and concretely as Jesus Christ; and in the Old Testament, He is known as the God of the Jews, the Creator of the Universe, the God of Moses (or of Abraham), etc. |
| <b>Spiritual Atlas</b>                                    | Often, during a time of national crisis, God promotes one man who, for all intents and purposes, carries his nation on his shoulders. God protects and even prospers a nation based upon the spiritual Atlas of that day. We have historical examples of Israel under Moses, Joshua and David (among many others) and Rome under Paul. In the Church Age, there can be many people who function as spiritual Atlases in any given period of time.  |
| <b>Syncretism</b>   | <i>Syncretism, as defined by the American Heritage Dictionary, is “the reconciliation or fusion of differing systems of belief.” This is most evident in the areas of philosophy and religion, and usually results in a new teaching or belief system. Obviously, this cannot be reconciled to biblical Christianity [that is, we cannot offer a fusion of some philosophy and Christianity and the result still be Christianity].<sup>13</sup></i>  |

<sup>12</sup> From <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/isagogics> accessed October 31, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> From <https://www.gotquestions.org/syncretism-religious.html> accessed October 29, 2017 (appended).

### Definition of Terms

#### Type , Typology

*A type is a preordained representation wherein certain persons, events, and institutions of the O.T. stand for corresponding persons, events, and institutions of the N.T. Types are pictures or object lessons by which God has taught His redemptive plan. They are a shadow of things to come, not the image of those things (Col. 2:17 Heb. 8:5 10:1). The Mosaic system, for example, was a kind of kindergarten in which God's people were trained in divine things and taught to look forward to the realities of things yet to come.<sup>14</sup>*

See **Typology** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Some of these definitions are taken from

[http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/?page\\_id=1556](http://gracebiblechurchwichita.org/?page_id=1556)

<http://www.bibledoctrinechurch.org/?subpages/GLOSSARY.shtml>

<http://rickhughesministries.org/content/Biblical-Terms.pdf>

<http://www.gbible.org/index.php?proc=d4d>

<http://www.wordoftruthministries.org/termsanddefs.htm>

<http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics.html>

<http://www.theopedia.com/>

## An Introduction to Genesis 31

**Introduction:** Genesis 31 begins from Jacob's point of view. He hears that Laban's sons believe that Jacob is taking too much of Laban's stock. He notices that Laban is not looking at him in a good way, anymore—so both Laban and his sons are unhappy about what is happening (all that is happening is, Jacob and Laban have come to an agreement on which sheep and goats are to belong to Jacob, and it appears that Jacob is getting a lot of sheep and goats as a result).

At some point, God has come to Jacob in a dream and told him to return to Canaan.

So Jacob calls his wives to come out into the field to discuss their options. This is probably the only time Jacob has ever done this; and they probably have no idea why he is calling them out to the field.

Jacob lays everything out very objectively. He does not appear to exaggerate his situation. They are, as a family unit, prospering; and this appears to upset the brothers and father of Jacob's wives. Laban and his sons believe that everything that Jacob gains is their loss.

Jacob presents himself to his wives as working hard. These women would have been aware, during the first 14 years, how Jacob had prospered their father—no doubt they would have heard that from time to time (and, if you will recall, Laban admitted at one time that God prospered him through Jacob). Whatever Jacob's wives know about his business (and it is probably quite a lot<sup>15</sup>), it is squaring with what Jacob is saying. He is presenting to his wives an honest assessment of their situation.

They know about Laban's agreement with Jacob (they no doubt know that their father has changed this agreement on Jacob on many occasions), and they know that their flocks are on the increase, despite how Laban changes the agreement. So when Jacob describes this, it fits with their reality. And Jacob, no doubt, has on previous occasions credited God with the increase in their herd. This takes us to the end of v. 9.

Then Chapter 31 goes in an interesting direction. So far, when God has revealed himself to any Old Testament saint through a dream or a vision, we are told the story as though it is happening right at that moment (even if the writer is recounting it from years ago). However, here, God has spoken to Jacob, yet Jacob does not record but

<sup>14</sup> From [Dake](#), accessed October 15, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Recall that Rachel was a shepherdess, so it is reasonable that she was interested in this business.

the barest bones information about the revelation (in v. 3). In fact, he records more of the revelation in the telling of it to his wives.

Let me suggest four possibilities: (1) Jacob did not act on God's guidance immediately; so he had the dream, and kind of set it aside; but when Jacob realized that Laban no longer favored him, that got him to thinking. (2) This does allow for the possibility that Jacob makes this dream up<sup>16</sup> in order to cause his wives to leave Laban and their homeland; however, the entire dream, as presented, seems to ring true. (3) Jacob has a second dream, where God tells him again, "Leave." This would assume that Jacob sort of forget about his first dream and God having to return to him and say, "I really mean it this time." That simply does not sound right to me either. It is more likely that Jacob remembered the dream, but did not act upon it immediately. (4) The dream and Jacob's telling of the dream are close in time. He dreams the dream and the next day he tells his wives about it.<sup>17</sup> This seems possible, but we must bear in mind that Jacob's motivation appears to be more about Laban's treatment of him as opposed to God's directive in this chapter. This is a lot to throw out there, prior to studying the chapter itself, but it will give somewhat of a warning of what is coming.

I should also point out, that the way this plays out, it seems to me that #1 explains it—Jacob had the dream and apparently kept it to himself, despite the fact that God told him to move out. This understanding allows all the pieces of the puzzle to all fall together. What did *not* happen was, God told Jacob to go, and so he made preparations to go.

When Jacob leaves Haran,<sup>18</sup> taking his wives and children with him, it is not under the best of circumstances. Laban and his sons are all turned against Jacob, so when Jacob surreptitiously leaves, Laban finds out and pursues him. While in hot pursuit, God speaks to Laban, to the intent, apparently, of calming him down prior to his catching up with Jacob.

Jacob also inadvertently has some teraphim (household deities) with him which were stolen from Laban (Rachel stole them). The explanation concerning Laban's frantic behavior concerning these deities is found in the **isagogics**.

The interaction between Jacob and Laban is fascinating. Both men know what is the right and fair thing to do. Both men expect this from of the other but they will not act accordingly. In you business dealings and in your personal relationships, you cannot expect others to behave as they ought. I have been in a great many business deals that, when money becomes a part of the dispute, hard feelings and difficulties can result. I have made an attempt in every business interaction to try to place myself in the shoes of the other person, attempting the best I could to see it from their point of view. Certainly, many times, the motivation is simply money and ego; but that is not always the case.

Some of what we are viewing is a contrast between Jacob and Laban, who are certainly men cut from the same cloth.

The only volition that you have control of is your own. You can do nothing but to do what is right according to the Holy Scriptures delivered to you. Beyond that, you depend upon God to deal with those who do not deal morally or ethically with you. This is not a sanction to be naive. God had mandated that we, as sheep send out among the wolves, **be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves** (Matthew 10:16b).

**Application:** Just in case I am being unclear, you will be cheated in a business transaction. Someone will lie to you when there is a lot of money on the line. This is pretty much guaranteed to happen. Do you let your life for the next 1, 2 or 5 years be guided by this? Very often, the correct response is to do nothing. Very often, you are better off not seeking justice, not getting revenge, not giving them a taste of their own medicine. This does not

<sup>16</sup> This was suggested by a commentators; I do not recall who.

<sup>17</sup> If Jacob is out shepherding, then God would bring this dream to him very close to the time that he would be returning home.

<sup>18</sup> I have assumed that Laban is living in Haran and I use that place as a reference point throughout this chapter. However, the name Haran is not found in this chapter. I am basing this upon Genesis 24, and Laban may have moved since then (he is still in the general area, Paddan-aram).

mean that you eschew all business dealings with other people because you might get burned. Before signing anything, you just need to make sure of what you are doing; and you have to bear in mind, you might be cheated, even after doing due diligence.

The study of Laban and Jacob is fascinating because both men have a reasonable point of view. We have come to find with Jacob, he sometimes gets himself into some difficult situations and, more often than not, it is his fault.

Abraham and Isaac received promises for the future, but without fulfillment (both men fathered a son of promise). Jacob will begin to see the beginnings of God fulfilling His promises to him.

The study of Jacob is quite extensive in the Bible, and many of us can relate to him more than we can relate to Abraham. Abraham makes a lot of good choices; Jacob does not. Abraham seems to focus on the guidance of God and upon his family; Jacob seems to always be searching for that angle which he can work.

Despite Jacob failures and bad choices, God is every bit as much in his life as God was in the life of Abraham. God's will is just as manifest in the life of Jacob as it was in Abraham's life—perhaps even more so, because so often, Jacob seems to be at odds with God's plan. So often it seems that God's will would move Jacob to the right; but then Jacob would say, "I have given this a lot of thought, and I think it is better for me if I go left." It is almost as if Jacob appears to be in a perpetual wrestling match with God.

Let's take this chapter as an example. It will be time for Jacob to pack up his family and leave Paddan-aram and move back to Canaan. God will tell him to do so. However, in this chapter, it will appear as though God telling Jacob to return to Canaan is only one of many things which move Jacob in that direction. God's will does not ever appear to be enough to guide Jacob—not here in this chapter or at any time.

Nevertheless, even when Jacob is not completely cooperative, God's plan moves ahead. (This statement may properly describe most of Jacob's life.)

*Dr. Robert Dean: What we discover through this whole process is that God is the one who is covertly guiding and directing the affairs in Jacob's life. God is the one who is disciplining Jacob who is working in his spiritual life, bringing him to spiritual maturity. God is the one who is blessing Jacob not because of anything Jacob does. In fact Jacob is making a lot of bad decisions. Nevertheless God blesses him not because of who and what he is but because of the Abrahamic Covenant. God has a broader sovereign purpose that He is bringing about through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac and now Jacob as He is building the Jewish people. That takes precedence over the flaws and failures in the lives of the individual believers like Isaac or Jacob or even Abraham earlier.<sup>19</sup>*

Do you remember all of that mess when Jacob pretended to be Esau in order to receive the end-of-life blessing from his nearly blind father? Esau found out and wanted to kill Jacob. Then Rebekah, whose plan this was, arranges for her son Jacob to leave Canaan. See **Genesis 27** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). We would be hard pressed in that and the next chapter to find a single person doing the right thing—apart from Isaac's blessing of Jacob in **Genesis 28** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)). And yet, God's will is done. Jacob needed to leave the country and find his wife (actually, wives) in the east; and he does that.

*Dr. Robert Dean expresses very similar thoughts: The emphasis here is that no matter how many flaws and failures there are, and Jacob certainly made a lot of mistakes and failed in a lot of ways, God is always true to His promise. That is one of the key themes throughout this whole section of Genesis. We see all the failures, the flaws, the sin nature trends of all the patriarchs. These are not always wonderful people. Yet we see that God is faithful to His promise and He uses fallen, flawed sinners to accomplish His plans and purposes in history. So this is tremendous encouragement for all of us. Ultimately the emphasis is on God's faithfulness, that no matter what transpires, no matter what failures there might be in the circumstances, He is still faithful to His Word. He has been faithful*

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<sup>19</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

to Jacob. Jacob has left the land as a result of God's direction and while he is out of the land God has promised to prosper and bless him, and that is indeed what happened while he was out of the land.<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes, a commentator will begin with a good observation of this chapter of the Bible.

### Brief, but insightful observations on Genesis 31

Arthur W. Pink: *Before Jacob had ever set foot in Padan-Aram Jehovah, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, had said to him, "Behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." (Gen. 28:15). And now the time had drawn near when our patriarch was to return to the promised land. He was not to spend the remainder of his days in his uncle's household; God had a different purpose than that for him, and all things were made to work together for the furtherance of that purpose.*<sup>21</sup>

Dr. Thomas Constable: *Laban's hostility and his wives' encouragement motivated Jacob to return to Canaan. When Laban overtook Jacob in Gilead, Jacob defended his own actions and accused Laban of deceit. This silenced Laban and led him to request a peace treaty with Jacob.*<sup>22</sup>

Whedon: **Jacob's Flight from Padan-aram**, Genesis 31:1–21.

Whedon continues: *Twenty years have now passed since Jacob came to Laban's house. Genesis 31:38. The single one has become a multitude. Twelve children have been born unto him, and every thing has prospered in his hand. But it now becomes evident that the time for separation has arrived. Two families, of such diverse interests and hopes as those of Jacob and Laban, cannot abide long together, and Jacob is called to separate himself as Abraham had been two hundred years before.*<sup>23</sup>

Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on vv. 1–21: *The affairs of these families are related very minutely, while (what are called) the great events of states and kingdoms at that period, are not mentioned. The Bible teaches people the common duties of life, how to serve God, how to enjoy the blessings he bestows, and to do good in the various stations and duties of life. Selfish men consider themselves robbed of all that goes past them, and covetousness will even swallow up natural affection. Men's overvaluing worldly wealth is that error which is the root of covetousness, envy, and all evil. The men of the world stand in each other's way, and every one seems to be taking away from the rest; hence discontent, envy, and discord. But there are possessions that will suffice for all; happy they who seek them in the first place. In all our removals we should have respect to the command and promise of God. If He be with us, we need not fear. The perils which surround us are so many, that nothing else can really encourage our hearts. To remember favoured seasons of communion with God, is very refreshing when in difficulties; and we should often recollect our vows, that we fail not to fulfil them.*<sup>24</sup>

NEV commentary, in reference to Jacob and Laban: *[I]n essence these two deceitful and materialistic men were little different. The saving difference was simply God's grace and Jacob's openness to it.*<sup>25</sup>

H. C. Leupold makes what I believe to be a less than insightful observation: *One may well question whether this chapter offers suitable matter for preaching. Certain negative matters loom up rather prominently—Laban's treachery and duplicity; Rachel's theft, involving incipient idolatry at least on her father's part; Rachel's lie. Though such material could be used for illustrative purposes in sermons, yet it is not of a character to furnish a text or a theme.*

<sup>20</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>21</sup> From [http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings\\_Genesis/genesis\\_32.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_32.htm) accessed October 28, 2017 (edited).

<sup>22</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Genesis 31 chapter comments.

<sup>23</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31 chapter comments.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–21.

<sup>25</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

Leupold continues, becoming more specific: *In the section v. 1-16, v. 12 is an essential part, yet offensive for public use. Again the portion v. 22-32 consists mostly of the protestations of a hypocrite. Even if one should think v. 36-42 suitable in a sense as the defense of a faithful workman, surely the evangelical pulpit needs more comprehensive themes. The concluding section v. 43 ff. reports for the most part how a suspicious and utterly untrustworthy fellow seeks to safeguard himself by binding others through solemn contracts and covenants.*<sup>26</sup>

Personally, I see this as a chapter filled with practical applications; and without it, there would be a massive hole in the book of Genesis. I have also found this chapter to be filled with nuance, requiring careful examination to extract the great wisdom that it has for us.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

As I study a chapter, questions will occur to me—some of them important and many of them minor. Not all of these questions will be satisfactorily answered.

### Fundamental Questions About Genesis 31

1. Jacob tells his wives about a dream he had. When did this dream take place? Is he talking about two dreams that he had in Paddan-aram?
2. What is the significance of the little statue gods taken by Rachel? Why does she take them?
3. Why does God the Holy Spirit include this in the narrative?
4. Did Jacob really believe that Laban would take his daughters back from him?
5. When making a covenant, Laban will say, “[May the God of Abraham, and the god of Nahor, the gods of their father, judge between us.](#)” (Genesis 31:53a; ESV) *God, god, and gods* are all the same word. Is ESV correct to differentiate them as it does?
6. What does it mean, “Do not speak to Jacob for good or for bad”? And doesn’t Laban then do just that? Laban does not actually harm Jacob, but he sure gives him an earful.
7. How should we understand and interpret the covenant between Jacob and Laban?
8. What exact is this [God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father](#)?
9. What was Laban’s specific intent when he chased after Jacob? Was he out to kill Jacob and take back Jacob’s wives and children?

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It is important to understand what has gone before.

### The Prequel of Genesis 31

20 years previous, Jacob had moved to Paddan-aram. He had made a mess of things at home with his family, and had to flee because of threats from his twin brother. However, the cover story was, Jacob would go east to hook up with that part of the family, and take a wife from there, rather than marry a Hittite or a Canaanite. Jacob leaves with virtually nothing.

Jacob happens to meet his cousin Rachel at a well and goes home to meet her family. After a month, he proposes to exchange 7 years of work for her hand in marriage. Laban agrees, but, 7 years later, puts her older sister into his wedding bed. When Jacob protests the next morning, Laban gives him Rachel, on credit, for another 7 years of work.

After working for 14 years, Jacob and Laban come to a new agreement for Jacob to take the newly-born, odd-

<sup>26</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

### The Prequel of Genesis 31

colored sheep of Laban’s flock as his pay. As Jacob’s stock grows too quickly, Laban changes this agreement a considerable number of times. However, God continues to bless Jacob and to increase his flock, no matter what changes Laban makes to their agreement.

Genesis 31 will begin with Jacob hearing Laban’s sons complain about him taking what should belong to his father (the same problem that Laban had, that Jacob’s flock was growing too quickly). Jacob will decide, partially because of a dream from God, that it is time to leave Paddan-aram, so he will call his wives into the field to discuss this.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

We need to know who the people are who populate this chapter.

### The Principals of Genesis 31

| Characters                     | Commentary   |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Jacob                          | Jacob is the son of Isaac, who is the son of Abraham. These are heirs to the promises that God made to Abraham. Every descendant of Jacob will become heirs to these promises.   |
| Rachel                         | Jacob considers Rachel his primary wife, even though he was tricked into marrying her sister first. Rachel will steal some small idols which belong to her father.   |
| Leah                           | Although Jacob was not happy that he was tricked into marrying Leah, she has given him most of his sons (Rachel has only given birth to a single son by this time); and in this chapter, the women are treated equally. <sup>27</sup> Even when Jacob is complaining to Laban and what he has done, Jacob does not complain the Laban tricked him into marrying Leah.  |
| Laban’s sons                   | Laban’s sons are mentioned once in the previous chapter. We do not know their names or how many of them there are. It is likely that these boys are in their teens. It is likely that, Laban has enjoyed such an increase in his livestock, that his sons are managing the excess. These sons are very jealous that Jacob’s own flocks are growing so quickly; they believe that these odd-colored sheep should belong to their father (and, therefore, to them in their inheritance). |
| Laban                          | Laban is Jacob’s uncle on his mother’s side. Rachel and Leah are his two daughters which he gives to Jacob in exchange for 14 years work. Jacob works for Laban an additional 6 years, which takes us to the beginning of this chapter.<br><br>Laban is out sheering his sheep when Jacob slips away secretly. Laban finds out and pursues Jacob, in part, because of the figurines stolen from him.   |
| God                            | God has appeared to Jacob in a dream, telling him that it is time to move; He will also appear to Laban in a dream, when Laban is about to come into Jacob’s camp. Laban receives a stern warning from God.  |
| Their <i>brothers, kinsmen</i> | Laban brings along some kinsmen who are probably various men who are related to him, work for him or are slaves to him. Jacob also has acquired some slaves during his time working for Laban.   |

<sup>27</sup> Rachel will be named first when the wives are called for.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

We need to know where this chapter takes place.

### The Places of Genesis 31

| Place                       | Description  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Paddan-aram                 | This seems to be a large area in Mesopotamia.  |
| Haran                       | Haran is where Laban had been living before. It is not spoken of by name; but I have assumed that this is where Laban continues to live. Scripture places him in Haran back in Genesis 24, but it is not clear that is where he still resides. |
| Canaan, the Land of Promise | This is the land southwest of Paddan-aram, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.  |

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Map of Canaan and Mesopotamia (a graphic); from [My Bible](#); accessed October 21, 2017.



Whatever numbers are related to this chapter.

| By the Numbers   |   |
|--|---|
| Item   | Date; duration; size; number  |
| Matthew Poole <sup>28</sup> and Benson's date of this chapter:   | B.C. 1739   |
| The Berkeley Bible dates the beginning of this chapter.  | 1909 B.C. The dramatic difference in these dates is probably related to the amount of time that the sons of Jacob would live in Egypt (most believe this to be 430 years; some think 215 years).  |
| Number of male children that Jacob has:  | 11 (his 12 <sup>th</sup> son has not yet been born).  |
| Time frame of this chapter.  | Perhaps month or two. From the time that Jacob became aware of the hostility of Laban's sons toward him to the time for him to travel to east of Canaan.  |
| Outside of this time frame:  | The observed accumulation of livestock by Jacob would have occurred over a 6 year period of time and we do not know when Jacob heard Laban's sons complain. We also do not know when Jacob had his dream and when he told his wives about it. We also do not know how much time transpired between Jacob speaking with his wives and their exit from Paddan Aram. |
| <span style="color: purple;">Chapter Outline</span> <span style="color: purple; margin-left: 200px;">Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines</span> |   |

### The Patriarchal Timeline for Genesis 31

| Legend   |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Birth or death   | God speaks with Abraham |
| Historical incidents (most of which are related to Abraham)  |                         |
| Parenthetical dates (2065 B.C.) simply refer to taking the date assigned by the chronologist and using Scripture to determine the next date. |                         |

| MacDonald (N. Berkeley Bible) | Reese's Chronology Bible | Bible Hub | Ages        | Scripture       | Event/Description  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------|--|
| 2234 B.C.                     | 2097 B.C.                |           |             | Genesis 11:24   | Terah, Abram's father, is born. Gen 11:24–26 Nahor lived 29 years and fathered Terah. After he fathered Terah, Nahor lived 119 years and fathered other sons and daughters. Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran. |
|                               | 1978 B.C.                |           |             | Genesis 11:25   | Death of Nahor, Abram's uncle  |
|                               | 1969 B.C.                |           | Noah is 950 | Genesis 9:28–29 | Death of Noah  |

<sup>28</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1.

| MacDonald<br>(N. Berkeley<br>Bible)   | Reese's<br>Chronology<br>Bible      | Bible Hub | Ages              | Scripture                                     | Event/Description   |
|---|-------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|---|---|
| 2164 B.C.   | 1967 B.C.                           |           |                   | Genesis<br>11:26–27                           | Abraham (Terah's son) and Lot (Haran's son) born in Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram would be the 43 <sup>rd</sup> generation from Adam. Gen 11:26 <b>Terah lived 70 years and fathered Abram, Nahor, and Haran.</b>  |
| 2078 B.C.   | 1881 B.C.                           | 2080 B.C. | Abraham<br>is 86  | Gen. 16:15–16                                 | Ishmael born to Abraham and Hagar in the land of Canaan. Gen 16:16 <b>Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.</b>  |
| 2064 B.C.<br>(2066 B.C.)  |                                     | 2066 B.C. | Abraham<br>is 100 | Genesis 21:1–7<br>1Chronicles 1:34            | Isaac born to Abraham. Isaac would be the 44 <sup>th</sup> generation from Adam. Gen 21:5 <b>Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him.</b>  |
|   | 1841–<br>1816 B.C.                  |           |                   | Genesis<br>25:12–16<br>1Chronicles<br>1:29–31 | Ishmael's children.   |
|   | 1834 B.C.<br>1829 B.C.<br>(Klassen) | 2054 B.C. |                   | Genesis 22:1–19                               | Abraham is told by God to go to the <b>land of Moriah</b> to offer up his son Isaac to God as a sacrifice. This was a 3-day journey away. They then go to <b>Beer-sheba</b> , which could simply indicate that they are returning home to <b>Beer-sheba</b> .   |
| Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge <sup>29</sup> puts this date at 1872 B.C., based upon Antiquities by Josephus. |                                     |           |                   |   |   |
| (2029 B.C.)   | 1830 B.C.                           | 2030 B.C. | Abraham<br>is 137 | Genesis 23:1–20                               | The death of Sarah. She dies in <b>Kirjatharba</b> , it is <b>Hebron</b> , in the <b>land of Canaan</b> . Gen 23:1 <b>Now Sarah lived 127 years; these were all the years of her life.</b> She is buried in a cave of the field of Machpelah before <b>Mamre</b> ; it is <b>Hebron</b> , in the <b>land of Canaan</b> , purchased by Abraham from the sons of Heth. |
| (2026 B.C.)   |                                     |           |                   | Genesis 24:1–67<br>Genesis 25:20              | Isaac (Abraham's son) and Rebecca. Genesis 25:20 <b>Isaac was 40 years old when he took as his wife Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramæan from Paddan-aram, and sister of Laban the Aramæan.</b> At this time, Isaac is living in the <b>Negev</b> . It is likely that Abraham lived there as well; or near to there.   |
|   |                                     | 2026 B.C. | Isaac is<br>40    | Genesis 25:20                                 | Isaac marries Rebecca. Genesis 25:20  |
|   | 1826 B.C.                           |           |                   | Genesis 25:1                                  | Abraham marries Keturah. Smith puts the date at 1860 B.C.; and Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge at 1853 B.C.  |
|   |                                     |           |                   | Genesis 25:2–4<br>1Chronicles<br>1:32–33      | Abraham's fathers children by Keturah.  |
|   | 1817 B.C.                           |           | Shem is<br>600    | Genesis 11:11                                 | Death of Shem.  |

<sup>29</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Genesis 22:1.

| MacDonald<br>(N. Berkeley<br>Bible) | Reese's<br>Chronology<br>Bible               | Bible Hub | Ages                                 | Scripture               | Event/Description   |
|-------------------------------------|--|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 2004 B.C.                           | 1807 B.C.                                    | 2006 B.C. | Abraham<br>is 160;<br>Isaac is<br>60 | Genesis 25:19,<br>21–26 | Jacob & Esau born to Isaac. Gen 25:26 <i>After this, his brother came out grasping Esau's heel with his hand. So he was named Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when they were born.</i> Therefore, Abraham would be 160 years old. |
| (1991 B.C.)                         |  |           |                                      | Genesis 25:5–6          | Isaac is the heir of all things that Abraham has (but, most importantly, of the covenant of God with Abraham).  |
| 1989 B.C.                           | 1792 B.C.                                    | 1991 B.C. | Abraham<br>is 175                    | Genesis 25:7–10         | Abraham dies. Gen 25:7 <i>This is the length of Abraham's life: 175 years.</i> He is buried in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Nephron (this would be with Sarah).  |
|                                     |  |           |                                      | Genesis 25:11           | God blesses Isaac.  |
| (1943 B.C.)                         | 1788 B.C.                                    |           |                                      | Genesis 25:17           | The death of Ishmael. Gen 25:17 <i>This is the length of Ishmael's life: 137 years. He took his last breath and died, and was gathered to his people.</i>   |
|                                     |  |           | Eber is<br>464                       | Genesis 11:17           | Death of Eber.  |
|                                     | 1782 B.C.                                    | 1978 B.C. |                                      | Genesis<br>25:27–34     | Jacob obtains Esau's birthright for a mess of pottage.  |
|                                     | 1782 B.C.<br>1740 B.C.<br>(Klassen)          |           |                                      | Genesis 26:1–5          | A famine in the land; God renews covenant with Isaac at Gerar.  |
|                                     |  |           |                                      | Genesis 26:6–10         | Rebecca and Isaac in Gerar.   |
|                                     |  |           |                                      | Genesis<br>26:11–16     | Isaac is blessed by God in Gerar.   |
|                                     | 1782 B.C.<br>1735 B.C.<br>(Klassen)          |           |                                      | Genesis<br>26:17–22     | Strife between Isaac and Philistines in and near Gerar.   |
|                                     | 1767 B.C.                                    |           |                                      | Genesis<br>26:34–35     | Esau marries two Canaanite women.   |
|                                     | 1757–<br>1739 B.C.<br>1733 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                                      | Genesis<br>26:23–25     | Isaac makes an altar in Beer-sheba.   |
| (1943 B.C.)                         | 1744 B.C.                                    |           | Ishmael is<br>137                    | Genesis<br>25:17–18     | The death of Ishmael.   |
|                                     | 1738 B.C.<br>c 1732 B.C.<br>(Klassen)        | 1977 B.C. |                                      | Genesis<br>26:26–33     | Isaac's alliance with Abimelech at Beersheba.   |
| (1929 B.C.)                         | 1737 B.C.<br>1730 B.C.<br>(Klassen)          | 1929 B.C. |                                      | Genesis 27:1–46         | Jacob by deception receives a final blessing from Isaac that was meant for Esau.  |

| MacDonald<br>(N. Berkeley<br>Bible) | Reese's<br>Chronology<br>Bible                        | Bible Hub   | Ages | Scripture   | Event/Description  |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|------|---|--|
|                                     |   |   |      | Genesis 28:1–5  | Jacob goes to his Uncle Laban's home in Padan-aram for a wife.   |
|                                     |   | 1928 B.C.   |      | Genesis<br>28:10–22   | Jacob's dream; God speaks to Jacob.  |
|                                     |   |   |      | Genesis 28:6–9  | Esau marries a daughter of Ishmael.  |
|                                     |   | 1906 B.C.<br>(For<br>descendants)                     |      | Genesis 36:1–42   | Esau's marriages and descendants.  |
|                                     | 1736 B.C.<br>1730 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   | 1928 B.C.   |      | Genesis 29:1–14   | Jacob in Haran (Charan).   |
|                                     | 1736–<br>1729 B.C.<br>1730–<br>1723 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |   |      | Genesis<br>29:15–20   | Jacob works 7 years to marry Rachel, but is deceived by Laban, and Jacob marries Leah, her older sister.   |
|                                     | 1729 B.C.<br>1724 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   | 1921 B.C.   |      | Genesis<br>29:21–31   | Jacob marries Rachel   |
| (1915 B.C.)                         | 1729–<br>1716 B.C.<br>1723–<br>1710 B.C.<br>(Klassen) | 1921 B.C.<br>1916 B.C.<br>(Rachel<br>bears<br>Joseph) |      | Genesis<br>29:32–34<br>Genesis 30:1–6<br>Genesis 29:35<br>Genesis 30:9,<br>7–8, 10–24   | Jacob has 12 children by his wives, Rachel and Leah; and by their personal servants as well. Reese breaks the timeline down in smaller increments in his book. |
| 1915 B.C.                           |   |   |      | Genesis   | Joseph is born.  |
|                                     | 1711 B.C.   |   |      | Genesis<br>36:31–33<br>1Chronicles<br>1:43–44<br>Genesis<br>26:34–39<br>1Chronicles<br>1:45–50<br>Genesis<br>36:40–43<br>1Chronicles<br>1:51–54 | The kings of Edom.   |
| (1909 B.C.)                         | 1716 B.C.<br>1710 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   |   |      | Genesis<br>30:25–43<br>Genesis 31:1–16  | Jacob's final years with Laban.  |
|                                     |   |   |      | Genesis<br>31:17–55   | Jacob's departure from Laban.  |
|                                     |   | 1908 B.C.   |      | Genesis 32:1–23   | Jacob returns to Canaan.   |

| MacDonald<br>(N. Berkeley<br>Bible) | Reese's<br>Chronology<br>Bible                        | Bible Hub | Ages            | Scripture                              | Event/Description   |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------|-----------------|--|---|
|                                     |   | 1906 B.C. |                 | Genesis<br>32:24–32<br>Genesis 35:10   | Jacob wrestles with the angel.                                  |
|                                     |   | 1906 B.C. |                 | Genesis 33:1–16                        | Jacob meets Esau face to face.                                  |
|                                     | 1715 B.C.<br>1710 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   | 1906 B.C. |                 | Genesis<br>33:17–20                    | The resumption of Jacob's journey.                              |
|                                     | 1711–<br>1708 B.C.<br>1706–<br>1705 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                 | Genesis 38:1–5<br>1Chronicles 2:3      | Judah fathers 3 sons.   |
|                                     | 1700 B.C.<br>1687 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   | 1906 B.C. |                 | Genesis 34:1–31                        | Dinah, daughter of Judah, is defiled.                           |
|                                     |   | 1906 B.C. |                 | Genesis 35:1–15                        | Jacob returns to Bethel.  |
|                                     | 1700 B.C.<br>1710 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   | 1903 B.C. |                 | Genesis<br>35:16–19 48:7<br>35:20–22   | Rachel dies when giving birth to Benjamin.                      |
| (1898 B.C.)                         |   |           |                 | Genesis 35:27<br>37:1                  | The return to Hebron.   |
|                                     | 1699 B.C.   |           | Joseph is<br>17 | Genesis 37:2–11                        | Joseph—his early days and his dreams.                           |
|                                     |   |           |                 | Genesis<br>37:12–35                    | Joseph in Shechem and Dothan.                                   |
| 1897 B.C.                           |   | 1898 B.C. |                 | Genesis 37:36<br>39:1                  | Joseph is sold into slavery, to end up in Egypt.                |
|                                     | c1699–<br>1690 B.C.                                   | 1898 B.C. |                 | Genesis 39:2–6                         | Joseph enjoys prosperity in Egypt.                              |
|                                     | c1695 B.C.<br>1707 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                  | 1898 B.C. |                 | Genesis 38:6–11                        | Judah and Tamar.  |
|                                     | 1692 B.C.   |           |                 | Genesis<br>38:12–26                    | Judah's wife dies.  |
|                                     | 1692 B.C.<br>1691 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                   |           |                 | Genesis<br>38:27–30<br>1Chronicles 2:4 | The birth of Pharez, the 41 <sup>st</sup> generation from Adam. |
|                                     | c1690 B.C.<br>1689 B.C.<br>(Klassen)                  | 1889 B.C. |                 | Genesis 39:7–19                        | Joseph flees adultery.  |
|                                     |   | 1889 B.C. |                 | Genesis<br>39:20–23                    | Joseph is put into jail; yet prospers in jail.                  |

| MacDonald<br>(N. Berkeley<br>Bible) | Reese's<br>Chronology<br>Bible      | Bible Hub                | Ages            | Scripture  | Event/Description   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| (1887 B.C.)                         | 1688 B.C.                           | 1887 B.C.                |                 | Genesis 40:1–23                                    | Joseph gives the interpretation of the dreams of the baker and the butler.                    |
| 1884 B.C.                           | 1687 B.C.                           |                          | Isaac is<br>180 | Genesis<br>35:28–29                                | The death of Isaac. <a href="#">Now the days of Isaac were 180 years.</a> (Genesis 35:28)     |
| (1885 B.C.)                         | 1686 B.C.                           | 1886 B.C.                |                 | Genesis 41:1–37                                    | Joseph interprets the Pharaoh's dream.  |
|                                     |                                     | 1886 B.C.                |                 | Genesis<br>41:38–44                                | Joseph is made governor.  |
|                                     |                                     |                          |                 | Genesis 41:45                                      | Joseph marries Asenath.   |
| 1884 B.C.                           | 1686–<br>1679 B.C.                  | 1886 B.C.<br>(Beginning) |                 | Genesis<br>41:46–49                                | The 7 years of plenty.  |
|                                     | 1685–<br>1683 B.C.                  |                          |                 | Genesis<br>41:50–53                                | Sons are born to Joseph.  |
|                                     | 1685–<br>1681 B.C.                  |                          |                 | Exodus 6:16<br>Num. 3:17<br>1Chronicles 6:1,<br>16 | The descendants of Levi are born.   |
|                                     | 1679–<br>1672 B.C.                  | 1875 B.C.                |                 | Genesis<br>41:54–57                                | The seven years of famine.  |
| (1876 B.C.)                         | 1678 B.C.<br>1677 B.C.<br>(Klassen) | 1875 B.C.                |                 | Genesis<br>42:1–44:34                              | Joseph provides his family with food.   |
|                                     |                                     | 1875 B.C.                |                 | Genesis 45:1–15                                    | Joseph reveals himself to his brothers.   |
|                                     |                                     | 1875 B.C.                |                 | Genesis<br>45:16–28                                | Jacob hears that his son, Joseph, is still alive, and he prepares to travel to Egypt himself. |
|                                     | 1677 B.C.                           |                          |                 | Ruth 4:18<br>1Chronicles 2:5                       | Birth of Hezron, the 40 <sup>th</sup> generation.   |
| 1873 B.C. <sup>30</sup>             | 1677 B.C.                           | 1875 B.C.                |                 | Genesis 46:1–7,<br>28                              | Jacob goes to Egypt after God's assurance in Beersheba.                                       |
|                                     |                                     | 1875 B.C.                | Jacob is<br>130 | Genesis 46:8–27<br>Exodus 1:1–5                    | Summary of the 70 who came to Egypt. Compare Genesis 47:8–9 and 46:27 for Jacob's age.        |
|                                     |                                     | 1875 B.C.                |                 | Genesis<br>46:29–34<br>47:1–12                     | The people of Joseph are established in Egypt.  |
|                                     | 1676–<br>1675 B.C.                  |                          |                 | Genesis<br>47:13–21                                | Joseph continues as prime minister in Egypt, exercising wise leadership during the famine.    |
|                                     |                                     |                          |                 | Genesis<br>47:22–26                                | The land of the priests in Egypt.   |
|                                     | 1672–<br>1593 B.C.                  |                          |                 | 1Chronicles<br>2:6–8                               | Zerah, the brother of Pharez, and his descendants.  |

<sup>30</sup> Jacob moves family to the Land of Goshen in Egypt (Genesis 47:28)

| MacDonald<br>(N. Berkeley<br>Bible) | Reese's<br>Chronology<br>Bible      | Bible Hub | Ages             | Scripture                   | Event/Description   |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|                                     | 1671 B.C.<br>1660 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                  | Genesis 48:1–22             | Blessings to Manasseh and Ephraim.  |
|                                     | 1660 B.C.<br>1665 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                  |                             | Birth of Berith to Ephraim.   |
|                                     |                                     |           |                  | Genesis<br>47:28–31         | The last days of Jacob; his charge to Joseph.                                     |
|                                     |                                     | 1859 B.C. |                  | Genesis 49:1–32             | Jacob speaks to his sons, giving them their final blessings and encouraging them. |
| 1857 B.C.                           | 1660 B.C.                           | 1859 B.C. | Jacob is<br>147  | Genesis 49:33               | The death of Jacob.   |
|                                     |                                     | 1859 B.C. |                  | Genesis 50:1–14             | The burial of Jacob.  |
|                                     |                                     |           |                  | Genesis<br>50:15–21         | The fears of Joseph's brothers after the death of Jacob.                          |
|                                     | 1638 B.C.<br>1644 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                  |                             | Birth of Resheph (who is in the line between Ephraim and Joshua).                 |
|                                     | 1625 B.C.<br>1620 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                  | Num. 26:58                  | Birth of Aram (Levi's grandson and Moses' father).                                |
|                                     | 1623 B.C.<br>1604 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                  |                             | The birth of Ram, the 39 <sup>th</sup> generation.                                |
|                                     | 1615 B.C.<br>1625 B.C.<br>(Klassen) |           |                  |                             | The birth of Telah, in the line between Ephraim and Joshua.                       |
|                                     |                                     |           |                  | Genesis<br>50:22–23         | Joseph's last days.   |
|                                     | 1606 B.C.                           |           |                  | Genesis<br>50:24–25         | Joseph's last words.  |
| 1805 B.C.<br>(1805 B.C.)            |                                     | 1806 B.C. | Joseph is<br>110 | Genesis 50:26<br>Exodus 1:6 | The death of Joseph. His brothers also die.                                       |
|                                     | 1606–<br>1462 B.C.                  |           |                  | Genesis 47:27<br>Exodus 1:7 | The population explosion among the Jews living in Egypt.                          |

### Bibliography

MacDonald's timeline is from: <http://www.bibleistrue.com/qna/qna63.htm> accessed October 11, 2011 and August 12, 2014. Included in MacDonald's timeline is a timeline for Egypt interspersed.

See <http://www.bibleistrue.com/qna/qna63dating.htm> for his justification of his timeline.

The Bible Hub [timeline](#) (accessed January 11, 2015) appears to be pretty thorough, but no one specifically is credited.

From: [http://www.christianshepherd.org/bible\\_study\\_guides/abram\\_to\\_the\\_exodus.pdf](http://www.christianshepherd.org/bible_study_guides/abram_to_the_exodus.pdf) (Christian shepherd). This source believes that the Jews live only a short time in Egypt (210 years).

*The Reese Chronological Bible*; KJV translation; Editor: Edward Reese; ©1977 by Edward Reese and Klassen's dating system ©1975 by Frank R. Klassen; ©1980 by Bethany House Publishers, South Minneapolis, MN; pp. 18–19, 54–74.

*The Modern Language Bible (The New Berkeley Version)*, Revised Edition; ©1969 by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; pp. 10–54.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Here is what to expect from Genesis 31:

### Clarke's Synopsis of Genesis 31

Laban and his sons envy Jacob, Genesis 31:1–2; on which he is commanded by the Lord to return to his own country, Genesis 31:3. Having called his wives together, he lays before them a detailed statement of his situation in reference to their father, Genesis 31:4–5; the services he had rendered him, Genesis 31:6; the various attempts made by Laban to defraud him of his hire, Genesis 31:7; how, by God's providence, his evil designs had been counteracted, Genesis 31:8–12; and then informs them that he is now called to return to his own country, Genesis 31:13. To the proposal of an immediate departure, Leah and Rachel agree; and strengthen the propriety of the measure by additional reasons, Genesis 31:14–16; on which Jacob collects all his family, his flocks and his goods, and prepares for his departure, Genesis 31:17–18.

Laban having gone to shear his sheep, Rachel secretes his images, Genesis 31:19. Jacob and his family, unknown to Laban, take their departure, Genesis 31:20, Genesis 31:21.

On the third day Laban is informed of their flight, Genesis 31:22; and pursues them to Mount Gilead, Genesis 31:23. God appears to Laban in a dream, and warns him not to molest Jacob, Genesis 31:24. He comes up with Jacob at Mount Gilead, Genesis 31:25; reproaches him with his clandestine departure, Genesis 31:26–29; and charges him with having stolen his gods, Genesis 31:30. Jacob vindicates himself, and protests his innocence in the matter of the theft, Genesis 31:31–32. Laban makes a general search for his images in Jacob's, Leah's, Bilhah's, and Zilpah's tents; and not finding them, proceeds to examine Rachel's, Genesis 31:33. Rachel, having hidden them among the camel's furniture, sat upon them, Genesis 31:34; and making a delicate excuse for not rising up, Laban desists from farther search, Genesis 31:35.

Jacob, ignorant of Rachel's theft, reproaches Laban for his suspicions, Genesis 31:36–37; enumerates his long and faithful services, his fatigues, and Laban's injustice, Genesis 31:38–41; and shows that it was owing to God's goodness alone that he had any property, Genesis 31:42.

Laban is moderated, and proposes a covenant, Genesis 31:43–44. Jacob sets up a stone, and the rest bring stones and make a heap, which Laban calleth Jegar-Sahadutha, and Jacob Galeed, Genesis 31:45–47. They make a covenant, and confirm it by an oath, Genesis 31:48–53. Jacob offers a sacrifice; they eat together; and Laban and his companions, having lodged in the mount all night, take a friendly leave of Jacob and his family next morning, and depart, Genesis 31:54–55.

Like all chapters of the Word of God, you need more than just the simple plot outline to understand what God wants us to know.

Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31 chapter comments.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

These outlines tend to vary more than we might think.

## Outlines of Genesis 31 (Various Commentators)

Rev. Joseph Benson:

- (1.) His resolution to return, Genesis 31:1–16.
- (2.) His clandestine departure, Genesis 31:17–21.
- (3.) Laban's pursuit of him in displeasure, Genesis 31:22–25.
- (4.) The hot words that passed between them, Genesis 31:26–42.
- (5.) Their amicable agreement at last, Genesis 31:43–55.<sup>31</sup>

Arno Gaebelein:

### CHAPTER 31 **Jacob's Servitude Ended and Flight from Laban**

1. Laban's behavior and God's commandment (Genesis 31:1–10)
2. The dream vision to return to the land (Genesis 31:11–16)
3. Jacob's flight (Genesis 31:17–21)
4. Laban warned (Genesis 31:22–24)
5. Laban's accusation (Genesis 31:25–30)
6. Jacob's answer (Genesis 31:31–42)
7. The covenant between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:43–55)<sup>32</sup>

The Cambridge Bible:

- 1–21. The Flight of Jacob.  
22–55. The Pursuit of Laban, and the Covenant between Laban and Jacob at Gilead.<sup>33</sup>

Matthew Henry:

Jacob was a very honest good man, a man of great devotion and integrity, yet he had more trouble and vexation than any of the patriarchs. He left his father's house in a fright, went to his uncle's in distress, very hard usage he met with there, and now is going back surrounded with fears.

- I. His resolution to return (v. 1–16).
- II. His clandestine departure, (Genesis 31:17–21).
- III. Laban's pursuit of him in displeasure (Genesis 31:22–25).
- IV. The hot words that passed between them (v. 26–42).
- V. Their amicable agreement at last (Genesis 31:43, etc.).<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett:

### **Jacob Prospers and Decides to Return Home** (Genesis 30:25 to Genesis 32:2).

This passage is centred around two theophanies and two covenants. In the first theophany Yahweh appears to Jacob and tells him to return home (Genesis 31:3). Then Jacob, describing the theophany to his wives, amplifies what God said as the God of Bethel, emphasising the command to return home (Genesis 31:11–13). And the second is when he meets the angels of God at Mahanaim (Genesis 32:1–2). The passage also contains details of the two covenants made between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 30:31–33 and Genesis 31:44–53). Originally separate covenant records may well have been involved.<sup>35</sup>

Leupold:

- a. the flight of Jacob, v. 1-21;
- b. the interference of Laban, v. 22-42;
- c. the treaty, v. 43-54.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis chapter comments.

<sup>32</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–55.

<sup>33</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31 chapter comments.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31 chapter comments.

<sup>35</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31 chapter comments.

<sup>36</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## Outlines of Genesis 31 (Various Commentators)

Matthew Poole:

Jacob observing Laban's envy, on God's command and promise, with the consent of his wives, departs secretly, Genesis 31:1–21. Laban pursues him; God in a dream warns him not to treat Jacob ill; he overtakes him on Mount Gilead; taxes him sharply for his secret departure, and with stealing his gods, Genesis 31:23–30. Jacob excuses his departure, Genesis 31:31; denies the taking either gods or aught else that was Laban's, Genesis 31:32. Laban searches, but finds not, Genesis 31:33–35. Jacob is wroth, and rebukes him vehemently for all he had suffered from him, Genesis 31:36–41. He owns God as his defence in the day of his affliction, Genesis 31:42. They make a covenant, in which Laban obliges Jacob not to hurt his daughters, nor take other wives to them, Genesis 31:44–52. Jacob swears by the fear of Isaac, and offers sacrifice, Genesis 31:53,54. Laban returns to his place, Genesis 31:55.<sup>37</sup>

F. B. Meyer on vv. 1–21:

Jacob was a remarkable mixture. He had an eminently religious nature, and had intimate dealings with God. Note Genesis 31:3; Genesis 31:5; Genesis 31:7; Genesis 31:18. But he grossly misrepresented God's dealings with him when he gave his wives the reasons on which he proposed flight. Note Genesis 31:9; Genesis 31:13. So the flesh and spirit struggle for mastery within us all, and only as the grace of God enters our hearts can we come into the absolute supremacy of the spiritual and divine, Galatians 5:17. The secret departure was very undignified and unworthy of the heir of the promises. The command to return was of God, and what He commands He becomes responsible for. Besides, had not the Almighty promised to keep him in all places? See Genesis 28:15. When we are on God's plan, we may reckon on Him absolutely.<sup>38</sup>

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A paragraph (or two) description of Genesis 31.

## Brief Descriptions of Genesis 31 (by Various Commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *In this chapter is the record of Jacob's leaving Paddan-aram and taking the long journey back to his ancestral home at Beersheba, taking with him his wives and children and all of the wealth which he gathered "beyond the River," the Euphrates. His increasing awareness of the increasing hostility of Laban, his enlistment of his wives as helpers in his secret departure, the actual departure, Laban's angry pursuit, their confrontation in the hills of Gilead, and the amicable settlement of their hostilities, which was commemorated by the erection of a cairn of stones and a festive meal together - all are here interwoven to form one of the most interesting chapters in the Bible. This effective narrative is a unity, a fact attested by the skilled and brilliant manner of its presentation.*<sup>39</sup>

J. Vernon McGee sums up this chapter: *In this chapter we find that Jacob leaves Laban without giving notice. They don't even have a farewell party for him. Laban takes out after him and overtakes him. Finally, Jacob and Laban made another contract, this time not to defraud or hurt each other. Then they separate in an outwardly friendly manner.*<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1.

<sup>38</sup> F. B. Meyer, *Through the Bible by Day (A Devotional Commentary)*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–21.

<sup>39</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>40</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

## Brief Descriptions of Genesis 31 (by Various Commentators)

Arno Gaebelein: *The twenty years had expired [since Jacob had come to Paddan-aram]. Laban's hatred and the hatred of his sons had increased. When the crisis had been reached the voice of Jehovah was heard. "Return unto the land of your fathers and to thy kindred; and I will be with you." This is the first time Jehovah spoke since the vision at Bethel. Jacob then laid the matter before his wives and relates a dream in which the angel of the Lord had spoken to him. What comfort it must have been for him to hear "I have seen all that Laban does unto you." The Lord watched over Jacob and though Laban hated him Jacob prospered. So Israel in the dispersion, hated by the Gentiles, increases and prospers.*

Arno Gaebelein continues: *Rachel and Leah consented to flee and Jacob departs with his great wealth, his cattle and his goods. Soon Laban pursued and overtook Jacob. God warned the Syrian to beware how he treated Jacob. It seems that the main reason of the pursuit was the teraphim (household gods) which Rachel had stolen and which Laban wanted to recover. Idolatry was practiced in the household of Laban, though he used the name of Jehovah (Genesis 31:49). The dialogue between Jacob and Laban is intensely interesting.<sup>41</sup>*

Hawker: *After a servitude of many years, in the family of Laban, Jacob resolves to return to his own home. And to this measure he is prompted, not only by the unkind treatment of Laban and his sons, but still more by a divine direction. The circumstances of Jacob's departure, with his wives and all that belonged to him: the pursuit of Laban after him: the gracious interposition of God for Jacob's protection, by the ministry of a dream on the mind of Laban: their interview: their reconciliation; their covenant of amity; and their final separation; these form the principal contents of this Chapter.<sup>42</sup>*

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31 records for us the story of Jacob's departure from Laban in Paddan Aram. This chapter contains the final act in the drama of the tumultuous relationship between Jacob and Laban.*

Wenstrom continues: *In Genesis 31:1-2, we will see Laban and his sons displaying a bad attitude towards Jacob because the Lord has been prospering Jacob and giving him spotted, speckled and stripe flocks from Laban's solid colored flocks. Also, we will see in Genesis 31:3, the Lord commanding Jacob to leave Laban and return home to the land of Canaan and his father Isaac.<sup>43</sup>*

Dr. Robert Dean: *To give a brief overview of chapter thirty-one we learn that Jacob the chiseller has been out-foxed by his uncle, cheated out of his first choice for a wife, forced to work for 20 years now, and has been cheated out of his income. But God is true to His promise to bless Jacob and to protect him while he was out of the land. That has come to a fulfillment and at the end of chapter 30 Jacob has become quite prosperous. That sets up the problem, the conflict, the difficulty that he faces in chapter 31. Jacob realizes now, according to 31:1, that God's blessing has caused his in-laws to resent him. So the problem that he now faces is a problem common to everyone down through the corridors of time, and that is the life and the welfare of his family. Their security is threatened because now that he has been blessed so greatly by God his in-laws seem to be turning against them and he knows that with the way that Laban is such a manipulator that their whole livelihood, everything that they have, is in jeopardy. He knows that he can no longer stay in Paddan-aram. So this is one of the ways that God maneuvers the circumstances and closes all the other opportunities. So it is time for Jacob to leave and to get out of there.*

<sup>41</sup> Arno Clement Gaebelein, *The Annotated Bible*; 1919; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–55 (slightly edited).

<sup>42</sup> Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Genesis 31:1.

<sup>43</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 483); accessed October 15, 2017.

### Brief Descriptions of Genesis 31 (by Various Commentators)

Dean continues: *This chapter has a number of important lessons for us, so we have to get an overview before we get into it. It starts off with Jacob's brothers-in-law expressing resentment and jealousy toward Jacob. He knows that he needs to leave, and so he flees. The same word for "flee" is used here in the Hebrew as back in chapter 28 when he flees from the land of Canaan. The author wants us to understand that there is a similarity between the two episodes. Laban doesn't find out for three days, and then Laban pursues him. When Laban finally catches up with him after a week he accuses Jacob falsely of stealing from him and stealing his teraphim (household gods). Jacob, because he is in the right, is being unjustifiably accused by Laban of having stolen the teraphim. He doesn't know that Rachel stole them so that he is indeed innocent of all charges and he has not stolen anything from Laban. All of the wealth that he has that was originally Laban's was transferred to him by God in fair business dealings. But Laban wants to accuse him of stealing all of his possessions from him, and when it turns out that Laban is unable to find the teraphim that Jacob, in his justifiable position, turns the table on Laban by accusing him of cheating him all these years. So what we see is how God in this process just works out His justice in their life.*<sup>44</sup>

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The ESV; capitalized is used below.

### A Synopsis of Genesis 31 from the Summarized Bible

- Contents:** Jacob's resolution to return. Laban's hot pursuit; their quarrel and final agreement.
- Characters:** Laban, Jacob, Rachael, Leah.
- Conclusion:** The safety of believers under trying circumstances is much due to the hold God has on the consciences of bad men. In the path of obedience, we may count on God's care.
- Key Word:** Flight, Genesis 31:21 (He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.).
- Strong Verses:** Genesis 31:48–49 (Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he named it Galeed, and Mizpah, for he said, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are out of one another's sight.).
- Striking Facts:** The settlement of a quarrel is a jewel so precious, one can scarcely buy it too dearly. While the believer may resent injuries, he is not to avenge them but remember that God is the avenger.

Keith L. Brooks, *Summarized Bible; Complete Summary of the Bible*; ©1919; from e-Sword, Genesis 31 (slightly edited).

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It is helpful to see what came before and what follows in a brief summary.

### The Big Picture (Genesis 29–32)

| Scripture           | Text/Commentary  |
|---------------------|--|
| Genesis 29:1–30     | Jacob comes to Paddan-aram, to his family in the east, and marries his two cousins.  |
| Genesis 29:31–30:24 | Jacob's wives and their servant girls bear 11 sons to Jacob.   |
| Genesis 30:25–43    | Jacob begins to think about leaving, but his Uncle Laban persuades him to stay, setting up a new deal to pay him for his work. |

<sup>44</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

### The Big Picture (Genesis 29–32)

| Scripture        | Text/Commentary   |
|------------------|---|
| Genesis 31:1–21  | There are rifts in the extended family of Laban; so Jacob, speaks to his wives, and then gathers up his family and sneaks away.   |
| Genesis 31:22–55 | Laban finds out that they are gone and goes after Jacob and his family, catching up to them. Laban and Jacob air all of their grievances and come to an agreement about Jacob leaving. They make a covenant and go their separate ways. |
| Genesis 32:1–6   | As Jacob and his family move closer to the Land of Promise, he sends messages to Esau, to inform him that he is coming.   |
| Genesis 32:7–11  | Jacob divides his own family into two camps and calls God out on a promise.   |
| Genesis 32:13–23 | Jacob prepares a generous present for Esau.   |
| Genesis 32:24–32 | Jacob wrestles with the Angel of God and has his leg permanently injured.   |

Jacob travels from Canaan to Paddan-aram and back to Canaan.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

The first title is often applicable to the entire chapter (although it may pertain just to the verses which follow it to the next section heading).

#### Paragraph Divisions of Modern Translations for Genesis 31 (from Dr. Bob Utley)

| NASB                             | NKJV                           | NRSV   | TEV  | NJB (FOLLOWS MT)   |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Jacob Leaves Secretly for Canaan | Jacob Flees from Laban         | Jacob's Success in Haran (Gen. 29:1 to Gen. 31:55) | Jacob Flees from Laban   | Jacob's Flight   |
| Gen. 31:1-16                     | Gen. 31:1-16                   | Gen. 31:1-9  | Gen. 31:1-3<br>Gen. 31:4-9                                       | Gen. 31:1-13   |
| Gen. 31:17-21                    | Gen. 31:17-21                  | Gen. 31:10-16<br>Gen. 31:17-18<br>Gen. 31:19-21    | Gen. 31:10-13<br>Gen. 31:14-16<br>Gen. 31:17-21                  | Gen. 31:14-16<br>Gen. 31:17-21                             |
| Laban Pursues Jacob              | Laban Pursues Jacob            |  | Laban Pursues Jacob  | Laban Pursues Jacob  |
| Gen. 31:22-24<br>Gen. 31:25-32   | Gen. 31:22-24<br>Gen. 31:25-32 | Gen. 31:22-24<br>Gen. 31:25-32                     | Gen. 31:22-25  | Gen. 21:22-25  |
| Gen. 31:33-35<br>Gen. 31:36-42   | Gen. 31:33-35<br>Gen. 31:36-42 | Gen. 31:33-35<br>Gen. 31:36-42                     | Gen. 31:26-30<br>Gen. 31:31-32<br>Gen. 31:33-35<br>Gen. 31:36-42 | Gen. 31:26-30<br>Gen. 31:31-35<br>Gen. 31:36-42            |
| The Covenant of Mizpah           | Laban's Covenant with Jacob    |  | The Agreement Between Jacob and Laban                            | A Treaty Between Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:43 to Gen. 32:3) |
| Gen. 31:43-55                    | Gen. 31:43-50<br>Gen. 31:51-55 | Gen. 31:43-50<br>Gen. 31:51-54<br>Gen. 31:55       | Gen. 31:43-44<br>Gen. 31:45-55                                   | Gen. 31:43-44<br>Gen. 31:45-55                             |

From Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31 chapter comments).

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Most of the chapters in the second half of Genesis are 20 or 30 verses long (give or take). This chapter has 55 verses. Therefore, it will end up being about twice the length of most chapter studies.

**Jacob and Laban in Genesis 31:** It is easy to see Laban as the villain and Jacob as the hero of this chapter; but that is far too simplistic. Laban was able to manipulate Jacob simply because he was more adept at it. Although Jacob did attempt some hocus pocus behind the scenes (his goofy breeding scheme of last chapter), Jacob finally came to realize that he could trust God when it came to his remuneration from God, despite what Laban did. I would agree that Jacob experienced some spiritual growth in Haran, and more or less obeyed God when He told Jacob to leave. Nevertheless, Jacob sneaks out of Haran rather than ending his relationship with Laban properly.

God told Jacob in a dream to leave Haran. His next few steps should have been to speak to his wives about this and then speak to Laban about it. No matter what hard feelings there are, Laban is not stronger than God; Laban could not have taken his daughters or grandsons from Jacob; nor could he have forbidden Jacob to leave.

However, given Jacob's complaints to his wives, it should be clear that, there is much more pushing Jacob out of the land, over and above the order of God.

All of this is fairly subtle and some may try to heap too much praise upon Jacob; but do not forget, as Jacob moves closer to Canaan, after all this has taken place, the Angel of God will wrestle with him, because that represents what Jacob has been doing with God all of his life.

So many times, when I am studying a chapter, I come across a key or a correct way of seeing things, and suddenly, a whole set of verses make perfect sense. I had somewhat of an epiphany with vv. 8–10, where suddenly, they all fit together, they all made sense, and it was clear the points that Jacob was making. This would mark my 5<sup>th</sup> going through this chapter where finally it makes perfect sense to me. I have had times in the past where it might take me 8 or 10 times of going through a particular chapter or passage, and then suddenly, it all becomes clear.

Sometimes, it is the twist of a phrase or the understanding of a phrase; and sometimes, I have a better understanding of the pertinent doctrines than I had before.

One of the things which is often missed in the study of the Bible is, many of these are compelling dramatic stories, with actual inherent literary elements. That is, *what's going to happen next* is very much a part of some of the narratives that we study. Just as God is very theatric when He enters into human history; so is His Word very much a piece of literary work. We are moved forward on plot points and narrative and character development. One of the little pieces of drama in this chapter is, Rachel steals her father's idols, we all know that she has done it; and then her father catches up to her caravan and begins to search for his missing idols. And Jacob pronounces that the thief should be executed. So what will Laban find and what will happen after he finds these idols? There are several narratives in Genesis which are like this, which really draw us into the story itself. This does not make them any less historical; but one cannot ignore the literary components of Scripture.

Related to this are the very theatric elements of portions of the Bible. One cannot ask for a more theatric story than the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 1–15). It is not simply narrative; but very theatric for all those who viewed this in real life. What I mean is, everyone involved—Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh, the Egyptians, the sons of Jacob—all of them witness some amazing events—life transforming events, if you will. No one was left out. At the very end, when the sons of Jacob walk out of Egypt, there is not some Egyptian running around saying, "Now, what just happened? Who are these people? Why are they leaving?" Everyone was involved; everyone saw things. This was a great stage; a massive production, with a cast of millions.

Similar things could be written about Y<sup>e</sup>howah upon Mount Sinai, the Ten Commandments etched in stone tablets, the amazing miracles witnessed in the desert. All of these things are very amazing and very theatrical.

Genesis 31, the chapter which we are studying, does not simply have, *In a dream, God came to Jacob and told him to move, and so he did*. There is a great deal more detail in the 55 verses than that. As discussed earlier, Jacob appears to have had a dream where God told him to leave Paddan-aram; but that also does not appear to be enough. Many other factors are brought into play.

There are two ways to view the events of this chapter (both are probably true). (1) The things which take place (like the negative remarks of Laban's sons or Laban's negative attitude towards Jacob) are really the things which give him the impetus to move from Paddan-aram. I maintain that God's orders delivered to Jacob (vv. 3, 13) were not enough to move Jacob; and circumstances also needed to encourage him to go. (2) It is also possible that these circumstances were among the reasons God wanted Jacob to return to Canaan. The animosity between Laban's sons and Jacob might go farther than it has gone.

God brought Jacob to Paddan-aram for several reasons: (1) to get married; (2) to begin the Jewish race; and (3) to become wealthy (blessed of God). These things are taken care of, so now it is time for Jacob to return to the land given him by God. His sons need to spend some time in the land of Canaan and to understand that God has given this land to them. Living in Paddan-aram would give them no sense of that. God has a timetable for Jacob and his family, and that includes time in Canaan (for those who know about this long narrative, at the end, Jacob and his family will reside in Egypt).

*J. Vernon McGee: We will see that God wants to get Jacob out of that land. He recognizes that the influence of Laban's household is not good for Jacob and his growing family. The boys are going to be heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, and God is anxious to get them out from that environment and back into Abraham's country, the country which He had promised to Abraham [Isaac and Jacob].<sup>45</sup>*

At the end of each completed verse is often a summary and/or an interpretation of that verse. When the verse is preceded by Genesis 31 in a **green color**, then that was taken from the Modern King James Version. Sometimes quotations marks and italics have been added.

In this study, I have quoted a great deal from Wenstrom, who provided a solid, well-thought out commentary on this chapter. I should also call your attention to Leupold, who made a number of unique observations. Although I certainly disagree with these and other commentators from time to time, the primary purpose is to more accurately present the meaning of the text at hand.

#### **Changes—additions and subtractions (for Genesis 31):**

*Outlines of Genesis 31* has added to the introductory material, which is something I have been doing informally for many chapters.

Similarly, *Brief Descriptions of Genesis 31* was also added.

Another new thing I am trying is, listing the text of a verse where it appears to be a link, but it is simply the verse of the text. In a WordPerfect document, running the mouse over the *link* will reveal the text. I do not know what will happen when this is converted to a PDF or an HTML. If this does not translate to those other documents, then I probably won't do it any more.

I began grouping commentators' opinions into boxes previously; by this chapter, this has become an established approach, which may also include commentary on their thoughts, when additional commentary is deemed

<sup>45</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

necessary (sometimes the additional commentary helps to clear up minor points, like, does Jacob recount one or two dreams in this chapter?).

At the end of the exegesis of every verse, I will make certain that there is a Kukis mostly literal translation and a Kukis paraphrase, both of them marked as such.

I have decided to add spacing between the translation and the commentary.

Many of these new charts and ideas will be eventually added to previous chapters of Genesis.

I drew from hundreds of sources for this chapter. I literally stand on the shoulders of thousands of men in order to put this document together.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

### Motivating Factors to Direct Jacob Back to Canaan

What has happened so far is, Jacob has become somewhat upset with his Uncle Laban and the situation that he is in. He worked for Laban for 14 years—an additional 7 years for a wife that he did not want. Now, he has negotiated a new contract with Laban. Jacob will begin with only white sheep, and he has agreed with Laban to keep all of the other sheep who are produced—the spotted, blotched or black sheep.

In the previous chapter, Jacob came up with a goofy breeding scheme that is mostly scientifically untenable.<sup>46</sup> However, God blessed him, nevertheless.

*Benson: The last chapter began with Rachel's envying Leah; this begins with Laban's sons envying Jacob.*<sup>47</sup>

As always, 3 separate translations will be produced for each verse. The slavishly literal translation attempts to preserve word order and number, making it more literal than Young's translation (however, I do not preserve the consistency of the translation that Young does). The moderately literal translation may add or delete a definite article, change the number of a noun to correspond with the English sense of thinking, and the order is often changed in order to better represent our English sentence structure. The paraphrase is an attempt to give a thought-for-thought interpretation of what each verse tells us.

Kukis slavishly literal:

**And so he hears words of sons of Laban, to say, "Jacob has taken all that [is] to our father and from that [which is] to our father, he has made all the glory the this."**

Genesis  
31:1

Kukis moderately literal:

**Jacob [lit., he] heard the words of Laban's sons, [which they kept] saying, "Jacob has taken all that [belonged] to our father and he has made all this wealth from that [which belongs] to our father."**

Kukis not so literal paraphrase:

<sup>46</sup> He focused breeding on the healthier animals, and that was more likely to produce a variety of offspring.

<sup>47</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1. Matthew Henry says exactly the same thing Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–16.

**Jacob overheard what Laban's sons had been saying: "Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father and he made all of his wealth from taking what belongs to our father."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Note: I compare the Hebrew text to English translations of the Latin, Syriac and Greek texts, using the Douay-Rheims translation<sup>48</sup>; George Lamsa's translation, and Sir Lancelot Charles Lee Brenton's translation as revised and edited by Paul W. Esposito, respectively. I often update these texts with non-substantive changes (e.g., *you* for *thou*, etc.). I often use the text of the Complete Apostles' Bible instead of Brenton's translation, because it updates the English text.

The Septuagint was the earliest known translation of a book (circa 200 B.C.). Since this translation was made before the textual criticism had been developed into a science and because different books appear to be translated by different men, the Greek translation can sometimes be very uneven.

When there are serious disparities between my translation and Brenton's (or the text of the Complete Apostles' Bible), I look at the Greek text of the Septuagint (the LXX) to see if a substantive difference actually exists (and I reflect these changes in the English rendering of the Greek text). I use the Greek LXX with Strong's numbers and morphology available for e-sword. The only problem with this resource (which is a problem for similar resources) is, there is no way to further explore Greek verbs which are not found in the New Testament. Although I usually quote the Complete Apostles' Bible here, I have begun to make changes in the translation when their translation conflicts with the Greek and note what those changes are.

The Masoretic text is the Hebrew text with all of the vowels (vowel points) inserted (the original Hebrew text lacked vowels). We take the Masoretic text to be the text closest to the original. However, differences between the Masoretic text and the Greek, Latin and Syriac are worth noting and, once in a great while, represent a more accurate text possessed by those other ancient translators.

In general, the Latin text is an outstanding translation from the Hebrew text into Latin and very trustworthy (I say this as a non-Catholic). Unfortunately, I do not read Latin—apart from some very obvious words—so I am dependent upon the English translation of the Latin (principally, the Douay-Rheims translation).

Underlined words indicate differences in the text.

Bracketed portions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are words, letters and phrases lost in the scroll due to various types of damage. Underlined words or phrases are those in the Dead Sea Scrolls but not in the Masoretic text.

I will only list the translation from the Dead Sea Scrolls if it exists and if it is different from the Masoretic text.

The Targum of Onkelos is actually the Pentateuchal Targumim, which are The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel. On the Pentateuch With The Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum From the Chaldee by J. W. Etheridge, M.A.

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<sup>48</sup> I have begun to doubt my e-sword Douay-Rheims version, so I now use [www.latinvulgate.com](http://www.latinvulgate.com).

From [http://www.becomingjewish.org/texts/targum/onkelos\\_genesis.html](http://www.becomingjewish.org/texts/targum/onkelos_genesis.html) and first published in 1862.

### Ancient texts:

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)         | And so he hears words of sons of Laban, to say, "Jacob has taken all that [is] to our father and from that [which is] to our father, he has made all the glory the this."   |
| Dead Sea Scrolls                | No portion of Genesis 31 was preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls.   |
| Targum (Onkelos)                | And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's; he <u>hath gotten all these possessions</u> . Translation for Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan by J. W. Etheridge, M.A. (1862).  |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)        | But he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Jakob hath taken all that was our father's; and from that which was our father's; he hath made himself all the glory <u>of these riches</u> .  |
| Revised Douay-Rheims            | But after that he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying: Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and being <u>enriched by his substance</u> is become great:   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta         | He heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Ya'aqub has taken away all that was our father's. From that which was our father's, has he gotten all this wealth."  |
| Peshitta (Syriac) <sup>49</sup> | AND Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our fathers; and of that which was our fathers has he acquired all of this wealth.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)              | JACOB flees from Laban. Gn.31.1-21<br>And Jacob heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and <u>of our father's property</u> has he gotten all this glory. This is the New Brenton translation from <a href="http://www.katapi.org.uk/">http://www.katapi.org.uk/</a> |
| Significant differences:        | The targums have additional text (as is often the case). Both the Latin and the Greek appear to have some additional text in the final phrase. The final phrase, when translated literally, may be more difficult to understand.  |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English      | Now it came to the ears of Jacob that Laban's sons were saying, Jacob has taken away all our father's property, and in this way he has got all this wealth.   |
| Easy English                | Jacob heard Laban's sons saying, 'Jacob has taken everything that our father had. He has got rich from things belonging to our father.'   |
| Easy-to-Read Version        | <b>Time to Leave—Jacob Runs Away</b><br>One day Jacob heard Laban's sons talking. They said, "Jacob has taken everything that our father owned. He has become rich—and he has taken all this wealth from our father." |
| International Children's B. | <b>Jacob Runs Away</b><br>One day Jacob heard Laban's sons talking. They said, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned. Jacob has become rich in this way."  |
| <i>The Message</i>          | Jacob learned that Laban's sons were talking behind his back: "Jacob has used our father's wealth to make himself rich at our father's expense."  |
| Names of God Bible          | <b>Jacob's Second and Third Encounters with God</b><br>Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father and has gained all his wealth from him."                    |
| NIRV                        | <b>Jacob Runs Away From Laban</b><br>Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying. "Jacob has taken everything our father owned," they said. "He has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."           |

<sup>49</sup> From the George Lamsa Translation of the Peshitta, taken from <http://www.studylight.org/>

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible    | Jacob's household leaves Laban<br>Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob took everything our father owned and from it he produced all of this wealth."   |
| Contemporary English V. | Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining, "Jacob is now a rich man, and he got everything he owns from our father."   |
| The Living Bible        | But Jacob learned that Laban's sons were grumbling, "He owes everything he owns to our father. All his wealth is at our father's expense."  |
| New Berkeley Version    | He heard talk from Laban's sons, who were saying, "Jacob has appropriated everything father had; he owes all this wealth to what belonged to our father. Which was true, for Jacob had nothing but his staff, when he arrived in Padan Aram; but it was a half truth, for Laban had greatly prospered because of Jacob's superior skill as a herdsman, and divine favor, so that Laban owed fully as much to Jacob as Jacob owed to him |
| New Century Version     | <b>Jacob Runs Away</b><br>One day Jacob heard Laban's sons talking. They said, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned, and in this way he has become rich."   |
| New Living Translation  | <b>Jacob Flees from Laban</b><br>But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were grumbling about him. "Jacob has robbed our father of everything!" they said. "He has gained all his wealth at our father's expense."   |

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | Well, Jacob overheard Laban's sons saying, 'Jacob has taken everything that belongs to our father and all our father's property... all of his glory!'  |
| Beck's American Translation | <i>Jacob Leaves Laban</i><br>Jacob heard Laban's sons say, "Jacob has taken everything our father had and by using our father's property has gotten all this wealth."  |
| International Standard V    | <b><i>Jacob Decides to Leave Laban</i></b><br>Now Jacob [Lit. He] used to listen while Laban's sons kept on complaining [Lit. saying], "Jacob has taken over everything our father owns! He made himself wealthy from what belongs to our father!" |
| New Advent (Knox)Bible      | Meanwhile, Laban's sons were complaining, Our father has been robbed of all his goods by Jacob, who has become rich at his expense.  |
| Translation for Translators | <b>Jacob's family fled from Laban</b><br>Someone told Jacob that Laban's sons were complaining and saying, "Jacob has become very rich by taking everything [HYP] that belonged to our father."  |

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible    | He was to hear the concern of Laban's sons, to the intent: Jacob is to have taken away that of our father's, even of our father, that he is to have attained this splendor.                         |
| Conservapedia         | Jacob heard the things that Laban's sons were saying about him: "Jacob has taken away everything that belonged to our father, and has gotten as rich as he is from the things that our father had." |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible    | However he heard the sons of Laban talking, saying, "Jacob will take all that our father has, and from what our father possessed he has made all his wealth."                                       |
| God's Truth (Tyndale) | And Jacob heard the words of Labans sons how they said: Jacob has taken away all that was our fathers, and of our fathers goods, has he gotten all this honor.                                      |
| HCSB                  | <b>Jacob Separates from Laban</b>   |

Now Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's and has built this wealth from what belonged to our father."

Lexham English Bible

**Jacob Flees from Laban**

Now he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, "Jacob has taken all that our father has," and "From that which [was] our father's he has gained all this wealth."

H. C. Leupold

**CHAPTER XXXI**

**7. Jacob's Flight from Laban; their Treaty (31:1-54)**

**(a) The Flight of Jacob (v. 1-21)**

And he heard the words of Laban's sons, who said: Jacob hath taken all that belonged to our father; and from that which was our father's hath he achieved all this abundance.

Tree of Life Version

**Jacob Secretly Leaves Laban**

Now Jacob heard the words Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything that belongs to our father, and from what belongs to our father he has made all these riches."

Unlocked Literal Bible

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, that they said, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and it is from our father's possessions that he has gotten all this wealth."

Urim-Thummim Version

He also heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our dad's, and he has produced all these riches from what belonged to our dad.

**Catholic Bibles:**

Christian Community (1988) Jacob returns to his land

Jacob learned that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned, and it is at our father's expense that he has accumulated this fortune."

The Heritage Bible

And he heard the words of Laban's sons saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and he has gotten all this heavy value from what was our father's.

New American Bible (2002)

Jacob learned that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father, and he has accumulated all this wealth of his by using our father's property."

New American Bible (2011)<sup>50</sup>

*Flight from Laban.*

[31:1–54] Jacob flees with his family from Laban. The strife that has always accompanied Jacob continues as Laban's sons complain, "he has taken everything that belonged to our father"; the brothers' complaint echoes Esau's in 27:36. Rachel and Leah overcome their mutual hostility and are able to leave together, a harbinger of the reconciliation with Esau in chap. 33.

Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father, and he has produced all this wealth from our father's property."

New English Bible

**JACOB flees from Laban.**

JACOB LEARNT that Laban's sons were saying, 'Jacob has taken everything that was our father's, and all his wealth has come from our father's property.'

New RSV

Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, 'Jacob has taken all that was our father's; he has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father.'

Revised English Bible

JACOB learnt that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything that our father had, and all his wealth has come from our father's property."

**Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

<sup>50</sup> Also called the revised edition.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible                   | But then he heard what Lavan's sons were saying: "Ya'akov has taken away everything that our father once had. It's from what used to belong to our father that he has gotten so rich."  |
| The Complete Tanach <sup>51</sup>       | And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father, and from what belonged to our father, he has amassed this entire fortune."  |
|   | <b>he has amassed:</b> Heb. עָשָׂה, lit., made, acquired, like (I Sam. 14:48) "And he gathered (וַיַּעַשׂ) an army, and he smote Amalek."   |
| exeGeser companion Bible                | And he hears the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Yaaqov takes all our father has; yes, from what our father has, he works all this honor.   |
| Hebraic Roots Bible                     | And he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was to our father, and from that which was to our father he has gotten all this wealth.  |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)                       | Now he heard the things that Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from that which was our father's he has built up all this wealth."   |
| Kaplan Translation                      | <i>Jacob's Journey, Marriage and Children</i><br>[Jacob] began to hear that Laban's sons were saying, 'Jacob has taken everything belonging to our father. He has become rich by taking our father's property!' The Kaplan Translation, particularly in Exodus through Deuteronomy, takes note of historic rabbinic opinions.   |
| Mechanical Literal Trans. <sup>52</sup> | ...and he heard the words of the sons of Lavan saying, Ya'akov took all which belongs to our father and from which belongs to our father he will do all this honor,...  |
| Complete MechLit Trans.                 | and~he~will~HEAR(Verb) {עָמַשׂוּ / wai'yish'ma} AT {תָּא / et} WORD~s {דִּיבְדִ / div'rey} SON~s {יָבֵ / vé'ney} Lavan {לָבָן / la'van} to~>>~SAY(Verb) {לֵמַר / ley'mor} he~did~TAKE(Verb) {לָקַח / la'qahh} Ya'akov {יַעֲקֹב / ya'a'qov} AT {תָּא / eyt} ALL {כֹּל / kol} WHICH {שֶׁאֵ / a'sher} to~FATHER~us {וּנְיָבְאֵל / lê'a'vi'nu} and~from~WHICH {וּמֵאֲמוֹ / u'mey'a'sheyr} to~FATHER~us {וּנְיָבְאֵל / lê'a'vi'nu} he~did~DO(Verb) {הִשָּׁעַן / a'sah} AT {תָּא / eyt} ALL {כֹּל / kol} the~ARMAMENT {דְּבָרָה / ha'ka'vod} the~THIS {הַזֶּה / ha'zeh} |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible                   | And he heard the divrei Bnei Lavan, saying, Ya'akov hath taken away all that belonged to avinu; and of that which belonged to avinu hath he gotten all this kavod.  |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | <b>Jacob Leaves Secretly for Canaan</b><br>Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying: "Jacob has taken away everything that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has acquired all this wealth and honor." |
| The Expanded Bible         | <b>Jacob Runs Away</b><br>One day Jacob heard Laban's sons talking. They said, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned, and in this way he has become rich [he has gotten all this wealth from our father]."              |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | <b>Verses 1-16</b><br>The Plan to Flee<br>And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.                   |

<sup>51</sup> From [chabad.org](http://chabad.org); accessed September 24, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> From <http://www.mechanical-translation.org/mtt/G31.html> accessed September 24, 2017. This is equivalent to Benner's Mechanical Literal Translation below.

That was the voice of envy, which begrudged Jacob the obvious blessing of God, incidentally revealing a very ugly suspicion, as is customary in such cases.

NET Bible®

*Jacob's Flight from Laban*

Jacob heard that Laban's sons were complaining [*Heb* "and he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying."], "Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father! He has gotten rich at our father's expense [*Heb* "and from that which belonged to our father he has gained all this wealth."!]" When it comes to making an actual material change to the text, the NET Bible® is pretty good about indicating this. Since most of these corrections will be clear in the more literal translations below and within the Hebrew exegesis itself, I will not continue to list every NET Bible® footnote.

The Pulpit Commentary

And he—Jacob had now served twenty years with Laban, and must accordingly have been in his ninety–seventh or seventy–seventh year (vide Genesis 27:1)—heard the words of Laban's sons,—who were not at this time only small youths about fourteen years of age (Delitzsch), since they were capable of being entrusted with their father's flocks (Genesis 30:35)—saying (probably in a conversation which had been overheard by Jacob), Jacob hath taken away (by fraud is what they meant, an opinion in which Kalisch agrees; but it is not quite certain that Jacob was guilty of dishonesty in acting as he did) all that was our father's;—this was a manifest exaggeration; sed hoc morbo laborant sordidi et nimium tenaces, ut sibi ereptum esse putent quicquid non ingurgitant (Calvin)—and of that which was our father's hath he gotten (literally, made, in the sense of acquiring, as in Genesis 12:5; 1Samuel 14:48) all this glory. כָּבוֹד (from כָּבַד, to be heavy, hence to be great in the sense of honored, and also to be abundant) signifies either glory, splendor, renown, δόξα (LXX.), as in Job. 14:21; or, what seems the preferable meaning here, wealth, riches, facultates (Vulgate), as in Psalm 49:13; Nah. 2:10. The two ideas appear to be combined in 2Corinthians 4:17; βάρος δόξης (cf. Wordsworth, in loco).

The Voice

Jacob, the heel-catcher, has met a kindred spirit. Both men are deceivers and manipulators. Both do whatever they can to get the better of the other. It just comes naturally. Laban tricks Jacob first by marrying him to Leah before Rachel. Then, after Jacob and he agree on a clear strategy to separate the flocks, Laban goes behind his back and takes away the animals that rightfully belong to Jacob. But Jacob is crafty, too, and he devises a way to produce striped, speckled, and spotted animals from Laban's flocks. After the many years of service, Jacob finally outwits Laban and gains a more valuable flock in the process. Deception may work for a while, but there are dire consequences that come with it. Jacob's situation is about to change, and it isn't long before his deceptive days are behind him.

*As time went on, Jacob overheard what Laban's sons were saying about him.*

**Laban's Sons:** Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father; he gained all his wealth from taking advantage of him.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ....and he heard the words of the sons of Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> saying, Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> took all which belongs to our father and from which belongs to our father he will do all this honor,..

Concordant Literal Version And hearing is Jacob the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Taking is Jacob all which was our father's. And from that which is our father's he makes all this glory.

Context Group Version And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's he has acquired all this public honor.

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Emphasized Bible            | Then heard he the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that belonged to our father; Yea out of what belonged to our father, hath he made all this wealth.                                |
| English Standard Version    | Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth."  |
| Green's Literal Translation | And he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was to our father, and from that which was to our father he has gotten all this wealth.  |
| NASB                        | <b>Jacob Leaves Secretly for Canaan</b><br>Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." |
| New European Version        | <b>Jacob's Family Escape from Laban</b><br>He heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. From that which was our father's, has he gotten all this wealth.           |
| New King James Version      | <b>Jacob Flees from Laban</b><br>Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth."             |
| Webster's Bible Translation | And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he obtained all this glory.  |
| World English Bible         | Jacob heard Laban's sons' words, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's. He has obtained all this wealth from <i>that</i> which was our father's."   |
| Young's Literal Translation | And he heard the words of the sons of Laban, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was to our father, and from that which was to our father he has gotten all this wealth.  |

**The gist of this passage:** Jacob comes to hear that Laban's sons have been complaining that all of Jacob's wealth is made off the back of their father.

| <b>Genesis 31:1a</b>  |  |   |                             |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| shâma <sup>c</sup> (שָׁמָע) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAHG</i> ]                      | <i>to listen [intently], to hear, to listen and obey, [or, and act upon, give heed to, take note of], to hearken to, to be attentive to, to listen and be cognizant of</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #8085<br>BDB #1033 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84    |
| d <sup>e</sup> bârîym (דְּבָרִים) [pronounced <i>daw<sup>b</sup>-vawr-EEM</i> ] | <i>words, sayings, doctrines, commands; things, matters, affairs; reports</i>  | masculine plural construct                                  | Strong's #1697<br>BDB #182  |
| bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                                  | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>   | masculine plural construct                                  | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119  |

## Genesis 31:1a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                              | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology                         | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN] | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle;</i> and is transliterated <i>Laban</i> | masculine singular proper noun; location | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |

**Translation:** *Jacob* [lit., *he*] *heard the words of Laban's sons*,... Even though many chapters are often literary units, in the original text, there were no chapter breaks. They went from the last verse in the previous chapter to this verse, without anything inserted in between. Gen 30:43 *Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.* (ESV) *The man* here refers back to Jacob in vv. 37–42, in Genesis 30. Therefore, this is Jacob doing the hearing.

It would be legitimate to translate this as *Jacob overheard these words spoken by Laban's sons*. The verb used here suggests that Jacob heard these things with his own ears. There are other verbs that could have been used; Jacob could have **come to know** or, *someone could have made known to Jacob the words of Laban's sons*. But these verbs were not used.

Have you ever known someone who wants to say something mean to you, but they are not willing to say it to your face, but they are willing to say it loud enough for you to hear? That seems to be the case here. Laban's sons are upset over Jacob's wealth and they let him know, but not directly. They talk among themselves so that Jacob can overhear.

Why is this important? Why should we know that Jacob hears about what Laban and his sons are saying? Jacob has to be forced to a place where he must leave Paddan-aram. God told him to leave (as we will find out later in this chapter). But that is not enough. Just because Jacob had a dream and God told him to leave, this does not mean that he is going to gather up his things and leave. There will be a number of other things which will occur that cause Jacob to seriously entertain the idea of leaving Laban and returning to Canaan. Now, had it been Abraham and God told him to move from point A to point B, he would have done it. But, Jacob is not quite as positive toward divine truth as his grandfather Abraham. He has not yet grown, spiritually speaking. Therefore, God will tell Jacob to go; but God will also make it necessary for Jacob to go, in his own judgment.

It does not seem unusual for all of these men, all working for Laban, to interact now and again; or to be in the same place from time to time. Furthermore, because of the agreement that Laban and Jacob had, which agreement Laban changed many times, this has required Laban to send men to inventory Jacob's livestock on a regular basis.<sup>53</sup> So, if Laban's sons are there, taking an inventory of the livestock Jacob controls, then Jacob would have overheard what they are saying.

We have not heard much of anything about Laban's sons until now. All of the talk has been about his two daughters, whom Jacob married. We really don't know if Laban had sons after Jacob began to live there; or if these sons have been a part of the family from the beginning. We know that the sons exist, as they are spoken of in Genesis 30:35, where preexisting sheep and goats that Jacob would later lay claim to were shipped off to Laban's sons, suggesting that they now watch Laban's flocks. Since we have not heard about them until now and the previous chapter (after Jacob has worked for Laban for 14 years), we may reasonably assume that these are very young men—probably in their teens—and that they were only recently put in the business of watching Laban's flocks. Given that Laban's wealth increased dramatically under Jacob (something which Laban himself admits in Genesis 30:27), there is a need for Laban to have more shepherds. Therefore, having male children just happened in a nick of time for him (God is overseeing Laban's blessing as well).

In the previous 13 years, Jacob begins to have children with the two daughters of Laban; and perhaps Laban decides at that time to have some sons of his own. Young people grew up much earlier then than now, working independently at their full-time vocation might occur as early as age 12 or 13. So, these kids may be at the

<sup>53</sup> This will be discussed later in this chapter.

beginning of their careers as ranch hands and shepherds; and they obviously distinguish between Laban and Jacob and realize that, Laban's wealth will become their wealth at some point in time.

To me, it is fascinating just how greedy people can become when faced with wealth, even if this is wealth beyond their wildest dreams (or simply beyond their expectations). Jacob was being clearly blessed by God; but so was Laban. Laban was not poor or destitute. He did receive blessing by association, despite his trying to outwit Jacob. His sons, however, see Jacob's wealth and determine, in their own hearts, *that should be our father's wealth*; which means, eventually, it would be their wealth.

Laban understood, at least in the previous chapter, that God was blessing him through Jacob. However, his sons did not recognize this. All they could see was, the oddly colored sheep and goats were proliferating under Jacob's control; and so they belonged to Jacob rather than to Laban. Laban's sons focused upon what they were ultimately losing, and it angered them.

| Genesis 31:1b   |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'âmar (אמר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]                                | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | Qal infinitive construct   | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| lâqach (לקח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]                             | <i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                     | Strong's #3947<br>BDB #542 |
| Ya'ăqôb (בְּקָעִי) [pronounced yah-ġuh-KOH <sup>b</sup> V]      | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]                                    | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>   | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| 'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]                             | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun   | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| Literally translated <i>all that</i> .                          |   |  |                            |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'âb (אב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> V]                         | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i>                                 | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix      | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |

**Translation:** ...[which they kept] saying, “Jacob has taken all that [belonged] to our father... One of the things that Jacob overheard was, “That Jacob has taken all that ought to belong to our father.” As discussed previously, these sons are not willing to say this directly to Jacob, but they do want him to know what they are thinking; therefore, they say it loud enough for him to hear. Perhaps they are crossing paths; perhaps Jacob has come into the compound for supplies; perhaps Jacob and the sons are rotating in their flocks. Whatever the reason, Jacob hears that Laban’s sons are bitter that he is becoming rich.

Even though Laban was clearly an opportunist, he apparently believed in the **Revealed God** (at one time, anyway). We do not know if his sons believed (notice that we know Laban’s name; we know the names of his daughters, but not the names of his sons—this is often a way that the Bible distinguishes between believers and unbelievers). They think that Jacob’s wealth is the result taking from their father—they do not recognize that Jacob is blessed of God (and, as a result, Laban and they are blessed). They do not see it that way.

Laban’s sons saw Jacob as doing something underhanded or tricky; dishonest in fact. This wealth (those of the flocks which went to Jacob) should have gone to Laban (and, by inheritance, to themselves as well).

Genesis 31:1 Jacob overheard what Laban’s sons had been saying: “Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father and he made all of his wealth from taking what belongs to our father.”

### “Jacob has taken that which ought to belong to our father” (commentators)

Gill: *[It] was out of their father's flock that Jacob got all his increase; but then it was according to a covenant that Laban and he entered into, and therefore was obtained in a just and lawful manner.*<sup>54</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 30:35, we saw that Laban gave his sons care of the spotted, speckled, and striped flocks, which were separated from the solid colored animals among his flocks. Then, out of mistrust for Jacob, Laban sent his boys on a three day journey in order to ensure that Jacob would not use these flocks to impregnate his solid colored animals, which Jacob would be shepherding.*<sup>55</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *They were whining and maligning Jacob and their words were reported back to Jacob. The idea of "Jacob has taken away" is that they are accusing Jacob of having done some underhanded deal where he stole all of the wealth of their fathers. That would be passed on to them by way of inheritance, so they were taking it personally and were emotionally involved and accusing Jacob of being the reason that they were going to end up impoverished.*<sup>56</sup>

L. M. Grant: *The prosperity of Jacob could not but awaken the envy of Laban's sons. Jacob had gained all of this through his caring for their father's sheep: now the majority of the sheep and the stronger sheep belonged to Jacob. But Laban had agreed to the arrangement, and they could do nothing about it [except complain].*<sup>57</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Jacob thrived far more abundantly than Laban. Apparently, Laban himself was doing far better than when Jacob first arrived. But Laban’s sons have too much of the niggardly spirit of their father. When they observe that Jacob is growing wealthy, they vent their displeasure in grumbling remarks, which, perhaps, are not heard by Jacob directly but are reported by others. Jealousy leads the sons of Laban to overstate the case, almost absurdly: "he hath taken all that belonged to our father," as though Laban had been impoverished, and as though Jacob had been guilty of some form of theft.*<sup>58</sup>

I do not think that these young men were really concerned for their father; but they believed that they themselves would be shortchanged in the inheritance.

<sup>54</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1.

<sup>55</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 484); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>56</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](http://www.deanbibleministries.org/); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>57</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>58</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Genesis 31:1c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                                 | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]   | <i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>              | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| 'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]   | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied                           | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| Together, the min preposition and the relative pronoun can mean <i>from where; more than</i> .   |   |  |                            |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]   | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix                  | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |
| 'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]   | <i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                                 | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |
| The full set of Qal meanings from BDB: <i>to do, work, make, produce; to do; to work; to deal (with); to act, act with effect, effect; to produce; to prepare; to make (an offering); to attend to, put in order; to observe, celebrate; to acquire (property); to appoint, ordain, institute; to bring about; to use; to spend, pass</i> . It is possible that this ought to be <i>to provide for</i> . |   |  |                            |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]   | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                            | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]   | <i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>                           | masculine singular construct followed by a definite article                            | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| kâbôwd (כְּבוֹד) [pronounced <i>kaw<sup>b</sup>-VODE</i> ]   | <i>glory, honor [with an emphasis upon power, wealth and/or abundance]</i>                            | masculine singular adjective which sometimes acts as a noun; with the definite article | Strong's #3519<br>BDB #458 |

This is the first time this word occurs in Genesis. It is found in Genesis 31:1 45:13 49:6. It is also found in Job 19:9 29:20. These are the oldest books of the Bible.

## Genesis 31:1c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings                             | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                                    |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew word translated "gotten rich" (כָּבוֹד, cavod) has the basic idea of "weight." If one is heavy with possessions, then that one is wealthy (13:2). Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph all became wealthy when they left the promised land. Jacob's wealth foreshadows what will happen to Israel when they leave the land of Egypt (Exod 12:35-38).</i><sup>59</sup></p> |   |   |   |
| <p>Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: <i>"Glory" is here used for "wealth," riches, or property; since those who possess riches, generally make them the subject of glory. The original word cavod, signifies both "glory" and "weight." Genesis 45:13 Est. 5:11 Job. 31:24–25 Psalm 49:16–17.</i><sup>60</sup></p>  |   |   |   |
| <p>Utle: <i>The Hebrew term "glory" means "heaviness" or "weight." It can be used of "honor," but here it seems to mean "physical abundance" (NKJV).</i><sup>61</sup></p>   |   |   |   |
| <p>zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]</p>   | <p>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</p> | <p>masculine singular demonstrative adjective with a definite article</p> | <p>Strong's #2088, 2090 (&amp; 2063)<br/>BDB #260</p> |

**Translation:** ...and he has made all this wealth from that [which belongs] to our father.” The end of this verse is a little difficult in its translation (although the general meaning of v. 1 is unambiguous). The final verb in this verse is the Qal perfect, third masculine singular of *ʿâsâh* (עָשָׂה) [pronounced *gaw-SAW*], which means *to do, to make*, in a very broad sense. It is one of the creation verbs used to manufacture something out of something else. That Jacob has manufactured his own wealth out of Laban's wealth is the charge against him. The perfect tense means this is a completed action in their eyes. The direct object of this verb is *kôl* (כֹּל) [pronounced *kole*] and it means *the whole*. This is followed by the demonstrative pronoun *this* and the substantive *kâbôd* (כָּבוֹד) [pronounced *kaw-BODE*] and this word means *abundance, riches, splendor, honor, glory*. So even though many translation use the word *glory* or in the margin make reference to the word *glory*, it is only one of the meanings for *kabod*. Here, it is glory and splendor with regards to wealth and abundance. The feeling here is that Laban's sons are standing in the midst of all that is Jacob's and they say, "Jacob has manufactured, from what was our father's, all of this wealth [and splendor]" as they wave one arm to take in all that is Jacob's (but should, in their minds, belong to their father).

Even though Jacob has been with Laban for 20 years, he is still viewed as an outsider to the family who more or less married into the family. In family disputes and disagreements, Laban's sons side with Laban, their father, and his daughters are caught in the middle. What I would suppose is, the sons are young, much younger than Jacob, and they have begun in the business (Laban did not necessarily have young sons when Jacob first showed up, as his daughter Rachel was a shepherdess. So, these young sons who are probably greedy and expect too much too quickly in life, survey the situation and recognize that, some of what should be Laban's (in their opinion) is going to Jacob. And what is Laban's is theirs. So, for 5 or so years, they are speaking into Laban's left ear, telling him negative things about Jacob. At the same time, Jacob is prospering, no matter how Laban changes his salary. So, even though Jacob is not doing anything wrong, he is prospering; and this was problematic to Laban's sons.

For 14 years, Jacob worked for free, in exchange for his wives. But now, he is taking from Laban's profits (in their view) and moving that into his own possession. Jacob is still seen as an outsider, even though he is married to Laban's daughters. Perhaps this is because Laban's family expects Jacob to eventually move away? However, whether Jacob is nearby or far away, the sons are still unhappy about the wealth that he has amassed.

<sup>59</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 12, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:1 (slightly edited).

<sup>61</sup> Dr. Bob Utle, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:1.

What Laban has done has been completely unfair to Jacob, however, family generally sides with family. Furthermore, they have learned to dismiss some of the things which their father, Laban does, as they have seen this behavior all their lives and have come to accept it as correct business dealings. What they see is Jacob's wealth increasing tremendously at a rate much faster than Laban's. So the only logical conclusion that they can come up with is that, since Jacob came to Laban with nothing and now has tremendous wealth, he has, for all intents and purposes, taken Laban's wealth as his own. And, even worse than that, the wealth that Jacob is accumulating is coming out of the future pockets of Laban's sons.

Everyone is aware of Jacob's significant gains. He has become very wealthy. Gen. 30:43 reads: **Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.** (ESV) Laban's sons can obviously see this, and they do not like it.

You may recall a few chapters back where Isaac is forced out of Philistia because the citizens did not like that he had so much wealth. They harassed him for this wealth. Essentially, Isaac created wealth (to be accurate, God took what Isaac had and increased it). Even though Isaac was very wealthy, that does not mean that he took his wealth from others. He made his wealth legitimately and the people of Gerar, the Philistine city where he was staying, were jealous of him and resented his wealth. Isaac was actually very good for the economy of Gerar, but the jealousy of the people was too much for them to recognize that.

We have the same thing going on here. Jacob has not stolen anything from Laban. He has done some goofy underhanded stuff, trying to make the flock produce animals which he could keep (which did not work); but apart from that, he did not take from Laban's wealth. It is reasonable to suppose that both men saw an increase in wealth, but that Jacob's wealth was what Laban and his sons focused upon. We are not told anything about Jacob's wealth increasing much more quickly and more dramatically. Maybe it did; maybe it didn't. But it increased, and this angered Laban (v. 2) and his sons (v. 1).

Wealth is a very relative thing. There is not a person reading this right now who would want to change places with Jacob and live under the material lack that he lived under. But, compared to everyone else, Jacob was rich. Laban looked at him and Laban's sons looked at him, and they were all jealous and angry about the situation.

**Application:** It is wrong to be jealous or desirous of what another person has. It is right to work hard and to put in an honest day's work every day and to enjoy the fruits of your own labor; but it is wrong to have some sort of need *to keep up with the Joneses*. It is wrong to observe the material prosperity of your next door neighbor, and then to spend your life trying to make the equivalent amount of wealth because you are envious of their lifestyle.

**Application:** There will *always* be those who are richer than you and there will always be those who are poorer than you are. You should never allow yourself to feel envious and if you do, you name that sin to God, as often as it crops up.

**Application:** In the Church Age (the time in which we live), every individual has a part to play in the plan of God. This is the greatest era of history to live in. Your life actually has meaning, purpose and definition. Your life can have eternal impact. We are studying the life of Jacob, a man who lived 4000 years ago. This is a man who was not any sort of earthly royalty; he did not have extensive power nor did he have a kingdom. *No one* would have recorded his life in a history book; and yet we are studying this man because God wants us to know him. Jacob had eternal impact.

**Application:** The other day, I was at a cemetery with my mom, and I remarked to her, "In another 100 years, *no one* will have any idea who we were." That is, someone will see our gravestone and, if there is something special about it, they might read it, but they will know nothing of the 90 or 100 years that we have lived. As far as they are concerned, we could have died 100 years ago or 1000 years ago. That is the way it is with most lives, insofar as the cosmic system is concerned. But, we as believers in the Church Age, are given the opportunity to have eternal impact. This comes from living the Christian life according to the System of God (called by R. B. Thieme, Jr., *the Protocol Plan of God*).

**Application:** This is something that many people desire today. They want to matter; they want to make a difference. They want to be known as more than just a consumer of goods and services. For the believer in Jesus Christ, this is a reality. This is something that you can do. Like Jacob, who impacts our lives from 4000 years ago, our lives here on earth can have the same eternal impact. Jacob was a shepherd; a rancher—and, apart from the Bible, there is no one who would have recorded anything about his life from so long ago. Yet always bear in mind, Jacob was not a great and holy person. He was very flawed, and his biography makes it clear, time and time again, that he is a flawed man. Yet his life has eternal impact.

**Application:** Your impact as a believer in Jesus Christ depends upon your remaining in fellowship and knowing the Word of God. If you are growing in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, then your life will have eternal impact. It does not matter if no one knows you; it does not matter if your circle of friends amounts to a next door neighbor and your cat—God is able to take the life of any individual and work it to His glory. If you want to take part, God can and will make that happen.

**Application:** Why do some people take global warming so seriously? There are those with a misplaced faith in global warming which allows every adherent to believe that they have impact on the preservation of the earth. If they change their lightbulbs or drive a Prius or post stuff on their facebook page or vote the right way, they matter (in their own minds); they are having the impact to save the planet (yes, they believe this, and they believe it wholeheartedly). People want to matter and the global warming "faith" gives them a chance to matter, to take part, to be in the movement. Furthermore, they incorrectly believe that, if they cannot get enough people to agree with them, the planet will be uninhabitable in 100 years (or whatever time frame is given for the end of the world). (So there is no misunderstanding, humans are not going to destroy the planet by driving trucks and planes.)

Genesis 1:1 **Jacob overheard what Laban's sons had been saying: "Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father and he made all of his wealth from taking what belongs to our father."**

### **Laban's wealth went to Jacob, according to his sons (many commentators)**

David Guzik: *It wasn't that Jacob had taken anything belonging to Laban. Rather, it was that his wealth was increasing in proportion to Laban's wealth. The problem wasn't that Jacob stole, it was that Laban's sons were filled with envy.*<sup>62</sup>

Wesley: *And what was this glory? It was a parcel of brown sheep and speckled goats, and some camels and asses.*<sup>63</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob's prosperity stirred up jealousy on the part of Laban's sons. Jealousy is a mental attitude sin directed toward another, which is resentful, intolerant and suspicious of another's success, possessions or relationships and is vigilant in maintaining or guarding something. Therefore, we see that Laban's sons were resentful and intolerant and suspicious of Jacob's success and were vigilant in maintaining and guarding their father's possessions and prosperity, which they would inherit.*<sup>64</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *Jacob has become extremely wealthy and he is a man to be contended with now because of his wealth and what that wealth means in terms of his position in society. Jacob has now come out on top, not because he has out-manuevered Laban but, as he recognizes in this passage, because God is the one who has blessed him.*<sup>65</sup>

Trapp says about the sons: *These were chips off the old block, as they say; as like the father, as if spit out of his mouth.*<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:1–2.

<sup>63</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:1.

<sup>64</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 484); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:1.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

No doubt, Laban's flock increased just as Jacob's did, but Laban's sons cannot help but look at the increase in Jacob's flock and be mad about it. People who focus on things and other people are always going to be unhappy. Wealth is a completely relative thing. Laban, as related to Jacob, has no doubt enjoyed an increase in his wealth because of his association with Jacob—he has even admitted this much already (Genesis 30:27). The sons—whom I think are quite young (teenagers)—cannot seem to help themselves but to worry about how Jacob's flock was increasing so quickly. The easiest way for a believer or unbeliever to be miserable is to focus in on the things that someone else owns and ruminate on that.

We are to carefully examine the information given to us in the Scriptures and draw reasonable conclusions.

### Did Jacob experience spiritual growth in Paddan-aram? (A discussion)

Dr. Robert Dean, Jr. also believes that Jacob has shown some spiritual growth: *That is the key in the spiritual growth of Jacob: he is developing genuine humility and is recognizing that what he has is not a result of his energy, of his manipulation, of his scheming but because he finally got to the point that there wasn't anything that he could do except rely upon God. God was waiting for that opportunity and once Jacob relaxed then God blessed him and prospered him.*<sup>67</sup> Dean also writes: *The Jacob that is coming out of the land now in chapter thirty-one is a different Jacob than the Jacob we saw leaving the land twenty years earlier. He has grown, he has matured spiritually.*<sup>68</sup>

Dean is not the only commentator to heap praise on Jacob for his spiritual growth; but I think that is premature.

Now, whereas I think some of Jacob's good points have come out in this narrative (he is a hard worker and honest man in his work), recall that he also had this whole breeding scheme worked out, meaning he was still trying to work things out in his own favor. Jacob tried to take unfair advantage (thinking that his breeding scheme was going to work), but what worked is God's will.

God did put Jacob face to face with another master manipulator, but I do not know that Jacob learned his lesson from this.

I think the thing that tells us that Jacob is not anywhere near spiritual maturity can be based on future incidents: (1) God will wrestle with Jacob until dawn (prior to meeting up with Esau). This is indicative of Jacob's relationship with God. (2) Jacob is not caused to move back to Canaan by God's order, but by a variety of circumstances combined with God's order. (3) Much later in life, when Jacob's sons return from Egypt, where the prime minister has demanded them to bring Benjamin, Jacob will act as if this is a personal affront, and that his sons worked against him for this to happen. He was self-centered and saw life only in terms of what he thought and felt.

On the other hand, I do believe there comes a time when Jacob experiences some spiritual maturity, and I think that occurs during the final 20 or so years of his life, when he is living in Egypt with his sons. His blessing of his grandsons and then of his sons; along with his burial requirements, will clearly indicate that he advanced spiritually. Also, the people of Egypt will afford him great respect; and he would not have gotten that by being the self-centered fool that he has always been.

Dean does point out that: *[Jacob will have] a face-to-face encounter with God at a place called Peniel, which means face to face with God. It is in that episode that God is going to change Jacob's name from Jacob to Israel. The new name, Israel, means one who is mighty with God or one who is strong with God, some say he is prince with God. But the issue is that the name Israel is a name that indicates the spiritual maturity of Jacob, he is now someone who is strong with God. The name change is extremely significant.*<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>69</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

## Did Jacob experience spiritual growth in Paddan-aram? (A discussion)

This is a very good point. However, I think that the new name is more aspirational than descriptive. I think the idea is, *this is where you could and should be* (which is an assumption that I am making).

But Dean makes a very good point with: *After chapter 32, when we study Jacob before we get into the Joseph part of Genesis, we don't see Jacob the conniver, the manipulator anymore. So what is implicit throughout these chapters is this spiritual growth process that has occurred in the life of Jacob.*<sup>70</sup>

I will concede that, in this one area, Jacob appears to have made some strides. Also, Jacob recognizes that it is God who blesses him with wealth, rather than his own breeding schemes (Genesis 31:6–9). However, it required a 20 year object lesson for Jacob to get this.

Jacob will experience spiritual growth, but not until many years into the future.

Why is this worth discussing? The Bible gives us a biography of Jacob and tells us what he does and often why he does it. We are able to think about these things and determine where he is at spiritually. Jacob is an extremely important character study because most of us are much more like Jacob than we are like Abraham.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

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

Laban's sons, who originally took all of the spotted, striped and blotched animals out of Jacob's herds are becoming quite concerned. Prior to this, Jacob was essentially working for room and board and his two wives. However, now that has changed. Now he has a specified wage, so that Jacob's earnings are now deducted from Laban's profits. This is the way that all businesses work; but there have been 14 years where all of the wealth generated by Jacob had gone to Laban. However, now that Jacob is keeping a portion of that wealth, it is clear that Jacob is being blessed greatly by God.

Laban and his sons don't see it that way. They believe that Jacob is stealing their wealth. They will inherit their father's wealth, but Jacob is now beginning to take a large chunk out of this wealth, and that has them concerned.

Remember that these are young men, in their teens and 20's (they were not mentioned when Jacob first agreed to work for Laban). There was probably some discussion of Jacob and his herd in the Laban household, so that his sons sided with their father on all of those issues.

As we studied in the previous chapter, Jacob was left with a bunch of white sheep and black goats; but, when they bred, they would have many oddly colored sheep and goats, which accrued to his account. Even though Jacob had a goofy scheme designed to produce blotched, striped, and other oddly colored kids and lambs; they came out that way due to genetics. There were no miracles necessarily involved; and certainly no hocus pocus to get those results. The only thing which probably had a positive effect is, Jacob primarily used the stronger of the flock to breed; and those would have had the more diverse gene pool; and they would have produced more of the oddly colored lambs and kids due to their recessive genes.<sup>71</sup>

But, Laban did not like it; and his sons did not like it. Whatever sheep and goats Laban determined that Jacob could keep; those would appear to be born in abundance to his flock. But these being born just angered Laban's family. They were filled with envy and other mental attitude sins against Jacob.

<sup>70</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>71</sup> There are some commentators who think that God's dreams to Jacob told him what to do in order to produce sheep for himself, but I just do not see it that way. I believe that Jacob's scheme with the carved branches was just a lame scheme.

Laban has clearly taken the side of his sons (this will be clear in [v. 2](#)), and does not appear to consider his daughters in his calculations.

Genesis 1:1 Jacob overheard what Laban's sons had been saying: "Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father and he made all of his wealth from taking what belongs to our father."

### Laban's Sons Complain (Various Commentators)

Trapp: *The young men were hot, and could not hold or hide what was in their heart, but blurted it out, and spoke their minds freely.*<sup>72</sup>

Whedon: *Either overheard with his own ears, or had them reported to him. Perhaps angry words at times passed between them in the fields or by the way. Such success and prosperity as attended all Jacob's movements would naturally provoke the jealousy of Laban's sons.*<sup>73</sup>

Carroll: *Laban's children looked on and it puzzled them. The pure white and solid colors began to get fewer and fewer. Jacob's flock began to multiply beyond all human calculation. What follows? Laban's sons begin to talk about it: "This stranger has come up here. He did not have a thing when he came to our house. He is managing this business and getting all of our father's property. After a while there won't be anything to divide between us."*<sup>74</sup>

Matthew Henry: *Upon a just provocation; for Laban and his sons had become very cross and ill-natured towards him, so that he could not stay among them with safety or satisfaction. Laban's sons showed their ill-will in what they said, Genesis 31:1. It should seem they said it in Jacob's hearing, with a design to vex him.*<sup>75</sup>

Jacobus: *How often what a man hears said of him determines his course in life! This was probably a report to him of what his cousins had said, as they were three days' journey distant. They were dissatisfied with Jacob's large share of the flocks, and no wonder. He had gotten so much of their father's property, and all with nothing of his own to start with, that they are incensed, and intimate that there must be the overreaching of Jacob in it all.*<sup>76</sup>

Trapp: *He said little, for shame, but thought the more, and could not so conceal his discontent, but that it appeared in his lowering looks. And this was plain to Jacob by his countenance, which had been friendly, smooth, and smiling, but now he was cloudy, sad, spiteful. The young men could not hold or hide what was in their heart, but blurted it out and spake their minds freely. This old fox held his tongue, but could not keep his countenance.*<sup>77</sup>

Laban's sons do not recognize God's hand in any of this; they do not recognize that their prosperity (the very flocks which they care for) are a result of Jacob's work and God's blessing. Even Laban recognized this ([Genesis 30:27](#)). We will see in Genesis 31:2 that Laban loses this attitude (and I would suggest that he no longer recognizes God's blessing through Jacob by interacting with his envious sons).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

<sup>72</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:2.

<sup>73</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:1.

<sup>74</sup> B. H. Carroll, *An interpretation of the English Bible*; from e-Sword, Gen. 28:10-31:55.

<sup>75</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–16.

<sup>76</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:1 (suggestive comments).

<sup>77</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:2 (suggestive comments).

Envy is such a strange sort of sin. Right now, Laban and his sons might be doing better than they have ever done before. Laban's net worth might have soared over the past 20 years; *but*, if it appears that Jacob's wealth is increasing at a faster rate—even if Laban is still worth quite a bit more—Laban and his sons are jealous; and therefore, they are upset with Jacob (yet, Laban is being blessed by his association with Jacob).

Envy is such a lame sin to fall into because wealth is such a relative concept. It is always good to remember that, there is always someone who has a better car than you do, a better job than you do, a better wife than you do, and a better house than you do. Also, there are people out there with worse cars, jobs, wives and houses.

Solomon is known for his incredible wealth; but, no matter who you are, your life is probably better than his, in terms of what you are able to do and eat. Your comfort level is probably way better than his. I can guarantee you that my house is far more comfortable than Solomon's palace. I drink and bathe in cleaner and better water than Solomon ever had. I have food and entertainment choices that Solomon could not have even imagined. And if I want to go somewhere, I can pretty much go anywhere that I want in the world. I would not change places with Solomon for the world; and if you had to spend a few days in his sandals, you would not either. Our lives are better than Solomon's are nearly every level, except that Solomon was known to be one of the richest people in his land (*relative* to everyone else); and we are not known for that. That is the only thing Solomon has over us is: compared to the people around him, Solomon was better off. But compared to your life or to my life? His life did not compare.

Laban and his sons were able to focus only on one thing: the increase of Jacob's wealth. That just burned them up; that angered them. Every time one of Laban's all white sheep threw off a striped lamb, it just angered them more and more. That new lamb then belonged to Jacob by prior agreement (an agreement which Laban changed again and again and again). Laban appears to have laid aside the idea that God blessed him through Jacob (**Genesis 31:2**); and I would suggest that interactions between Laban and his sons have led to Laban's lack of appreciation. You have heard that *a little leaven leavens the whole lump* (Galatians 5:9); and the leaven of the envy felt by Laban's sons has infected (leavened) Laban's thinking as well. He will no longer be objective about Jacob and the blessings of God.

Genesis 1:1 Jacob overheard what Laban's sons had been saying: "Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father and he made all of his wealth from taking what belongs to our father."

### Various Commentators on Envy

Matthew Henry: *Men's over-valuing worldly wealth is that fundamental error which is the root of covetousness, envy, and all evil.*<sup>78</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *The building up of wealth always provokes jealousy, especially from those who feel that they have lost by it. What had seemed a good bargain, and even rather clever, had now turned against them, and Laban's sons were not amused. And Jacob could see that even Laban had cooled towards him. He was decidedly unpopular, which considering that he had not looked after Laban's section of his charge very well (they were the weaker ones) was not surprising. He was beginning to feel uneasy.*<sup>79</sup>

Bishop Hall: *As the wicked have no peace with God, so the godly have no peace with men; for if they prosper not they are despised, if they prosper they are envied.*<sup>80</sup>

Chuck Smith: *In other words, they are now saying, "Hey, that really belongs to our dad. Jacob's stolen it from us". Not so. Jacob made the deal. His dad made the deal, but now the brothers are jealous because Jacob has such a large flock. They're so strong and healthy and there's a great jealousy.*<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–16.

<sup>79</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:1–2.

<sup>80</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:2 (suggestive comments).

<sup>81</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1.

James 3:13–16 **Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. (ESV)**

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

It is the worst idea in the world for you to pick someone from your street, your office, your circle of friends, and then look at them with intense envy because of something that they have. And if you base your whole political consciousness on the fact that there are people in your country with a lot more than you have (the so-called 99% versus the 1%), you are going against the plan of God. You are in direct opposition to the **laws of divine establishment**.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, God has already worked out the details to give you a great life on this earth. It may be short, it may be long; you may have a very public ministry or there might not be more than 2 people who know you by name—but God has a place for every single one of us and adjusting to His plan is going to be the greatest thing that every happens to you. You know what cannot be a part of that plan? Envy.

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This is a marvelous verse to help understand the approach to translation. I know a great many people who are very jazzed about a literal translation. Mine is the most literal translation there is; and there are a couple of others which is not far from mine (like the ECB or Benner's translation); but the more literal the translation is, the more difficult it is to understand. Some words and some groups of words have a very literal meaning; but they also have less formal meanings, which nearly every translation adopted for this particular verse (see the MEV, the NASB or the NKJV). For this reason, I embrace many of the less-than-literal translations, as they so often provide a better understanding for a verse or passage which would otherwise be obscure.

Because so many translations have approached this verse more imaginatively than usual, there are a greater number of translations listed (and for a very short verse). However, it ought to be clear that the various understandings of this verse by 90 or so sets of translators is very close indeed.

Even though many of the examples of the 90+ translations are found below, I always make an attempt to avoid duplication. I work primarily from the bottom up (from the most literal translations up toward the least literal); and I often look at portions of a verse and check two or three words against the previously listed translations; and if I cannot find those short phrases listed already, then I list that new translation as well. Ideally speaking, once you start at the top and read down, you might have a pretty good understanding of the meaning of that verse in context already.

You can see quite the evolution in the original translations below, going from ultra-literal, to reasonably literal, to an attempt to preserve the meaning and yet give a more readable translation.

**And so sees Jacob faces of Laban and, behold, [are] not with him as yesterday three days ago.**

Genesis  
31:2

**Jacob observed the face of Laban and, he observed that it [lit., *behold*] [was] not with him as before.**

**Jacob looked carefully at Laban's face and he observed that they were no longer friends or allies as before.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so sees Jacob faces of Laban and, behold, [are] not with him as yesterday three days ago.  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Jakob saw the looks of Laban [Or, "the aspect of the looks of Laban."], and, behold, they were not with him as yesterday, and the time before. |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Jakob observed the looks of Laban and, behold, they were not <u>peaceful toward</u> him as yesterday and as before it.                         |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And perceiving also that Laban's countenance was not towards him as yesterday and the other day,...  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Ya'aqub saw the expression on Laban's face, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And Jacob saw that Laban's countenance toward him was not as it had been yesterday and the day before.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and behold it was not toward him as before.  |
| Significant differences: | The Pseudo-Jonathan targum adds some additional explanatory text. I was surprised the other ancient translations are so spot-on.                   |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English          | And Jacob saw that Laban's feeling for him was no longer what it had been before.   |
| Easy English                    | And Jacob saw that Laban was not as nice to him as he had been before. Laban does not want Jacob to leave because Jacob has God's blessing. |
| <i>God's Word</i> <sup>TM</sup> | He also noticed that Laban did not appear as friendly to him as before.   |
| Good News Bible (TEV)           | He also saw that Laban was no longer as friendly as he had been earlier.  |
| <i>The Message</i>              | At the same time, Jacob noticed that Laban had changed toward him. He wasn't treating him the same.   |
| NIRV                            | Jacob noticed that Laban's feelings toward him had changed.   |
| New Simplified Bible            | He also noticed that Laban did not appear as friendly to him as before.   |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible   | And Jacob saw that Laban no longer liked him as much as he used to.           |
| The Living Bible       | Soon Jacob noticed a considerable cooling in Laban's attitude toward him.     |
| New Berkeley Version   | Jacob also noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not as it used to be. |
| New Century Version    | Then Jacob noticed that Laban was not as friendly as he had been before.      |
| New Life Version       | Jacob saw that Laban did not show him as much favor as he did before.         |
| New Living Translation | And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban's attitude toward him.            |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | So Jacob came to realize that Laban [wasn't happy to see him anymore].  |
| Beck's American Translation | Jacob saw also that Laban didn't look at him as he used to.   |
| International Standard V    | Jacob also noticed that the way [Lit. <i>face</i> ] Laban had been looking at him wasn't as nice as it had been just two days earlier [Lit. <i>been the day before yesterday</i> ]. |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | Jacob was aware of this; he found, too, that Laban looked on him more coldly than hitherto.   |
| Translation for Translators | And Jacob noticed that Laban was not acting friendly toward him as he had done before.  |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible | Jacob was to perceive the face of Laban - Is it as yesterday and three days ago? |
|--------------------|--|

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Conservapedia           | Jacob also noticed Laban's attitude, and it was definitely not what it had been before [Literally, "not with him as yesterday, or three days ago."]. |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible      | Jacob consequently watched the face of Laban, and perceived it was not with him as formerly.   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, that it was not toward him as it was in times past.   |
| HCSB                    | And Jacob saw from Laban's face that his attitude toward him was not the same.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | And Jacob observed Laban's face, and it certainly was no longer as it had formerly been.   |
| NIV, ©2011              | And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.   |
| Tree of Life Version    | Then Jacob saw Laban's face, and he noticed that his expression wasn't the same as it was just a day or two before.                                  |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Jacob saw the look on Laban's face. He saw that his attitude toward him had changed.   |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then Jacob saw the looks of Laban that they were not the same as in the past.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Jacob saw the face of Laban, and, no, he wasn't with him, as he had been yesterday or the day before.  |

### Catholic Bibles:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Christian Community (1988) | Jacob under stood from Laban's expression that his attitude towards him was no longer the same.   |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Jacob saw the face of Laban, and lo, it was not toward him as yesterday-day before yesterday [ <b>yesterday-day before yesterday</b> is the Hebrew literally, and means as in days before.].  |
| New American Bible (2011)  | Jacob perceived, too, that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had previously been.   |
| New Jerusalem Bible        | Jacob learned that Laban's sons were saying, 'Jacob has taken everything that belonged to our father; it is at our father's expense that he has acquired all this wealth,' and Jacob also saw that Laban's manner towards him was not as it had been in the past. V. 1 is included for context. |
| Revised English Bible      | He noticed also that Laban was not so well disposed to him as he had once been.   |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible     | He also saw that Lavan regarded him differently than before.  |
| The Complete Tanach       | And Jacob saw Laban's countenance, that he was not disposed toward him as [he had been] yesterday and the day before. |
| exeGesés companion Bible  | And Yaaqov sees the face of Laban and behold, it is not toward him as three yesters ago.                              |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)         | Jacob also saw that Laban's manner toward him was not as it had been in the past.                                     |
| Kaplan Translation        | When Jacob saw Laban in person, [Laban also] did not behave to him as he did before.                                  |
| Mechanical Literal Trans. | ...and Ya'aqov saw the face of Lavan and look, it was not with him previously,...                                     |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible     | And Ya'akov beheld the countenance of Lavan, and, hinei, it was not toward him as before.                             |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | Jacob noticed [a change in] the attitude of Laban, and saw that it was not <i>friendly</i> toward him as before. |
| The Expanded Bible         | Then Jacob noticed [saw] that Laban was not as friendly as he had been before.                                   |

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Kretzmann's Commentary | And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before. Laban no longer concealed his selfishness and covetousness, with the resulting ill will against Jacob.  |
| NET Bible®             | When Jacob saw the look on Laban's face, he could tell his attitude toward him had changed [ <i>Heb</i> "and Jacob saw the face of Laban, and look, he was not with him as formerly."].  |
| The Pulpit Commentary  | And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, Behold, it (i.e. either Laban or his countenance) was not toward him (literally, with him) as before—literally, as yesterday and the day before. The evident change in Laban's disposition, which had previously been friendly, was obviously employed by God to direct Jacob's mind to the propriety of returning to the land of his inheritance; and the inclination thus started in his soul was further strengthened and confirmed by a revelation which probably soon after, if not the night following, was sent for his direction |
| The Voice              | And Jacob also noticed a change in how Laban looked at him and treated him. He seemed colder toward him than before.   |

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans.  | ...and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> saw the face of Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> and look, it was not with him previously,... |
| Concordant Literal Version  | And seeing is Jacob the face of Laban, and behold! It is not with him as heretofore.   |
| English Standard Version    | And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before.  |
| Modern English Version      | Jacob saw the look of Laban and saw he was not congenial toward him as before.   |
| NASB                        | Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not <i>friendly</i> toward him as formerly.                                |
| New European Version        | Jacob saw the expression on Laban's face, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.  |
| New King James Version      | And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not <i>favorable</i> toward him as before.                           |
| Webster's Bible Translation | Jacob saw the expression on Laban's face, and, behold, it was not toward him as before.  |
| Young's Updated LT          | And Jacob sees the face of Laban, and lo, it is not with him as [it was] before.   |

**The gist of this passage:** Jacob has noticed that he has fallen out of the good graces of Laban as well.

### Genesis 31:2a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                               | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]                      | <i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906 |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ăuh-KOH<sup>BV</sup></i> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>                                | masculine proper noun                                       | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                            | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |

## Genesis 31:2a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                              | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| pānîym (פָּנִים)<br>[pronounced paw-NEEM]         | <i>face, faces, countenance; presence; person; surface</i>          | masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular) | Strong's #6440<br>BDB #815 |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN] | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i> | masculine singular proper noun; location                       | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |

**Translation:** *Jacob observed the face of Laban and,...* Jacob *hears* in v. 1; and he *sees* here in v. 2. Because Jacob heard those comments from Laban's sons, he started to pay attention to Laban. They interacted, but Jacob begins to study Laban's face for tell-tale signs of his own personal feelings.

Many people cannot hide their feelings. I know a woman whose face always reveals her thinking. Most of the time, she is a happy person, and this shows on her face. But I saw her once when someone had cheated her in a business deal, and it was such a contrast!

Laban has an opinion of Jacob and his increase in wealth; and that opinion is going to be seen on his face. He does not have to say anything for Jacob to understand how he feels.

We don't know it at this point in the chapter, but God has already spoken to Jacob and told him to leave Paddan-aram. There are a number of circumstances which will move Jacob to obey God.

## Genesis 31:2b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                     | BDB and Strong's #                          |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וּ)<br>[pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction               | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                   |
| hinnêh (הִנֵּה)<br>[pronounced hin-NAY]                             | <i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note; pay attention, get this, check this out</i> | interjection, demonstrative particle | Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006)<br>BDB #243 |

This seems to attempt to take others and put them in the place of the person saying this (so that they see the same thing); or to grab the attention of the reader. From the many times I have seen this word used in a narrative, I believe that we may update the translation to, *he observed [that]*. This goes along with the idea that this word is to cause us to see things from the viewpoint of someone in the narrative.

|                             |   |  |                            |
|-----------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| 'êyn (אֵין) [pronounced ān] | <i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i> | particle of negation; substantive of negation  | Strong's #369<br>BDB #34   |
| 'îm (עִם) [pronounced ġeem] | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>   | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

## Genesis 31:2b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|--|---|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ)<br>[pronounced k <sup>e</sup> ]     | <i>like, as, according to; about, approximately; combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning as, often, when, as soon as</i> | preposition      | No Strong's #<br>BDB #453           |
| t <sup>e</sup> môwl (למול)<br>[pronounced t <sup>e</sup> MOHL] | <i>yesterday; and is used figuratively for recently, formerly</i>   | adverb           | Strong's #8543 (and #865) BDB #1069 |
| shil <sup>e</sup> shôwm (שלשום)<br>[pronounced shil-SHOHM]     | <i>three days ago, the day before yesterday</i>   | adverb           | Strong's #8032<br>BDB #1026         |

Together, this preposition and two adverbs mean *as before, previously, formerly*.

Whedon: *The Hebrew for as before is idiomatic; literally, yesterday three days; that is, yesterday and the third day, or yesterday and before. Somewhat like our "yesterday week."*<sup>82</sup>

**Translation:** ...he observed that it [lit., behold] [was] not with him as before. You can tell a great deal about people and their attitude toward you by examining their faces. When they look beyond you, when they speak to you, but you are not even in their field of vision or within their focus, then they have dismissed you contemptuously. They are tolerating you at best. Laban is extremely unhappy because he has done every crooked thing that he could to Jacob, to snag some of Jacob's prosperity and increase, and no matter what he does, Jacob's wealth increases at a rate much greater than the increase of his own wealth (they may even be increasing at the same rate). But Laban's focus and the focus of his sons is on Jacob and how much wealth he is accumulating. In their minds, this wealth should be theirs.

It has come to a point to where Laban is discouraged and angry and he is sharing this with his sons and the rest of his family. He has reached a point to where his facial expressions give him away. Before he could lie and cheat Jacob, but do it with a smiling, family face. However, his deception is not working. I mentioned that God blesses us apart from the particular salary that we make. Here is a perfect example. Jacob came to Laban with nothing and Laban had all the wealth (having been blessed through blessing by association with Abraham). When Jacob begins to work for Laban, even though Laban cheats him immediately, both his wealth and Jacob's wealth increases greatly. However, with the last agreement, Laban came and took all the sheep and goats which might bear the king of young he had agreed to give to Jacob. Nevertheless, God began to bless Jacob at a very noticeable rate that far exceeded His rate of blessing for Laban (that is an assumption on my part—we actually do not know the relative blessings enjoyed by these men<sup>83</sup>).

Understand that Laban is not losing out; his herds and wealth are not decreasing; they are (probably) not increasing as fast as Jacob's. So Jacob, the servant, if you will, of Laban is gaining more wealth than Laban, his employer. It is not unheard of for the employee of a particular company or firm to do better than his employer. It is a matter of God's blessing. It is certainly possible to work side-by-side people or to work for people, and to be graced out by God more than they.

Let me quickly point out that not all blessing is money. Part of this verse is almost humorous—Jacob might have been willing to suffer more underhanded business deals with Laban if Laban was still able to smile and treat him nicely; but this negative expression on Laban's face appears to be the straw that broke the camel's back. Jacob

<sup>82</sup> Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:2.

<sup>83</sup> We do know that Jacob's flocks grew noticeably.

is going to move out of Laban's sphere of influence. So you do not misunderstand that, Laban's expression (and the words of his sons) may end up going further than them expressing that they are unhappy with Jacob's prosperity. It is not out of the question that, in the future, Laban and his sons might take Jacob's increased by force.

Also, God has told Jacob to move on out of there, but it appears that Jacob obeys only when he realizes that he is in a bad place with the Laban family. As we will come to find out, it appears that Jacob does not decide to return to Canaan simply because God has told him to.

Laban, although he had played Jacob for much of their relationship, he also liked Jacob—at least he liked that Jacob was helpful to him. However, at this point, Jacob can see that Laban no longer appreciates him.

Genesis 31:2 *Jacob looked carefully at Laban's face and he observed that they were no longer friends or allies as before.*

### Laban's Attitudinal Shift Towards Jacob (Various Commentators)

The NET Bible: *Jacob knew from the expression on Laban's face that his attitude toward him had changed – Jacob had become persona non grata.*<sup>84</sup>

Barnes: *[Jacob's] prosperity provokes the envy and slander of Laban's sons, and Laban himself becomes estranged.*<sup>85</sup>

Utlely: *Laban was a manipulator. Although he had treated Jacob harshly, he had always smiled at him, but now his countenance had changed.*<sup>86</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *[Al]though Laban is more adroit and refrains from saying what might be used against him, yet he has dark looks for Jacob in place of the hypocritical smiles that once wreathed his face.*<sup>87</sup>

Trapp: *Laban... could not... conceal his discontent, but that it appeared in his lowering looks. That which he had parted with in his riches, was, as it were, raked out of his belly; {Job. 20:15} he had as beloved have parted with his very heart blood. And this was plain to Jacob by his countenance, which had been friendly, smooth, and smiling; but now was cloudy, sad, spiteful... This old fox held his tongue, but could not keep his countenance.*<sup>88</sup>

Whedon: *During the fourteen years of his service, when Laban had all the advantage, and every thing his own way, he doubtless treated Jacob with great regard, so that the latter would be quick to note coldness and opposition. His changing his wages (Genesis 31:7) gave him opportunity to show his growing dislike.*<sup>89</sup>

L. M. Grant: *Before this Laban had recognized that it was Jacob's presence with him that caused Laban to prosper greatly; so he appreciated Jacob. Now Jacob prospers and Laban's attitude toward him changes to that of resentment.*<sup>90</sup>

<sup>84</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 13, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–13.

<sup>86</sup> Dr. Bob Utlely, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:2.

<sup>87</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>88</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:2.

<sup>89</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:2.

<sup>90</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

At first, everything was going Laban's way. For 14 years, he saw his wealth increase, and increase, and continue to increase, under Jacob's guidance. Every time that Laban viewed Jacob's herd, he knew that this was all his. He was rich beyond his imagination. But, after the, Jacob began to take a legitimate cut of the herd, and that bothered Laban. Further, God saw to it that Jacob was really blessed with the offspring of Laban's sheep and goats. Laban would see this large herd, but it was no longer all his, and that bothered him. It bothered him so much, that he could not even hide it in his face.

None of this means that Laban was getting the short end of the stick or that he was being harmed financially. Let me suggest that, he will do better with Jacob working for him than with his sons working for him.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Laban had supported and possibly even liked Jacob for many years—but that time had come to a close. Laban liked good, hard workers, which Jacob was; but Laban wanted to enjoy the lion's share of the profits. So, periodically, Laban would readjust Jacob's salary, and, no matter what Laban did, Jacob always ended up with a greater increase than Laban liked. Possibly, Jacob more often enjoyed a greater increase in his own flocks and herds than Laban did. This bothered the sons of Laban and it began to bother Laban as well.

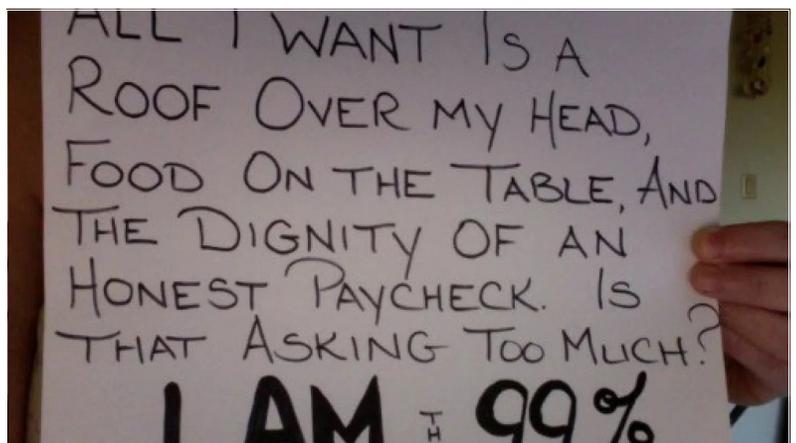
*J. Vernon McGee: You will recall that Jacob has had a pretty sad ordeal of twenty years with Uncle Laban. Uncle Laban has really given him a course in the college of hard knocks, and poor Jacob is beginning to wince because of all the pressure he has been under. However, since the new deal which he had made with Laban regarding cattle breeding, Jacob is now getting more than Uncle Laban is getting. Uncle Laban doesn't like it, nor do his sons like it.<sup>91</sup>*

We are not told exactly how Laban's facial expressions changed. However, we know previously that Laban recognized that God had blessed him through Jacob (**Genesis 30:27**); so we may reasonably assume that Laban has developed a rather negative attitude towards Jacob. We are not told how this came to pass, but, for the first time, some of the sheep born to Laban's flock overseen by Jacob would now belong to Jacob. This did not happen before (not for 14 years), so every sheep born with odd markings was a sheep that now belonged to Jacob and not to Laban. This particularly bothered Laban's sons; and now, apparently, bothered Laban as well. I will suggest to you that interaction between Laban's sons and their father turned their father against Jacob. Furthermore, this would have turned Laban against his own daughters. He does not seem to consider, at any time, *another sheep born to Jacob? Great; that is more wealth to my lovely daughters.* He seems to view additional wealth to Jacob meant less wealth to him and his sons.

I want to emphasize how Laban is continuing to move away from Jacob's God. A person who understands the blessings of God and blessing by association (as Laban apparently once understood), would think, *the same God blessing Jacob is also still blessing me.* But Laban no longer thinks that way. His eyes are on Jacob and his increase of wealth; he is making the incorrect assumption that, he is losing wealth because Jacob is gaining wealth.

**Application:** We have a false movement in the United States known as *Occupy Wall Street*; and their beef was, 1% of the population of the United States made too much money; and 99% made too little money.

**99% Sign** (a graphic); from **ThinkProgress**; accessed October 29, 2017. This is an example of the dishonest propaganda of the left.



<sup>91</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

Somehow, the 1% is making so much money that the 99% are unable to have a house, food or the dignity of an honest paycheck (which is the implication of the sign above). I would guess that fewer than 1% of Americans who are poor lack housing<sup>92</sup>; and, in almost all cases, it has nothing to do with the 1% taking money that the 99% should get. The homeless often have mental problems exacerbated by drug and alcohol addiction (according to **Mental Illness Policy**, about half of the homeless have mental problems; and according to **SAMHSA**, about two-thirds of the homeless have drug problems). Now, this maligned **1% pays about 40% of the federal taxes**, so it is not as though they are holding back. Who is actually holding back is about **40–50% of the taxpayers who do not pay any taxes** at all.

Yet, the left keeps trying to sell the bill of goods that the 1% is somehow ruining America. This is the politics of greed; this is the politics of envy. Somehow, they seem to be implying that, if the 1% did not make so much money, that the 99% could afford food and housing; but, given the information above, that is a lot of hooey. The people claiming to speak for the 99% are simply using this approach in order to further a communist/socialist government, which is capable of regulating the amount of wealth that each person has. They use the greed and envy that many people possess in order to sell their movement.

Furthermore, at one time, California, for instance, had a robust mental health system, where there were quite a number of institutions for the indigent. That all ended because of an anti-mental institution push *from the left*, who despised such institutions (this occurred between 1960–1980). So this whole homeless thing where there are no facilities to help the homeless, is a result of liberal policies.

So, Laban's sons are using the dishonest politics of envy, exactly what Occupy Wall Street did; and the end result is not going to be, Laban and his sons will become more prosperous. When Jacob leaves, what will leave with him is the blessing of God. So, by the time that this chapter is finished, Laban and Jacob will go their separate ways, but, I can guarantee you, the end result was not great prosperity for Laban and his sons. I can guarantee one more thing—Laban's sons were not as good at shepherding as Jacob was. Hence their breeding would have been imperfect; and their losses because of predatory animals would have been greater.<sup>93</sup>

What Laban is unable to do is, accuse Jacob of cheating or stealing<sup>94</sup> and he cannot accuse Jacob of not taking proper care of his flock. Jacob was not cheating<sup>95</sup> or stealing; and he took care of his animals and Laban's. Despite Jacob's shortcomings, he apparently worked hard and gave Laban an honest day's work.

**Application:** One of the reasons that we are blessed in the United States is, there are a considerable number of believers in the United States; and a considerable number of mature believers in the United States. God's blessing to them overflows to their families, their cities, their states and their nation. The anti-God movement in the United States is quite strong, and the best they can hope for is to remove the great blessing that God is giving to them, despite them being antagonistic unbelievers.

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

For many people, how they feel in their hearts is revealed by their face and/or their voice. Some people play poker when it comes to their emotions; and others just cannot. What they think is right there written on their face.

The Cambridge Bible writes: *Laban's countenance toward Jacob is said to be altered. For this idiomatic use of "the countenance" as expressing feeling, cf. Genesis 4:5.*<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> According to one **article**, fewer than 600,000 people in the US go to bed without having a home, which is approximately 0.2% of the population. Furthermore, only about 30% actually live without a roof over their heads. I write this in 2017.

<sup>93</sup> I am making these assumptions. We do not know what happens to Laban and his sons. But, what we do know is, their blessing by association will be removed from them by chapter's end.

<sup>94</sup> Taken in part from Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:2.

<sup>95</sup> He tried to cheat, but it did not work.

<sup>96</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:2.

I do not believe that the writer is being idiomatic here. In fact, I don't think the Bible was being idiomatic in Genesis 4:5 either—Cain's unhappiness with God's disapproval of his offering could be read on his face. No one needed to know or understand micro-expressions in order to read his utter disdain for the whole situation. I believe that the same is being said of Laban here. During the first 14 years, he was reasonably proud of his son-in-law, who made him so rich; and now, he is less than enthusiastic about the whole thing. He sees his herds that Jacob oversees now, knows that many of them actually belong to Jacob, and he is infuriated by this.

Laban, now that he is paying Jacob, is unhappy with the deal. In fact, he will unilaterally change this agreement with Jacob many times. He also has his own sons who can do what Jacob is doing; and they are probably not being paid as much as Jacob. Materialism lust is very difficult for some. Laban probably lacks for nothing (the same thing is probably true of his sons as well); yet he and his sons are upset because of Jacob—and Jacob is doing nothing but collecting his agreed-upon salary.

Wealth is such a relative thing. It is likely that Laban is still enjoying a reasonable increase on his wealth, because he is associated with Jacob, who is God's man in the line of promise. Laban has sons with flocks; he has Jacob caring for his flocks. So, he is probably doing quite well overall. The problem is, Jacob's increase of wealth is occurring at a much higher rate; or it may be that Jacob's increase in wealth is simply noticeable. That is what bothers Laban. Over a very short period of time (maybe 2 or 3 years since Jacob has begun to work for an actual wage), Jacob's wealth is increasing exponentially. This is bothersome to Laban, who is still enjoying increase in his own herds.

Laban is the boss and the owner. If Jacob is enjoying great increase, then Laban believes that he is being cheated out of this increase. Because of God's grace, sometimes the employee is blessed more than the employer. I have personally seen that occur. I have known employees to receive greater blessings than their employer, despite their salary differential.

*L. M. Grant: Management too often considers it has the right to reap all the benefits that labor produces, because management has provided the original capital. But God takes account of the guilt of management in the oppression of its employees (James 5:4: Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.—ESV).<sup>97</sup>*

**The Wealth Inequality Movement and Socialism/Communism:** The *wealth inequality* movement (which is nothing more than a front for socialism) expresses similar concerns as Laban. They are always able to make their case for wealth inequality, no matter what the circumstances, because there is always wealth inequality. They can always sound offended and upset, whether the wealthy are making 10x what the poor are making, or 100,000x what the poor make. The whole idea is, the government comes in and makes everything equal, which gives the government power over all of these individuals and their businesses. That is the end-game—more power to the government (power lust can corrupt just as much as monetary lust).

Communism has a different approach for impoverished countries—they rail against poverty and promise to eliminate it with their wonderful policies. In the end, they will instead increase poverty with their socialistic approach because with socialism, no one has a desire to excel, because he is not going to get anything for it. **Venezuela is a great example of this.** This was a country poised to become one of the prosperous countries in the world, but Hugo Chavez came along and promised to go after the wealthy. He ran that country into the ground.

No matter what a person makes, they can always point to someone else and claim that they are somehow getting a bad deal. The idea is to breed discontent.

<sup>97</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017 (slightly edited).

I have known many state workers in California. In their own area, they all get paid about the same—so there is no desire to stand out due to productivity. In fact, a worker who is too productive is often going to be looked down upon by his peers. “You make us look bad; knock it off!” My cousin Richard, a state worker, lived by the motto, “If you are not working for the state, you are working too hard.”

When communism is trying to make inroads in a prosperous country, like the United States, they cannot rail against poverty because the poor in the United States have a lot of stuff. Right now, there are about **93 million people** in the United States who do not work, are not looking for work, and yet, I can guarantee you, all of them eat, all of them have some kind of shelter and clothing, and most of them have televisions, cable, cell phones, automobiles, heating and air conditioning (I wrote this in the year 2016). In fact, all of them have far more than Laban and Jacob, even though, in that day, these men were considered wealthy.

Obviously, you cannot argue that communism will solve the poverty problem because our only poverty problem is, we have far too many people who live high on the dole. The biggest health problem of the poor in the United States is **obesity** (really). So, communists and their dupes rail against wealth inequality, which is a brilliant strategy because, in a capitalist nation (or in a quasi-capitalist nation) there will be differences of outcome. Generally speaking, people who work long and hard, make far more money than those who work as little as they can. Freedom *demand*s different outcomes. So, what our society truly needs is a lot fewer people jealous of those who do well; and we need fewer people to push more government power to achieve a greater equity in outcomes (which never happens, by the way; in a socialist society, those in government take the lion’s share of the profits along with their friends).

**Application:** It is a big mistake in your life to spend even 1 second mad about how much someone else has; or envious of them. You rarely have to look very far before you see someone who has a better car than you or a better house or a better-looking wife, etc. Your eyes should never be on other people or on things. A person with a nicer and bigger house than you is not necessarily happier—unless they have Bible doctrine in their souls and you don’t (as evidenced by your thinking about what they have and you don’t).

This brings us back to Laban and Jacob. They are both experiencing an increase in wealth; but Jacob is becoming too prosperous, too fast, possibly at a greater rate than Laban—and this concerns Laban, when it shouldn’t. Jacob’s wealth increase is apparent to Laban and to his sons. Nowhere is it implied that Laban is getting poorer; nowhere does the Bible tell us that he is facing desperate financial times. This is simply a matter of looking at Jacob, noting that Jacob is prospering, and that angers Laban.

Recall that, at the beginning, Laban was quite happy with Jacob watching his flocks and breeding his flocks prior to this. Laban worked out a deal with Jacob for Laban’s two daughters, and Laban was quite happy with this deal. The only person who enjoyed an increase in wealth was Laban, because Jacob, for 14 years, worked only for Laban’s increase. However, now Laban cannot get over just how much Jacob’s share in increasing. That has become Laban’s focus and the focus of his sons.

I used to work for a real estate agency which dominated our part of town. Many of the agents would *farm* a territory, meaning they would hang flyers, they might make phone calls; and this territory was internally protected from other agents. If Charley Brown got a property call from Lucy Van Pelt’s farm, Charley Brown had to hand this lead over to Lucy.

There was a mental attitude which went along with this. An agent could see a sign from a rival agency go up in her territory, and she would remark, “That is money out of my pocket; that is a house that should have listed with me.” This mental attitude (which is one of healthy competition) did not depend upon the personal wealth of the person with that attitude. They might be selling 100 houses a year; but they could see that one lone house with the wrong sign on it, and they would think that it should have belonged to them. “That should be my listing!”

This is the attitude expressed by Laban and his sons, but without the healthy competition attitude. They are seeing Jacob’s share of the flocks increase. A number of years ago, *all* of the increase would have been Laban’s; but

now, Jacob gets some of it. So, it does not matter to Laban and his sons that they are prosperous; they keep seeing that flock which is now Jacob's, which, not many years ago, would have been Laban's. "What you have should be mine." And this is not healthy competition, at this point; this is simply monetary/wealth lust.

Do you understand this attitude? This is the attitude of Laban and his sons; this is the covetous attitude of the lower middle class person toward the wealthy person—they strongly desire what is not theirs. They all have reasons why it should be theirs (for Laban, before all the increase was his, and now it is not; for the real estate agent, this is the neighborhood she farms, so the listing should be hers; for the lower middle class person, it is unfair that someone from the 1% has so much more than he does). All of this falls under the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, which is 'Do not desire another man's wife; do not covet another man's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his donkey, or any thing that belongs to him.' (Deut. 5:21; NSB) As believers, we need to be satisfied with what God has given us; our focus should never be upon someone down the street or at the family reunion who we think makes more. Hebrews 13:5 **Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."** (Deut. 31:6) Philip. 4:11 **I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.** (both from the NIV)

In life, you can always find someone who is doing better than you are (at least, from your own perspective). All you need to do is to look next door or down the street, and it will be apparent that someone is better off than you are, through some superficial measure of wealth. If this bothers you, then monetary lust might be your problem.

We are all subject to different lusts; just because I suffer from monetary lust and you suffer from approbation lust, that does not make my sins or inclination towards sin better or worse than yours.

### A List of Lusts

Monetary Lust (1Timothy 6:10)  
 Sexual Lust (Matthew 5:28)  
 Power Lust (Isaiah 14:13-14)  
 Approbation Lust (Matthew 23:5)  
 Social Lust (Matthew 23:6-7)  
 Pleasure Lust (James 4:3)  
 Chemical Lust (drugs and alcohol) (Galatians 5:20 1Peter 4:3-4)  
 Inordinate Ambition (James 4:2)  
 Crusader Lust (2Corinthians 11:20)  
 Lust for Revenge (Genesis 34:25-29)  
 Criminal Lust (Matthew 21:13)  
 Eating Binge Lust (Gluttony) (1Samuel 2:12-16)

From <http://www.biblenews1.com/balaam/lust.htm> accessed June 17, 2015.

The problem here was one of envy—Laban and his sons both envied the wealth that Jacob was gathering.

### David Guzik on Envy

- i. Envy is bad not only on its own, but also for the company it keeps: for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (1Corinthians 3:3) For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there (James 3:16).
- ii. Instead, Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy (1Corinthians 13:4).
- iii. God wants to deliver us from envy: For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another (Titus 3:3).
- iv. Is envy a small sin? It put Jesus on the cross: For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy (Matthew 27:17–18: **So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"** For he knew that it was out of envy that they

## David Guzik on Envy

had delivered Him up.—ESV; capitalized).

From <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/genesis-31/> accessed September 30, 2017 (verse text added).

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

For more information, see the **Doctrine of Envy** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Time passes. In vv. 1–2 we get a set of mental attitudes which fester for several years in the Laban household. However, with v. 3, we are in year 19 or 20 of Jacob's life with Laban, and the attitudes of Laban and his sons are impacting Jacob's life more and more.

Unlike the previous verse, which actually used fairly simple words; this verse also uses fairly simple words, but they are quite straightforward with little interpretation needed. Therefore, there will be fewer translation examples.

V. 3 seems to come out of nowhere. Suddenly, God is speaking to Jacob. We do not know any of the related circumstances, but it appears that this originally came to Jacob in a dream, and what he does in vv. 4–7 is in reaction to this dream, which Jacob will fully explain to his wives while speaking to them.

The human author of this portion of the Word of God (who I believe is Jacob), does not first give us the dream and the related circumstances of the dream; but he gives us the most important part (which is right here); and then gives more of the content of the dream when speaking to his wives. This is so we do not have a repetition of the same material when such repetition is unnecessary.

**And so says Y<sup>e</sup>howah unto Jacob, "Return unto a land of your fathers and to your relatives and I will be with you."**

Genesis  
31:3

**Furthermore, Y<sup>e</sup>howah had said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and [return] to your family [there] and I will be with you."**

**Then Jehovah said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and return to your family there, and I promise that I will be with you."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so says Y <sup>e</sup> howah unto Jacob, "Return unto a land of your fathers and to your relatives and I will be with you."   |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And the Lord said to Jacob, Return to thy country and to thy native (place): and My <u>Word</u> shall be for thy help.            |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And the Lord said to Jakob, Return to the land of thy fathers, and to thy native place; and My <u>Word</u> shall be for thy help. |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | <u>Especially</u> the Lord saying to him: Return into the land of your fathers, and to your kindred, and I will be with you.      |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Mar-Yah said to Ya'aqub, "Return to the land of your fathers, and to your relatives, and I will be with you."                     |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And the LORD said to Jacob, Return to the land of your fathers, and to your kindred; and I will be with you.                      |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And the Lord said to Jacob, Return to the land of your father, and to your family, and I will be with you.                        |

Significant differences: The Latin appears to add the word *especially*. The targum of Onkelos leaves some words out and adds some words in.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English | Then the Lord said to Jacob, Go back to the land of your fathers, and to your relations, and I will be with you.           |
| Easy English           | Then the Lord said to Jacob 'Go back to the land where your fathers lived. Go back to your relatives. I will be with you.' |
| Easy-to-Read Version   | The LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to your own land where your ancestors lived. I will be with you."                         |
| <i>The Message</i>     | That's when GOD said to Jacob, "Go back home where you were born. I'll go with you."                                       |
| Names of God Bible     | Then <b>Yahweh</b> said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your ancestors and to your relatives, and I will be with you."   |
| NIRV                   | Then the Lord spoke to Jacob. He said, "Go back to your father's land and to your relatives. I will be with you."          |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Contemporary English V. | One day the LORD said, "Jacob, go back to your relatives in the land of your ancestors, and I will bless you."                        |
| New Century Version     | The LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land where your ancestors lived, and I will be with you."                                     |
| New Living Translation  | Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you." |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | Then Jehovah said to Jacob: 'Now, return to your family and to your father's land, and I will be with you.'        |
| International Standard V    | Then the LORD ordered Jacob, "Go back to your father's territory and to your relatives. I'll be with you."         |
| Revised Knox Bible          | But what moved him most was that the Lord had bidden him, Return to the land of your fathers, to your own kindred. |
| Translation for Translators | Then Yahweh said to Jacob, "Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will help you there."                |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible    | Jehovah was to say to Jacob: Be turning back to the solid grounds of your fathers and kindred.                      |
| Conservapedia         | The LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers, and to your own kin, and I shall be with you."        |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible    | Then the EVER-LIVING said to Jacob, " Return to the land of your fathers and your birth, and I will be with you."   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale) | And the Lord said unto Jacob: turn again into the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you. |
| HCSB                  | Then the LORD said to him, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."        |
| H. C. Leupold         | And Yahweh said to Jacob: Return to the land of thy fathers and to thy relationship, and I will be with thee.       |
| Urim-Thummim Version  | And YHWH said to Jacob, return to the land of your forefathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.       |

Wikipedia Bible Project      And Yahweh said to Jacob, return to the land of your fathers, to the land of your birth; and I will be with you.

### Catholic Bibles:

Christian Community (1988)      Then Yahweh said to Jacob, “Go back to your homeland, the country of your kinsmen. I will be with you.”  
 New American Bible (2011)      Then the LORD said to Jacob: Return to the land of your ancestors, where you were born, and I will be with you. Gn 26:3; 28:15; 32:10.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible      *ADONAI* said to Ya’akov, “Return to the land of your ancestors, to your kinsmen; I will be with you.”  
 The Complete Tanach      And the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your forefathers and to your birthplace, and I will be with you."

**Return to the land of your forefathers:** And there I will be with you, but as long as you are still attached to the unclean one, it is impossible to cause My presence to rest upon you. — [from Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer , ch. 36]

exeGeses companion Bible      And Yah Veh says to Yaaqov,  
 Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred;  
 and I AM with you.  
 Israeli Authorized Bible      And YY said unto Yaakov, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred;  
 and I will be with thee.  
 JPS (Tanakh—1985)      Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers where you were born, and I will be with you.”  
 Kaplan Translation      God said to Jacob, 'Go back to your birthplace in the land of your fathers. I will be with you.'  
 Mechanical Literal Trans.      ...and YHWH said to Ya'aqov, turn back to the land of your father and to your kindred and I will exist with you,...  
 Orthodox Jewish Bible      And Hashem said unto Ya’akov, Shuv el Eretz Avoteicha! And to thy moledet; and I will be with thee.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Expanded Bible      The LORD said to Jacob, “Go back to the land where your ancestors lived [of your fathers and your birthplace], and I will be with you [indicating Jacob’s covenant with God].”  
 Kretzmann’s Commentary      And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. Canaan was the land of Jacob's fathers, Genesis 17:8; Genesis 26:3; there lived his nearest relatives. The Lord therefore not only bade him return, but also assured him of His protection.  
 NET Bible®      The Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers [Or perhaps “ancestors” (so NRSV), although the only “ancestors” Jacob had there were his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac.] and to your relatives. I will be with you [I will be with you. Though Laban was no longer “with him,” the Lord promised to be.]”  
 The Pulpit Commentary      And the Lord—Jehovah; since the entire journey to Padan-aram had been conducted under his special care, vide Genesis 28:15 (Hengstenberg), and not because the first three verses of this chapter have been inserted or modified by the Jehovist (Tuch, Block, et al.)—said unto Jacob, probably in a dream (cf. Genesis 28:5, Genesis 28:10, Genesis 28:11). Return unto the land of thy fathers (i.e. Canaan), and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. So Jehovah had promised at Bethel twenty years before (Genesis 28:15).

The Voice

**Eternal One** (to Jacob): *You must now return to the land of your ancestors and to your own family. I will be with you always.*

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans.  | ...and YHWH <sup>[He Exists]</sup> said to Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> , turn back to the land of your father and to your kindred and I will exist with you,... |
| Concordant Literal Version  | And saying is Yahweh to Jacob, "Return to the land of your forefathers and to your kindred, and come will I to be with you.   |
| Darby Translation           | And Jehovah said to Jacob, Return into the land of thy fathers [Or 'birthplace:' see ch. 24.4,7], and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.                        |
| Emphasized Bible            | Then said Yahweh unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers and to thy kindred,—that I may be with thee.   |
| Green's Literal Translation | And Jehovah said to Jacob, Go back to the land of your fathers and to your kindred. And I will be with you.   |
| World English Bible         | Yahweh said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers, and to your relatives, and I will be with you."  |
| Young's Updated LT          | And Jehovah says unto Jacob, "Turn back unto the land of your fathers, and to your kindred, and I am with you."   |

**The gist of this passage:**

Now God tells Jacob to return to the land of Canaan; and promises to be there with him.

| Genesis 31:3a                                    |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                             | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]               | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect      | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH] | transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>  | proper noun   | Strong's #3068<br>BDB #217 |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]                        | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>                               | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |
| shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced shoo <sup>b</sup> v]   | <i>return, turn, turn back, reminisce, restore something, bring back something, revive, recover something, make restitution</i>       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative     | Strong's #7725<br>BDB #996 |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]                        | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>                               | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |

| Genesis 31:3a                            |  |   |                          |
|--|--|---|--------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                     | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #       |
| 'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]      | <i>earth (all or a portion thereof), land, territory, country, continent; ground, soil; under the ground [Sheol]</i> | feminine singular construct   | Strong's #776<br>BDB #75 |
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v] | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i>                | masculine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3       |

**Translation:** Furthermore, Y<sup>e</sup>howah had said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers... In the Hebrew, we do not have a tense to indicate that this was said right then and there in this time context or whether this was something that God had said to Jacob days or months ago. We will see that this is a dream which Jacob had, his second communication with God. Additional information from that dream will be forthcoming, later on in this chapter.

*Gill: In answer to a prayer of his; or seeing what difficulties and discouragements Jacob laboured under, he appeared unto him for his encouragement and instruction how to proceed.<sup>98</sup>*

The change of facial expression could mean that Laban will come to regard Jacob as an enemy and as a rival. It might not be that great of a deal for Laban to be Jacob's friend and relative, but as an enemy, it could possibly be worse. Nevertheless, Jacob has nothing to fear. God is with him and God has made promise after promise to Jacob concerning his future. God can take care of Jacob and God can protect Jacob. He does the same for us.

We do not know how God contacted Jacob. I would make the educated guess that God came to Jacob in a dream, as He has before (which Jacob will tell his wives in [vv. 10–13](#)).

God's timing is perfect. Jacob needed to remain outside of the land because of all the sorry crap that he pulled. God took this chiseler out of the Land of Promise and put him with Laban, an even greater chiseler. “You want to con all those around you? I will let you see what a real con-man is like.” And God had Jacob go to his relatives in Paddan-aram, and spend 20 years with a much greater chiseler and con-man. Jacob needed to be on the receiving end of dishonesty and half-hearted agreements.

**Application:** If you have any sort of a business, then you need to be honest and have great integrity. In every business, you will come to a point where you can be dishonest and enjoy a little more gain; or you can be honest and not have any gain. You need to be honest and show integrity. When you are not, your reputation suffers and so does your business.

| Genesis 31:3b   |   |                                    |                           |
|---|---|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                   | BDB and Strong's #        |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction             | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>                                | directional/relational preposition | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510 |

<sup>98</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:3.

### Genesis 31:3b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| môwl <sup>e</sup> deth (תְּדָלוּם)<br>[pronounced moh <sup>e</sup> -<br>DETH] | <i>birth, origin, native; kindred,<br/>family; progeny, [female]<br/>offspring, children;<br/>circumstances of birth</i> | feminine singular noun<br>with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person<br>masculine singular suffix | Strong's #4138<br>BDB #409 |

**Translation:** ...and [return] to your family [there]... Isaac is still in the land, as is Jacob's brother Esau. Isaac was very rich and had a very large household (I often refer to it a *compound*); and many of them would have been like family to Jacob.

Genesis 31:3 Then Jehovah said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and return to your family there, and I promise that I will be with you."

#### God's guidance to Jacob (commentary/discussion)

David Guzik: *Even if Jacob never knew it, God prepared him for this time. First, God gave him the desire to go back home (Genesis 30:25). Then his present circumstances became unbearable. Finally, the LORD gave personal direction to Jacob. God often leads us in the same pattern.*<sup>99</sup> Except that God does not come to us personally and tell us, "It is time to move on."

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Jacob might not have deemed himself at liberty to quit his present sphere, under the impulse of passionate fretfulness and discontent. Having been conducted to Haran by God (Genesis 28:15) and having got a promise that the same heavenly Guardian would bring him again into the land of Canaan, he might have thought he ought not to leave it, without being clearly persuaded as to the path of duty. So ought we to set the Lord before us, and to acknowledge Him in all our ways, our journeys, our settlements, and plans in life.*<sup>100</sup>

H. C. Leupold has an inordinately favorable view of Jacob: *Many times before this Jacob may have desired to return, especially since living together with Laban was becoming increasingly difficult. We have every reason to believe that, godly man that he was, Jacob had been submitting his difficulty to his God in prayer. Since he had been living under God's direct guidance ever since the time of the Bethel vision, Jacob would not presume to return unless God so directed.*<sup>101</sup>

I disagree with Leupold, and can quote chapter and verse on it. In the previous chapter, Jacob used his return to Canaan as a bargaining chip. He told Laban, "Give me my wives and children and let me moved back to Canaan." But then Laban says, "Name your salary" and Jacob immediately withdraws his threat to leave and names his salary. Genesis 30:25–28 (and Jacob names his salary in the subsequent verses).

Furthermore, the chapter that we are studying is *very* careful to note everything else that is going on, besides God telling Jacob to leave (in a dream). When Jacob shares this dream with his wives, it seems to be days, if not months, after the fact; and there are a whole host of things which cause Jacob's family to move, besides God's direction (the complaints of Laban's sons, the mean looks that Laban was giving Jacob, the estrangement between Laban and his daughters). In fact, I would submit to you that, had everything been hunky dory, Jacob and his wives would have remained in Haran, despite the orders of God.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:3.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:3.

<sup>101</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> The entire purpose of this study is to have the best and most careful understanding of each chapter, including having a knowledge of the motivations of the characters where such motivations might be reasonably deduced from the text.

### God's guidance to Jacob (commentary/discussion)

Wesley gives Jacob far too much credit: *Jacob...would not quit his place [in Haran] 'till God bid him. He came there by orders from heaven, and there he would slay 'till he was ordered back.*<sup>103</sup>

L. M. Grant: *The time has come when the Lord tells Jacob to return to the land of his fathers (v.3). There is no reason for him to continue with Laban when there is serious friction in their relationship.*<sup>104</sup>

With this seemingly innocuous observation, Grant misses two very important points: (1) Just because your job sucks, that does not mean you have carte blanc to quit it. Difficulties and troubles on the job are 100% normal. Having the perfect job where there are no problems and no conflicts is abnormal. Serious friction between you and your boss or you and a co-worker is never enough reason to just up and find another job. Sometimes, God places you in a situation like that to work things out. Sometimes God uses something like that to move you elsewhere. How can you tell which way to go? Mix your personal experience with Bible doctrine; and then determine. (2) Jacob is not going to simply move back to Canaan because God has come to him in a dream and told him to. He is not to that point in spiritual maturity. He and his wives will require a number of other factors to push them in that direction. A considerable portion of this chapter describes these other factors.

Many people, in the 1970's and 1980's, heard R. B. Thieme, Jr. on tape, and knew that is where they needed to be, in Houston, Texas, taking in Bible doctrine. I would not be surprised if thousands of people moved to Houston to get face to face doctrine every night. Personally, I was sold on Bible doctrine, but not on moving to Houston, Texas. I had to find a job, and I was having no luck in my hometown; so I checked on jobs in 3 places—the 3<sup>rd</sup> one, and way down in terms of preference, was Houston, Texas. My approach here was, *oh, what the hell, maybe*. Well, you know where the doors opened up and where they did not open up. No doors opening in my first two choices; but in Houston, I was told by a very helpful secretary, to physically come to Houston and set up some job interviews, and that would gain me a job. That is what I did and all of the right doors opened. It was as if God had said, "Here is where I want you. Get going." Nothing mystical happened; I did not have any dreams that led me to Houston; no one put a Houston Astros pennant on my car windshield.

My point being, in this personal story, is, I mixed the doctrine I had with the situation I was in, and everything pointed to Houston, even though that was my 3<sup>rd</sup> choice of 3. It took me 6 or 7 years to get used to the idea; and now, 40+ years later, it was the best decision that I could have ever made.

God gave Jacob guidance, but many other things were done to make this move back to the Land of Promise the only rational thing to do.

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#### Genesis 31:3c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>      | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]                            | <i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect   | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| ‘îm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]                                   | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>                                      | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

<sup>103</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:3.

<sup>104</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

**Translation:** ...and I will be with you.” God promises that He will be with Jacob in returned to the Land of Promise.

This promise, *I will be with you*, is made on numerous occasions in Scripture. It means, Jacob will be in God’s geographical will. God always has a place for us to be; when we are in that place, then God is with us. This does not mean that God is going to intrude on Jacob’s life on numerous occasions. God was with Jacob when he moved to Haran; but God only spoke to Jacob one time while he was in Haran, and that was to tell him to move out.

Genesis 31:3 Then Jehovah said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and return to your family there, and I promise that I will be with you.”

### God’s Promise, “I will be with you” (Various Commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *The renewal of the promise of the Divine Presence made to Jacob in Genesis 28:15; cf. Genesis 21:22, Genesis 26:24.*<sup>105</sup>

Clarke: *[This means] I will take the same care of thee in thy return, as I took of thee on thy way to this place. The Targum reads, My Word shall be for thy help, see Genesis 15:1. A promise of this kind was essentially necessary for the encouragement of Jacob, especially at this time; and no doubt it was a powerful means of support to him through the whole journey; and it was particularly so when he heard that his brother was coming to meet him, with four hundred men in his retinue, Genesis 32:6. At that time he went and pleaded the very words of this promise with God, Genesis 32:9 (And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD Who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,'—ESV; capitalized).*<sup>106</sup>

Gill: *I will be with you; to protect him from any injury that might be attempted to be done unto him, either by Laban or Esau.*<sup>107</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge offers up these related passages: Genesis 21:22, Genesis 26:24, Genesis 28:15, Genesis 32:9 Isaiah 41:10 Hebrews 13:5.<sup>108</sup>

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**Genesis 31:3** (a graphic); from [Free Daily Bible Study](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

**Genesis 31:3** And Jehovah said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers, and to your kindred, and I will be with you.”

As occurs many times in Scripture, there are times that God comes to a believer and speaks to him, but often we do not know the manner in which this occurs. Later in this narrative, we will see that God has come to Jacob in a dream.

About 20 years have passed and now it is time for Jacob to return to Canaan—the land that God has given to the Jews—those who would be descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

<sup>105</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:3.

<sup>106</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:3 (appended).

<sup>107</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:3 (slightly edited).

<sup>108</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:3.

So, here we have Jacob: he knows what God wants him to do. That is the right thing to do. Now will he do a right thing in a right way, or will he do a right thing in a wrong way? If you have been in this study for any amount of time, you can easily answer that question without even reading ahead.

Notice the play on words between vv. 2 and 3: **Jacob observed the face of Laban and, he observed that it [lit., behold] [was] not with him as before. Furthermore, Y<sup>e</sup>howah had said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and [return] to your family [there] and I will be with you.”** Laban is no longer with Jacob; but, God will be with Jacob.

In the next chapter, we will see Jacob running around like a chicken with his head cut off, not knowing what he should do. He is worried about his own life; he is worried about the lives of his wives and children. However, this is simple. God said to go there; so Jacob is going there; and so we should expect everything to be okay for Jacob. He should have had that trust as well. If there were problems, God would either provide further guidance or He would have taken care of those problems (Jacob is worried about Esau, the brother who threatened to kill him 20 years ago).

Interestingly enough, Jacob will start off right in the next chapter, praying a marvelous prayer. 10 seconds later, he is off in panic palace, not knowing what to do. For that reason, and many others, it is clear that Jacob has experienced some spiritual growth in Paddan-aram; but he is nowhere near spiritual maturity.

Some commentators<sup>109</sup> believe that Jacob first was going to obey God’s orders in Genesis 30:25–26 **As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you.”** Three things are important: (1) there is no indication that God spoke to Jacob and told him to move as He did in this chapter; (2) Jacob did not say to Laban, “God has ordered me to return to Canaan;” and (3) as soon as Laban said, “Okay, tell me how much you want to be paid,” Jacob stopped talking about moving to Canaan, and came up with a salary (which he had apparently been thinking about for some time<sup>110</sup>). So, it is my opinion that Jacob used his eventual return to Canaan as a bargaining chip. “You need to offer me enough money to stay here, Laban.” Do you really think that Jacob is above using such a bargaining chip? Jacob is looking to manipulate Laban and Laban is looking to manipulate Jacob. What God did for Jacob is completely separate from this manipulations and Jacob’s scheming (**Genesis 31:9**). Even Laban understood that his own personal prosperity was tied to Jacob (**Genesis 30:27**).

Genesis 31:3 **Then Jehovah said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and return to your family there, and I promise that I will be with you.”**

### What caused Jacob to move?

1. Jacob, in this chapter, will clearly choose to move back to Canaan.
2. He will meet with his wives shortly, discuss this problem with Laban with them, and when he proposes that they leave Laban to move to Canaan, his two wives are on board.
3. Now, God has clearly told him to return to Canaan, in this verse and again, in v. 13 (“**I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.**”—ESV; capitalized). God did not tell this twice to Jacob; we are first told about it in v. 3, and Jacob repeats this to his wives in v. 13, where he quotes God.
4. One could say that God told Jacob to move, and that is all it took; Jacob, in obedience to God, said, “We are moving to Canaan” to Rachel and Leah.
5. However, knowing what we know about Jacob, it is easy to give him no credit at all.
6. I believe the Bible actually places us in the middle of these two extremes. God did directly tell Jacob to move; but there are other reasons clearly given in Scripture.
7. Both of Jacob’s wives must be onboard. We cannot have Rachel go, and Leah stay behind. One of the

<sup>109</sup> From [http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings\\_Genesis/genesis\\_32.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_32.htm) accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>110</sup> This was totally related to Jacob’s breeding scheme.

## What caused Jacob to move?

great themes of the book of Genesis is the purity, isolation and protection of the line of Jacob. Unlike Abraham and Isaac, there are no errant branches to prune out in his line. Everyone with the genes of Jacob will be a racial Jew. Therefore, it is all or nothing at this juncture.

8. Does Jacob fully recognize that? I could not say; but he brings in both wives; he discusses this issue with both wives, and he looks to bring both of them and all of the children with him. This could have been the point where Jacob looks at Rachel and says, "Listen, baby, it's been you and me from the beginning; if Leah wants to stay, I am cool with that." Given the text which we have, I think we may rest assured that Jacob, to at least a limited degree, knows that all of his children and all of his wives must come with him.
9. However, since there are other factors recorded in the Word of God, other than God telling Jacob to move, we must take those other factors into consideration.
10. First off, there is friction between Jacob and Laban, as well as Jacob and Laban's sons. There did not seem to be any place to go where these relationships could be smoothed out. Laban changed Jacob's salary on numerous occasions; and yet, Laban was unhappy and his sons were unhappy. Genesis 31:1–2
11. It is Laban's own greediness which has turned his two daughters against him. This will be examined in great detail in [vv. 14–16](#), but suffice it to say, Laban treated his daughters more like chattel than like daughters; so, as a result, they have no reason to want to maintain a close relationship with him.
12. Therefore, there were many factors which came together all at once which made it certain that Jacob would take all of his wives and all of his children back to Canaan.

We can view these external situations (Laban's change of attitude; the animosity of Laban's sons) in two ways: (1) they were necessary in order to get Jacob to move. It does not appear to me that Jacob would have moved without having other circumstances point him in that direction. (2) It is because of these external circumstances that Jacob had to move; it was clearly the right time for him to move and God knew this. This could have escalated to a very bad place to the point where Laban's sons may have killed Jacob.

We come to these conclusions based upon the text of the Bible.

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This was taken from the chapter summary done by James Burton Coffman.

### Jacob's three-fold reason for leaving Paddan Aram (Thomas Whitelaw)

- I. Jacob had heard the ominous and hostile words of Laban's sons, a development rising out of Jacob's prosperity; and
- II. the fact that trouble was brewing was confirmed by the attitude of Laban, which toward Jacob had changed to hostility from friendliness; and
- III. Jehovah commanded him to leave. All this together signaled to Jacob that the hour for leaving Paddan-aram had struck. He moved at once to procure the aid of his wives and to inform them of the basis for his decision. Jacob's age at this time was "either ninety-seven or seventy-seven," depending upon which method of calculating it is followed.

Most importantly, reason III. is not enough by itself.

From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

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Snider's translation of Genesis 31:1–3 Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not toward him as formerly. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:1–3

1. After some six years of service, a great deal of Laban's flocks had become Jacob's.
2. There are two distinct factors to consider when dealing with how Jacob acquired his wealth.
3. The first is the fact that God controlled the laws of genetics so that Jacob acquired his flocks at God's direction.
4. However, it is important to remember that Jacob had his own human viewpoint method he employed to prosper himself.
5. Because of his scheming, he lacks a clear conscience in regard to his acquisitions.
6. This fact is even more obvious in that he never refers to his methods when speaking about how he was prospered. vs 7-9
7. Perhaps Jacob has grown spiritually so that he recognizes that God controls the laws of genetics, and not his rod tricks.
8. In any case, Jacob becomes aware of two distinct developments in his niche:
  - 1) The complaining of Laban's sons.
  - 2) The change in Laban's disposition.
9. It is not specifically noted whether or not Jacob was privy to the talk of the sons himself, or if someone else told him.
10. Likely their talk made its way back to Jacob without their knowledge.
11. They practically accuse Jacob of being a thief, since he is now prospering more than Laban himself.
12. There can be no question that Laban was doing better after Jacob's tenure than he was before his arrival.
13. But his fortunes have taken a turn for the worst during the previous six years.
14. His sons are jealous of Jacob, and demonstrate their father's pre-occupation with money and the details of life.
15. Jacob also observed that Laban no longer had the same disposition toward him which he had had the previous fourteen years.
16. Laban had reason from his point of view to be upset, since he basically had fourteen years of slave labor for free.
17. Now he is having to actually recompense Jacob for his work, and this does not sit well with him.
18. His critics conveniently ignore the overall prosperity which has come to their niche since Jacob's arrival.
19. He had been cheated out of seven years of service, which no doubt kept a smile on Laban's face.
20. Now his phony smiles and hypocrisy are replaced with frowns and glares toward Jacob.
21. Beyond these physical developments, YHWH had appeared to him and commanded him to return to Canaan.
22. These events coupled with his recent prosperity cause Jacob to finally make the decision which would get him back in the geographic will of God.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:1–3 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father." Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly. Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:1-3

Jacob Exits Haran (vv. 1-55)

Yahweh Tells Him to Leave (vv. 1-3)

1. Even though Jacob had resorted to gimmicky to produce off-colored sheep and goats, God blessed Jacob by tweaking the genetics of animals during mating.
2. Over the course of the final six years of Jacob's service to Laban, Jacob's wealth increased exponentially and Laban's shriveled.
3. The degree of Jacob's prosperity is detailed at the end of chapter 30 (in v. 1 "wealth" is actually the noun glory).
4. This inevitably led to resentment on the part of Laban and his sons.
5. It was Jacob's sons-in-law that started the verbal attack on him, insinuating that he had somehow gain this advantage by chicanery.
6. They slandered Jacob before Laban and anyone who would listen.
7. This slanderous attack came to the attention of Jacob via unnamed sources.
8. The brewing crisis is the background to the parting of ways of Jacob and Laban.
9. Laban's loss and Jacob's gain illustrates the principle of reaping and sowing.
10. Laban, ever the lover of mammon, is denied his heart's desire and Jacob is blessed with significant wealth as he is positive and an heir of the covenant made with his grandfather.
11. Besides the reports of verbal insinuation, Jacob sees a change in Laban's demeanor whenever the two men were together (v. 2).
12. Laban the friendly extrovert now appears sullen and moody treating his son-in-law accordingly.
13. These two things (the slander and Laban's demeanor) told Jacob that a crisis was in the offing.
14. Observe: the slander of Laban's sons had the desired effect on Laban.
15. Whatever esteem Jacob had previously enjoyed with his father-in-law/uncle had evaporated in the heat of Laban's unfulfilled avarice.
16. Jacob, the toast of Laban's success, became persona non grata.
17. With Ph 2 prosperity comes testing.
18. Individuals become jealous and bitter, and sometimes they enter into a vilification campaign.
19. Even though Jacob is very rich, he has no family to support him in case violence breaks out.
20. He feels alone and exposed.
21. Against this background Yahweh speaks to him informing him that it is time to exit this foreign land and "return to the land of your fathers and to your clan/relatives."
22. This divine summons took place six years into the seven year contract with Laban.
23. Jacob's call is reminiscent of the one made to his grandfather when he left Ur.
24. Jacob is once again reassured that God would be with him in this endeavor—e.g. that his trip home would be met with success.
25. Back in chap. 28 God told Jacob in a dream that during his time away from his homeland He would be with him.
26. God proved to be good to His promise blessing Jacob with wives, children and much wealth.
27. Now the only then Jacob needs to do to insure blessing on the trip back is obedience to the summons

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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**Jacob Speaks with His Wives/Jacob's Dream from God**

And so sends Jacob and he calls for Rachel and Leah the field unto his flock, and so he says to them, "Seeing me faces of your father for [it is] not unto me as yesterday three days ago. And Elohim of my father was with me. And you [even] you [all] have known that in all my strength I have served your father. And your father have deceived in me and he has changed my wages ten times. And has not given him Elohim to cause evil with me.

Genesis  
31:4–7

Jacob sent and called for [his wives] Rachel and Leah, [to come to] the field with his flock. He said to them, "I observe the face of your father, and he [is] no longer [favorable] to me as he has been previously. However, the Elohim of my father is with me. You [both] know that I have served your father with all my strength. Nevertheless, your father has cheated me and he has changed my wages ten times. However, Elohim has not given him the occasion to do evil to me.

Jacob sent for his wives, Rachel and Leah, to come to the field where he was tending Laban's flock. He said to them, "I have observed the countenance of your father, and he no longer favors me as he did before. However, despite this, the God of my father is with me. You both know that I have worked very hard for your father. Nevertheless, your father has cheated me and he had changed my wages many times. However, God has not allowed him to do evil to me.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so sends Jacob and he calls for Rachel and Leah the field unto his flock, and so he says to them, "Seeing me faces of your father for [it is] not unto me as yesterday three days ago. And Elohim of my father was with me. And you [even] you [all] have known that in all my strength I have served your father. And your father have deceived in me and he has changed my wages ten times. And has not given him Elohim to cause evil with me.   |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Jacob sent and called Rahel and Leah to the field with his flocks: and he said to them, I see the looks of your father, that they are not with me as yesterday and the time before; and the God of my father hath been to my <u>help</u> . And you know that with all my strength I have served your father; but your father hath lied to me, and hath changed my wages ten times; but the Lord hath not permitted him to hurt me.  |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Jakob sent <u>Naphtali, who was a swift mes-senger</u> , and he called Rahel and Leah, and they came into the field unto his flock. And he said to them, I consider the looks of your father, and, behold, they are not <u>peaceful</u> with me as yesterday and as before it; but the God of my father hath been to my <u>aid</u> . And you know that with all my strength I have served your father, but your father hath deceived me, and hath changed [JERUSALEM. Hath commuted.] my wages ten portions; yet the Lord hath not given him power to do me evil. |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | He sent, and called Rachel and Lia into the field, <u>where he fed</u> the flocks, And said to them: I see your father's countenance is not towards me as yesterday and the other day: but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that I have served your father to the utmost of my power. Yea, your father also has overreached me, and has changes my wages ten times: and yet God has not suffered him to hurt me.   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Ya'aqub sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock, and said to them, "I see the expression on your father's face, that it is not toward me as before; but God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all of my strength. Your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock, And said to them, I see that your fathers countenance toward me is not as it has been yesterday and the day before; but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that  |

Septuagint (Greek) I have worked for your father with all my strength. And yet your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God has not permitted him to hurt me. And Jacob sent and called Lea and Rachel to the plain where the flocks were. And he said to them, I see the face of your father, that it is not toward me as before, but the God of my father was with me. And you too know that with all my might I have served your father. But your father deceived me, and changed my wages for the ten lambs, yet God gave him not power to hurt me.

Significant differences: The targums has a lot of additional text; the Latin has some additional text as well. The Greek has *ten lambs* rather than *ten times*. Other than that, the various ancient translations were fairly close.

The Cambridge Bible notes: *[The] LXX, not understanding the Hebrew word rendered "times" (mônîm), seems to have transliterated it with the rendering ἀμῶν, "lambs" (or is this for μῶν?), i.e. "ten lambing seasons."*<sup>111</sup>

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English And Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to come to him in the field among his flock. And he said to them, It is clear to me that your father's feeling is no longer what it was to me; but the God of my father has been with me. And you have seen how I have done all in my power for your father, But your father has not kept faith with me, and ten times he has made changes in my payment; but God has kept him from doing me damage.

Easy English Jacob sent someone to go to Rachel and Leah. Jacob said that they must come to the field where he was. He was with his animals. Jacob said to Rachel and Leah, 'Your father is not as nice to me now, as he was before. I have seen that he is not so nice. But the God of my father has been with me. You know how I have worked for your father. I have worked as well as I can. But your father has changed what I receive in return for working. He changed it many times. But God has not let him hurt me.

Easy-to-Read Version So Jacob told Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where he kept his flocks of sheep and goats. He said to them, "I have noticed that your father is not as friendly with me as he used to be. But the God of my father has been with me. You both know that I have worked as hard as I could for your father. But he cheated me. He has changed my pay ten times. But during all this time, God protected me from all of Laban's tricks.

*The Message* So Jacob sent word for Rachel and Leah to meet him out in the field where his flocks were. He said, "I notice that your father has changed toward me; he doesn't treat me the same as before. But the God of my father hasn't changed; he's still with me. You know how hard I've worked for your father. Still, your father has cheated me over and over, changing my wages time and again.

NIRV So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah. He told them to come out to the fields where his flocks were. He said to them, "I see that your father's feelings toward me have changed. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength. But your father has cheated me. He has changed my pay ten times. In spite of everything that's happened, God hasn't let him harm me.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

<sup>111</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:7.

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible    | So Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah and summoned them into the field where his flock was. He said to them, "I am aware that your father no longer likes me as much as he used to. But my father's God has been with me. You know that I've worked for your father as hard as I could. But your father cheated me and changed my payment ten times. Yet God didn't let him harm me.  |
| Contemporary English V. | And sending is Jacob and calling Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock. And saying is he to them, "Seeing am I the face of your father, that it is not toward me as heretofore. And the Elohim of my father came to stand by me. And you know that with all my vigor I served your father. Yet your father trifles with me, and varied my hire at ten countings. Yet the Elohim did not allow him to do evil withal.                                   |
| The Living Bible        | So one day Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to come out to the field where he was with the flocks, to talk things over with them.<br>"Your father has turned against me," he told them, "and now the God of my fathers has come and spoken to me. You know how hard I've worked for your father, but he has been completely unscrupulous and has broken his wage contract with me again and again and again. But God has not permitted him to do me any harm! |
| New Berkeley Version    | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, where his flocks were, and said to them, "I have been noticing that your father's feelings toward me are not what they used to be, but my father's God has been with me. You yourselves know how I have served you father to the best of my ability, while your father has cheated me; ten times he has changed my wages; but God has not permitted him to harm me.                                  |
| New Life Version        | So Jacob called Rachel and Leah to come to his flock in the field. He said to them, "I see that your father does not show me as much favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have worked for your father with all my strength. Yet your father has not been fair with me. He has changed my pay ten times. But God did not let him hurt me.  |
| New Living Translation  | So Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching his flock. He said to them, "I have noticed that your father's attitude toward me has changed. But the God of my father has been with me. You know how hard I have worked for your father, but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to do me any harm.  |

#### **Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | So Jacob sent for LeAh and RachEl, [who were] out in the plains with the flocks, and said to them: 'I know that your father is no longer [happy to see me]. However, the God of my father is still with me. For although I've served your father with all my might, he deceived me, changing what he owed me to [just] ten lambs... but God didn't allow him to [do me wrong].   |
| International Standard V    | Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to come out to the field where his flock was and informed them, "I've noticed that the way [Lit. <i>the face of</i> ] your father has been looking at us hasn't been as nice as it was just two days ago [Lit. <i>was the day before yesterday</i> ]. But my father's God has been with me. You know I've been serving your father with all my heart. Even so, your father has cheated me. He broke our wage agreement ten times. However, God didn't allow him to harm me. |
| Revised Knox Bible          | So he sent word to Rachel and Lia to meet him on the pasture-ground where he was feeding his flocks, and said to them, I find that your father looks on me more coldly than hitherto; and all because the God of my father has prospered me. You know well that I have worked for your father with all my might, whereas he has defrauded me altering, time and again, his bargain with me; it was only God's mercy that prevented him doing me an injury.   |
| Translation for Translators | So Jacob sent a message to Rachel and Leah, telling them to come out to the pastures where his flocks of sheep and goats were. When they arrived, he said to   |

them, "I see that your father does not act friendly toward me as he did previously. But God, whom my father worshiped, has helped me. You two know that I have worked very hard for your father, but many times [HYP] he has cheated me by decreasing my wages. But God has not allowed him to harm me.

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | Jacob was to send off and call for Rachel and Leah, to the field of his small cattle. He was to say: I am to perceive your father's face - is it as yesterday and three days ago? He of mighty ones of my father is to have occurred to me. You has known, that with my might I have served your father. Even your father is to have feigned me, and is to have altered my wages at ten counts. Has he of mighty ones allowed him to fracture me in spite of it? - |
| Conservapedia           | Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come at once to the field, and to his flocks. He told them, "I've noticed your father's attitude toward me, and it is definitely not what it was before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have given your father the best years of my life. In return, your father has played games with me, and changed my wages ten separate times. But God did not allow him to do me evil.                     |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible      | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his sheep, and said to them, " I see that the face of your father is not with me as formerly, — but the God of my fathers is with me. Now you know that with all my strength I have served your father. But your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times ; God however did not allow him to do evil to me.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah out into the field to his flock, and he said to them: I have been observing your father's face, for it is no longer toward me as it formerly was; but the God of my father hath been with me. And you for your part know that I served your father to the best of my ability. But your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times; but God did not allow him to do me harm                                     |
| Tree of Life Version    | So Jacob sent and called for Rachel and Leah to come to the field, to his flock. He said to them, "I can see by your father's face that his expression isn't the same as it was just a day or two ago. But the God of my father has been with me. Now you yourselves know that I've served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has fooled around with me and has changed my salary ten times—but God hasn't allowed him to harm me.                  |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock and said to them, "I see your father's attitude toward me has changed, but the God of my father has been with me. You know that it is with all my strength that I have served your father. Your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God has not permitted him to hurt me.   |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah from the field where his flocks were, And said to them, I see your dad's looks that they are different now from what they were in the past, but Elohim of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my human strength I have labored for your dad. And your dad has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but Elohim has not permitted him to hurt me.   |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Jacob sent and called for Rachel and Leah, towards the field, to his sheep. And he said to them, I can see the face of your father, that he is no longer with me, as he was yesterday, the day before; and the God of my fathers has stood by me. And you two, you knew, that with all my strength I worked for your father. And your father has slighted me, and has swapped my wages ten times; and God has not allowed my standing to suffer.               |

**Catholic Bibles:**

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|----------------------------|---|
| Christian Community (1988) | Jacob had Rachel and Leah called to the field where his flocks were. There he said to them, "I see that your father no longer looks kindly on me, but the God of my father has been with me. You yourselves know that I have served your father with all my strength. But your father has not been straight with me, changing my wages ten times. But God has not allowed him to do me harm.  |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Jacob sent, and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flocks, And said to them, I see your father's face that it is not toward me as yesterday-day before yesterday, and the God of my father has been with me. And you know by seeing that I have served your father with all my power. And your father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times, and God did not allow him to do me evil.   |
| New American Bible (2002)  | So Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to meet him where he was in the field with his flock. There he said to them: "I have noticed that your father's attitude toward me is not as it was in the past; but the God of my father has been with me. You well know what effort I put into serving your father; yet your father cheated me and changed my wages time after time. God, however, did not let him do me any harm.  |
| New American Bible (2011)  | So Jacob sent for Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where his flock was. There he said to them: "I have noticed that your father's attitude toward me is not as it was in the past; but the God of my father has been with me. You know well that with all my strength I served your father; yet your father cheated me and changed my wages ten times. God, however, did not let him do me any harm.  |
| New Jerusalem Bible        | So Jacob had Rachel and Leah called to the fields where his flocks were, and he said to them, 'I can see that your father's manner towards me is not as it was in the past, but the God of my father has been with me. You yourselves know that I have worked for your father with all my might, and that your father has tricked me, changing my wages ten times over, and yet God has not allowed him to harm me.   |
| New English Bible          | So Jacob sent to fetch Rachel and Leah to his flocks out in the country and said to them, 'I see that your father is not as well disposed to me as once he was; yet the God of my father has been with me. You know how I have served your father to the best of my power, but he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times over. Yet God did not let him do me any harm.   |
| Revised English Bible      | The LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your kindred; I shall be with you," and Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to where his flocks were in the country. He said to them, "I have been noticing that your father is not so friendly to me as once he was. But the God of my father has been with me. You yourselves know I have served your father to the best of my ability, yet he has cheated me and changed my wages ten times over. But God did not let him do me any harm. V. 3 is included for context. |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Complete Jewish Bible | So Ya'akov sent for Rachel and Le'ah and had them come to the field where his flock was. He said to them, "I see by the way your father looks that he feels differently toward me than before; but the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength, and that your father has belittled me and has changed my wages ten times; but God did not allow him to do me any damage. |
| The Complete Tanach   | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flocks.  |

**and called Rachel and Leah:** First Rachel and then Leah, because she (Rachel) was the mainstay of the household, because, on her account, Jacob had joined Laban. Even Leah's children acknowledged this matter, for Boaz and his tribunal of the tribe of Judah say, "like Rachel and like Leah, both of whom built, etc." (Ruth 4:11). They place Rachel before Leah. — [from Tanchuma Buber, Vayetze 15]

And he said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that he is not disposed toward me [as he was] yesterday and the day before, but the God of my father was with me. And you know that with all my might I served your father. But your father mocked me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me.

**ten times ten times:** Heb. מִיּוֹם תְּרַשָּׁע מִיּוֹם is not less than ten.

**ten times:** Heb. מִיּוֹם, a term denoting the base number, which is ten. We learn that he (Laban) changed his stipulation a hundred times.

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| exeGeses companion Bible | And Yaaqov sends<br>and calls Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock,<br>and says to them,<br>I see that the face of your father<br>is not toward me as three yesters ago;<br>but Elohim of my father is with me.<br>And you know I serve your father with all my force:<br>and your father mocked me<br>and changed my hire ten times;<br>but Elohim gives him to not vilify me:...               |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)        | Jacob had Rachel and Leah called to the field, where his flock was, 5and said to them, "I see that your father's manner toward me is not as it has been in the past. But the God of my father has been with me. 6As you know, I have served your father with all my might; 7but your father has cheated me, changing my wages time and again. God, however, would not let him do me harm.             |
| Kaplan Translation       | Jacob sent word and summoned Rachel and Leah to the field where his flock was. 'I saw your father's face,' he said. 'He is not acting the same with me as he used to. But the God of my father has been with me. 'You know full well that I served your father with all my strength. Your father swindled me and changed his mind about my pay at least ten times, but God would not let him harm me. |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible    | And Ya'akov sent and called Rachel and Leah to the sadeh unto his tzon,<br>And said unto them, I see penei avichen, that it is not toward me as before; but Elohei Avi is with me.<br>And ye know that with all my koach I have served avichen.<br>And avichen hath deceived me, and changed my sachar aseret monim but Elohim allowed him not to harm me.  |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and he said to them, "I see [a change in] your father's attitude, that he is not friendly toward me as [he was] before; but the God of my father [Isaac] has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me [as often as possible] and changed my wages ten times; but God did not allow him to hurt me.  |
| The Expanded Bible         | So Jacob ·told [·sent for] Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where he kept his flocks. He said to them, "I have seen that your father is not as friendly with me as he used to be, but the God of my father has been with me. You both know that I have ·worked [served] ·as hard as I could [·with all my power/strength] for your father, but he ·cheated [mocked; deceived] me and changed my ·pay [wages] ten times. But God has not allowed your father to harm me. |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before. Yesterday and the day before, in the first years of Jacob's service, the gain which Jacob brought him had caused Laban to be kind enough, but now envy had taken  |

possession of his heart also, together with covetousness. But the God of my father hath been with me; the God whom Isaac, his father, had worshiped, who had revealed Himself in mercy and with the promise of His blessing upon Jacob. **And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.** As Jacob had emphasized his faithfulness over against Laban, Genesis 30:30-33, so he could truthfully point to it in the presence of Laban's daughters, his wives. **And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times.** This puts another ugly blot upon Laban's character, for as the contract was made, Genesis 30:34, no changes were looked for. Yet Laban had frequently and in an arbitrary manner altered its provisions in favor of himself. But God suffered him not to hurt me, neither in body nor in goods.

NET Bible®

**So Jacob sent a message for Rachel and Leah** [*Heb* "sent and called for Rachel and for Leah."] **to come to the field** [*Heb* "the field."] **where his flocks were** [*Heb* "to his flock."]. **There he said to them, "I can tell that your father's attitude toward me has changed** [*Heb* "I see the face of your father, that he is not toward me as formerly."], **but the God of my father has been with me. You know that I've worked for your father as hard as I could** [*Heb* "with all my strength."], **but your father has humiliated me and changed my wages ten times. But God has not permitted him to do me any harm.**

The Pulpit Commentary

**And Jacob went**—being unwilling to approach the house lest Laban should discover his design (Rosenmóller)—**and called Rachel and Leah**—Rachel may be placed first as the beloved wife of Jacob (Wordsworth, Lange), scarcely as the principal wife in comparison with Leah, who was adventitia (Rosenmóller; cf. Genesis 31:14)—**to the field unto his flock.** The expression "his flock" indicates that Jacob had abandoned Laban's sheep and taken possession of those which belonged to himself—probably in preparation for his departure.

**And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before** (vide supra); **but the God of my father**—literally, and the Elohim of my father, the term Elohim employed by Jacob not being due to "the vagueness of the religious knowledge" possessed by his wives (Hengstenberg), but to a desire on his own part either to distinguish the God of his father from the gods of the nations, or the idols which Laban worshipped ('Speaker's Commentary'), or perhaps, while using an expression exactly equivalent to Jehovah, to bring out a contrast between the Divine favor and that of Laban (Quarry)—**hath been with me**—literally, was with me; not the night before simply, but during the past six years, as he explains in Genesis 31:7.

**And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.** The term Jacob here uses for power is derived from an unused onomatopoeic root, signifying to pant, and hence to exert one's strength. If, therefore, the assertion now made to his wives was not an unblushing falsehood, Jacob could not have been the monster of craft and deception depicted by some (Kalisch); while, if it was, it must have required considerable effrontery to appeal to his wives' knowledge for a confirmation of what they knew to be a deliberate untruth. The hypothesis that Jacob first acquired his great wealth by "consummate cunning," and then piously "abused the authority of God in covering or justifying them" (Kalisch), presupposes on the part of Jacob a degree of wickedness inconceivable in one who had enjoyed the sublime theophany of Bethel.

**And your father hath deceived me,**—לָטָה, the hiph. of לָטַת, means to rob or plunder (Furst), or to cause to fall, as in the cognate languages, whence to deceive (Gesenius)—**and changed my wages ten times;**—i.e. many times, as in Num. 14:22; Job. 19:3 (Rosenmóller, Bush, Kalisch, Lange); as often as possible, the number ten expressing the idea of completeness (Keil, Murphy)—**but God** (Elohim, Jacob purposing to say that he had been protected, not by human stratagem, but by Divine interposition) **suffered him not to hurt me**—literally, to do

evil to me. The verb here construed with  $\text{מָנַח} = \text{מָנַח}$  is sometimes followed by  $\text{לִי}$  (1Kings 17:20), and sometimes by  $\text{בִּי}$  (1Chronicles 16:22).

The Voice

So Jacob called his wives Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field where his flock was grazing.

**Jacob:** I notice your father's attitude toward me has changed; he doesn't regard me with the same respect as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You *both* know *how well* I have served your father—with all my strength. However your father cheated me by changing *the terms* of my salary 10 times, but *beyond that* my God did not allow him to harm me.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> sent and he called out to Rahhel <sup>[Ewe]</sup> and to Le'ah <sup>[Weary]</sup> to the field of his flock,...

**Footnote:** - The phrase "the~Field To Flocks~him" should be translated as "the field to his flocks" but may have originally been written as "To the~Field Flocks~him" which would be translated as "to the field of his flock" which better fits the context of the sentence structure.

...and he said to them, I am seeing the face of your father given that it was not to me as previously and the powers of my father existed by me, and you know that in all my strength I served your father, and your father had dealt deceitfully in me and he changed my payment ten times and Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> did not give him to be made dysfunctional by me,...

Context Group Version

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock, and said to them, I see your (pl) father's countenance, that it is not toward me as formerly; but the God of my father has been with me. And you (pl) know that with all my power I have served your (pl) father. And your (pl) father has deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God didn't allow him to hurt me.

Emphasized Bible

So Jacob sent, and called for Rachel and for Leah, to the field unto his flock; and said to them, Beholding, am I the face of your father, that it is not towards me as aforetime,—nevertheless, the God of my father, hath been with me; and, ye, know that with all my vigour, have I served your father. But, your father, hath deceived me, and hath changed my wages ten times,—yet God hath not suffered him to deal harmfully with me.

English Standard Version

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me with favour as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me.

Modern English Version

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field where his flock was, and said to them, "I see your father's demeanor, that it is not congenial toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. You know that with all my strength I have served your father. Your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.

NASB

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and said to them, "I see your father's attitude, that it is not *friendly* toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.

New King James Version

So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that it is not favorable toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.

Young's Updated LT

And Jacob sends and calls for Rachel and for Leah to the field unto his flock; and says to them, "I am beholding your father's face—that it is not towards me as heretofore, and the God of my father has been with me. And you—you have known that with all my power I have served your father, and your father has played upon me, and has changed my hire ten times; and God has not suffered him to do evil with me.

**The gist of this passage:**

Jacob called his two wives into the field to where he was working and tells them that their father no longer treats him like a son. He says that they know what has been going on all this time.

4–7

| Genesis 31:4  |   |   |                             |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                                 | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]                         | <i>to send, to send for [forth, away], to dismiss, to deploy, to put forth, to stretch out, to reach out</i>                          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; what is sent (messengers, a message) is implied | Strong's #7971<br>BDB #1018 |
| Ya'ăqôb (בְּקָעִי) [pronounced yah-ăuh-KOH <sup>BV</sup> ]      | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun   | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784  |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                                 | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced kaw-RAW]                              | <i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lamed]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #7121<br>BDB #894  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| Râchêl (רָחֵל) [pronounced raw-KHALE]                           | <i>ewe and is transliterated Rachel</i>   | feminine proper noun  | Strong's #7354<br>BDB #932  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| Lê'âh (לֵאָה) [pronounced lay-AW]                               | <i>weary; transliterated Leah</i>   | feminine singular proper noun   | Strong's #3812<br>BDB #521  |

There seems to be a missing preposition here; perhaps Jacob is sending a message *from the field with his flock*; or, better, he is calling them *to the field with his flock*.

## Genesis 31:4

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| sâdeh (שָׂדֶה)<br>[pronounced saw-DEH]   | field, land, country, open field,<br>open country; an unpopulated<br>area                              | masculine singular noun<br>with the definite article   | Strong's #7704<br>BDB #961 |
| The NET Bible: <i>The word is an adverbial accusative, indicating that this is where Jacob wanted them to meet him. The words "to come to" are supplied in the translation for clarification and stylistic reasons.</i> <sup>112</sup> |  |  |                            |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]  | unto; into, among, in; toward, to;<br>against; concerning, regarding;<br>besides, together with; as to | directional preposition<br>(respect or deference<br>may be implied)                                  | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced<br>tzohn]   | small cattle, sheep and goats,<br>flock, flocks  | feminine singular<br>collective noun with the<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine<br>singular suffix | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |

**Translation:** Jacob sent and called for [his wives] Rachel and Leah, [to come to] the field with his flock. Jacob has apparently made the decision to return to the Land of Promise (this may be partially dependent upon the thoughts of his wives). Therefore, he has to contact his wives and let them know what is happening and to get their input. My impression is, Jacob did not know for certain how his wives would react to them moving to Canaan.

Rachel is named first because, to Jacob, she is his primary wife. He would not have married Leah except by deception.

Poole: *Rachel is first named here, as also Ruth 4:11, because she was his chief, and, by right, his first and only designed wife. And therefore it is observable, that in the enumeration of Jacob's wives and children, Genesis 46:1–34.*

Poole continues: *Leah is only mentioned by her name, Genesis 46:15, but Rachel is called Jacob's wife, Genesis 46:19, by way of eminency, and in a peculiar manner. In the field they might more freely discourse of their business, and without fear or interruption.*<sup>113</sup>

You may recall that there were some commentators who, because bigamy so disturbed them as a great sin, that they believed that once Jacob was married to Leah, that was the end of it—no more wives. God the Holy Spirit seemingly poo-poo's that notion here by naming Rachel first. See **Genesis 30** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) for more information in this particular topic.

We do not know exactly what Jacob's wives do all day, but they do work—the requirements of a housewife in that era was much greater than it is today. He calls them to come to the field where he is with his flock. It is unlikely that either wife is at all involved with the keeping of the flock, per se. However, if you will recall, when Jacob first met Rachel, she was leading a flock to the well to drink (I think that this was a matter of necessity on the part of Laban's).

Jacob called for his wives to meet him in the field so that they could talk privately. No servant, no child, no maidservant would be near enough to hear what he was saying to them. There were certainly limited family discussion concerning the business dealings of Laban and Jacob around the Jacob household; limited because Jacob did not need any more trouble than he already had being married to two women (and to have two mistresses).

<sup>112</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 13, 2016.

<sup>113</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:4.

By calling for his wives and reasoning with them, it is clear that Rachel and Leah are *not* chattel in Jacob's eyes. He does not call them out there and begin issuing orders: "We are leaving at 06:00 hours tomorrow; have the kids and the camels ready. That is all. You are dismissed!" Jacob is going to lay out a careful case why they need to leave Paddan-aram, and then he is going to stop and listen to what his wives have to say. At no time will he issue orders like a drill sergeant.

However, whenever Laban did Jacob wrong, this probably became a limited topic of conversation. There were ten times (or so) that Laban had an agreement with Jacob that Laban went back on. "From hereon in, you will keep the striped sheep offspring and I will keep the spotted ones," Laban would have said, because Jacob's herds began to produce only spotted young.

Jacob apparently had no idea exactly how his wives would be reacting to what he has to say; and, quite obviously, he needs them onboard in order to move to the Land of Promise. Calling for them and laying out his situation gave him the chance to closely watch them, to gauge their reaction. Further, what he says will allow them all some privacy, whether they are with Jacob or not.

Genesis 31:4 **Jacob sent and called for [his wives] Rachel and Leah, [to come to] the field with his flock.**

### **Jacob calls for wives to speak to him out in the fields (commentators/discussion)**

The NET Bible: *Jacob did not go in person, but probably sent a servant with a message for his wives to meet him in the field.*<sup>114</sup> If Jacob went in person, then he could have discussed all of this right then and there.

Dr. Bob Utley: *Rachel is mentioned first because she was the favored wife. They are called out into the field for a private, secret meeting. Apparently Jacob had not discussed this with his wives before.*<sup>115</sup>

Fuller: *He sends for his wives into the field, where he might converse with them freely on the subject, without danger of being overheard. Had they been servants, it would have been sufficient to have imparted to them his will; but, being wives, they require a different treatment. There is an authority which Scripture and nature give the man over the woman; but everyone who deserves the name of a man will exercise it with a gentleness and kindness that shall render it pleasant rather than burdensome. He will consult with her as a friend, and satisfy her by giving the reasons of his conduct. Thus did Jacob to both his wives, who by such conduct forgot the differences between themselves, and cheerfully cast in their lot with him.*<sup>116</sup>

Chuck Smith: *Now he, rather than talking about it in the tent where he might be overheard, he calls them out in the field so that he can talk to them privately.*<sup>117</sup>

Clarke: *[Jacob] had probably been at some considerable distance with the flocks; and for the greater secrecy, he rather sends for them to the field, to consult them on this most momentous affair, than visit them in their tents, where probably some of the family of Laban might overhear their conversation...It is possible that Jacob shored his sheep at the same time; and that he sent for his wives and household furniture to erect tents on the spot, that they might partake of the festivities usual on such occasions. Thus they might all depart without being suspected.*<sup>118</sup>

Trapp on the importance of speaking to his wives and getting them on his side: *Jacob...consults with his wives; so should we in matters of weight, of remove especially. They are our "companions," the wives "of our covenant," {Mal. 2:14} not our vassals or footstools; and must therefore be both of our court and counsel.*<sup>119</sup>

<sup>114</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 13, 2016.

<sup>115</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:4.

<sup>116</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:4 (suggestive comments).

<sup>117</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:4.

<sup>118</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:4.

<sup>119</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:4.

## Jacob calls for wives to speak to him out in the fields (commentators/discussion)

H. C. Leupold: *The wives are to be apprised of Jacob's purpose to flee. The fact that Jacob sends for them to come "out into the field" ...gives the first indication that Jacob is determined to flee secretly.*

Leupold continues: *Rachel is mentioned first because she still ranked pre-eminent in Jacob's esteem. The wives are not only to be informed; their active co-operation is to be enlisted. It would seem as though Jacob had never fully spoken his mind to his wives on this subject. The patriarchal manner of life seems to have made such a step as Jacob here contemplated appear too much like rebellion to allow him even to discuss it with his wives prior to this time. Emancipation desires were not the order of the day then as now.*<sup>120</sup>

J. Vernon McGee thought that Jacob was told in a dream to move, and that he then simply obeyed God: *God called Jacob to leave, and so he is now preparing to do that. He calls Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field because he is afraid to talk this over at home for fear some servant or possibly even Laban or Laban's sons might overhear him. He doesn't want them to see him plotting with Rachel and Leah.*<sup>121</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob...had evidently said little to them before about what had been happening the past few years, out of respect for their love for their father. But now he had to present the complete picture to them.*<sup>122</sup>

I do not believe that Jacob is simply obeying God's order, and for two reasons: (1) Jacob did not lead with, "This is what God has told me to do" when speaking to his wives. In fact, he adds that as if he almost forgot to mention that. (2) It sounds as if Jacob's dream, when he describes it to his wives, occurred awhile ago—probably a few months ago. Now, if God told Jacob to move and he was going to immediately obey God, then he would have called his wives in a few months ago and said, "God came to me last night and told me that we need to move."

Now, the text does not specifically say that Jacob was not immediately obeying God; but when we begin to study the pertinent verses, note that the dream that Jacob has is described as having occurred during mating season ([Genesis 31:10a](#)). Again, if Jacob was intent on obeying God, he would have gotten his wives in immediately and talked about the dream he had *last night*.

At least one commentator<sup>123</sup> talked about the secondary wives. These two women were servants; wherever their mistresses moved, they would naturally follow. The key to moving was Leah and Rachel; if they were willing to leave their home and family, then the maids would have gone with them, just as the children did.

To look at this in another way, asking the maids their opinions would have been like asking the children their opinions. Their opinions might be interesting, but would not have changed anything.

Let me suggest that this was an unusual situation. Had Jacob called Rachel and Leah to come out and speak with him before? I have no idea, but I doubt it. And, Jacob is going to talk about leaving, so, he is not going to send a message to his wives, saying, "Listen, I think we should move. Come out to the field so we can talk about it." The whole purpose of them coming to the field is to have some privacy to discuss this issue.

So, this is how I see it: Jacob calls for his wives to come out to the field, and he has probably never done that before. Furthermore, they probably have no idea what is up, why he is calling them out there. I would think that this is a once-only occurrence; and no telling if his wives had any sort of a clue.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

[Genesis 31:4](#) And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flocks.

<sup>120</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>121</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>122</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 479.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:4.

There has developed between Jacob and his wives a solid bond. They have been married for 13 years and have many children as a result. Jacob's wives are now more beholden to Jacob than they are to their father Laban, which will become apparent in the narrative.

It is clear that, Jacob's wives remained in one place, but Jacob took the herd out to another. Such a tradition is not unusual, for the women to remain home with the children and for husband to go off to work. Here, we have such a situation from 4000 years ago (the Bible seems to record many areas of continuity with modern life).

So, Jacob gathers his wives together, to tell them that he is unhappy at work, working for their father; and that their father is unhappy with him. He already has the plan to leave in his head (this is an assumption on my part); he just needs to see where his wives are at regarding such a move. Obviously, the last thing that Jacob wants to hear is, "But this is our home; this is all we have ever known. We cannot go with you."

Vv. 5–13 is what Jacob is going to say to his wives to convince them to leave their life in Haran and to move with him to Canaan.

| Genesis 31:5a                           |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                    | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âmar (אמר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]        | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                                  | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]               | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine plural suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| râ'âh (ראה) [pronounced raw-AWH]        | <i>seeing; observing; understanding; a seer, perceiver</i>  | Qal active participle   | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906 |
| 'ânôkîy (אניכי) [pronounced awn-oh-KEE] | <i>I, me; (sometimes a verb is implied)</i>   | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun  | Strong's #595<br>BDB #59   |
| 'êth (את) [pronounced ayth]             | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                               | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| pânîym (פנים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]     | <i>face, faces, countenance; presence; person; surface</i>  | masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)                            | Strong's #6440<br>BDB #815 |
| 'âb (אב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v] | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i>                                 | masculine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix             | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |

**Translation:** He said to them, “I observe the face of your father,... Jacob does not tell them about what Laban’s sons are saying (at least, that is not recorded here), but he is going to describe what is going on between him and their father. That will be key to his decision.

Furthermore, despite what Laban’s sons were saying, this caused Jacob to further examine Laban’s face.

Notice with what Jacob leads—the expression of Laban. He does not tell his wives, “We need to leave; God told me to” (although he will eventually get around to telling them that). But he is going to start telling his wives how their father does not appear to like him any more.

| Genesis 31:5b   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong’s #                     |
| kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]                                 | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition  | Strong’s #3588<br>BDB #471             |
| ’ēyn (אין) [pronounced <i>ān</i> ]                                | <i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i> | particle of negation; substantive of negation with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong’s #369<br>BDB #34               |
| kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced <i>k<sup>e</sup></i> ]     | <i>like, as, according to; about, approximately; combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning as, often, when, as soon as</i>         | preposition   | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #453              |
| t <sup>e</sup> mōwl (לומת) [pronounced <i>t<sup>e</sup>MOHL</i> ] | <i>yesterday; and is used figuratively for recently, formerly</i>   | adverb  | Strong’s #8543 (and #865)<br>BDB #1069 |
| shil <sup>e</sup> shōwm (שלושום) [pronounced <i>shil-SHOHM</i> ]  | <i>three days ago, the day before yesterday</i>   | adverb  | Strong’s #8032<br>BDB #1026            |

Together, this preposition and two adverbs mean *as before, previously, formerly*.

**Translation:** ...and he [is] no longer [favorable] to me as he has been previously. This phrase does not use the word *favorable*, but it appears that is what is meant. This may be idiomatic for that; or this may be a word left out, but understood to belong here.

Laban had worked well with Jacob for at least 14 years—and then he had to start paying him for his work (with the striped and spotted sheep). That has changed everything. The addition of Laban’s sons to oversee his flocks is another new wrinkle (although, it ought to occur to Laban that, since he now needs at least 2 sons watching over his flocks, that he has been made quite wealthy by Jacob).

Jacob’s first point is, Laban does not regard him with favor as he did previously.

H. C. Leupold: “I have been observing” (*ro’eh*, participle and first by way of emphasis) indicates that Jacob wishes to assure his wives that this is not an impression based on a glimpse or two of Laban’s face. Laban’s ill will has now already become a fixed attitude. The expression relative to the change in Laban’s face involves in this case active and harmful enmity, because Jacob hastens to point out

by way of contrast (we adversative) that God had definitely taken Jacob's part to guard him against the harm which Laban's attitude presaged or even may already have attempted.<sup>124</sup>

| Genesis 31:5c   |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                                 | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]                      | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural construct   | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]                          | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix                  | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced <i>haw-YAW</i> ]                              | <i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>                            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                               | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]                                     | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>   | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

**Translation:** However, the Elohim of my father is with me. Jacob is saying, "Now, your father no longer likes me, but despite this, God is with me." You may recall in the naming of Jacob's children, God's name was sometimes invoked.

I have to give Jacob some credit here. He has set up a contrast. "Your father has been looking at me in a mean way; but God is overlooking my situation and acting in our favor." This is a good and accurate contrast. Laban is looking at Jacob, unfavorably; but God is also looking upon Jacob, favorably, which does not just balance this out, but gives Jacob great grace.

Over the time that Jacob has lived in Haran, he does appear to have matured somewhat spiritually. We must be careful here not to oversell this aspect of his life. But surely, 20 years of working for a manipulator may have taught Jacob some lessons in his own life (he will not manipulate people through dishonest means as he has in the past).

He is going to present his wives with an accurate assessment of the situation, so that they can make the right decision together as a family regarding their future. You know what would have been a bad idea? To present his wives with false or slanted information. Jacob comes to them with the truth; and this will allow them to concur with Jacob's decision.

Dr. Bob Utley: "*the God of my father*" This is one of several phrases in chapter 31 which shows the historical continuity of God's covenant with several generations of Abraham's family.<sup>125</sup>

H. C. Leupold: The expression, "God of my father," does not mean that He is not Jacob's God, but rather that He is giving proof of the faithfulness which the fathers experienced. Elohim is here used

<sup>124</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>125</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:5.

*because Jacob is thinking of the power which the Creator displayed in overruling the things that Laban did to overreach his son-in-law.*<sup>126</sup>

Recall that, when Jacob was moving to Haran, to find a wife and to escape Esau's wrath, God told him that He would be with him. God told Jacob, "Behold, I am with you, and I will keep you wherever you go. I will bring you into this land again; for I will not leave you. I will do all that I have promised to you." (Genesis 28:15; ULLB)

Here is the contrast that Jacob notes: "Laban has changed his countenance toward me; the LORD remains the same."

*Barnes: Jacob now opens his mind fully to Rachel and Leah. Rachel, we observe, is put first. Several new facts come out in his discourse to them.*<sup>127</sup>

Even though Laban has changed his attitude toward Jacob, it is clear that God has not. We know that; but what is remarkable is, Jacob recognizes that as well.

**Genesis 31:5** And he said to them, "I see your father's face, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me.

Whereas Jacob knows very little about genetics, he does know some psychology, and now, when he interacts with Laban, he can tell that things are not good. He can look a Laban and he can tell that Laban is displeased.

Jacob recognizes that, even though his employer, Laban (the father of his wives) is not treating him fairly, the God of Abraham is still with him.

| Genesis 31:6  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]         | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| 'attênâh (אֲתֵנָּה) [pronounced <i>aht-tay-NAW</i> ]                            | <i>you</i> (often the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person feminine plural, personal pronoun                   | Strong's #859<br>BDB #61   |
| yâda <sup>c</sup> (יָדָעַ) [pronounced <i>yaw-DAHG</i> ]                        | <i>to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess]</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                     | Strong's #3045<br>BDB #393 |
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]   | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition                           | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>   | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |

<sup>126</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>127</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–13.

## Genesis 31:6

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| kôwach (כֹּחַ) [pronounced KOE-ahkh]; and spelled kôach (כֹּחַ) [pronounced KOE-ahkh]   | <i>strength, power, ability; produce; substance, riches, wealth [of soil]</i>                         | masculine singular substantive with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix  | Strong's #3581<br>BDB #470 |
| Trapp: <i>The word translated power signifies that natural moisture of the body that makes it lively and lusty, vigorous and valorous to do service. So it is used, Genesis 49:3 Psalm 22:15.<sup>128</sup></i> |   |   |                            |
| ʿâbad (עָבַד) [pronounced áwaw <sup>b</sup> -VAHD]  | <i>to work, to serve, to labor; to be a slave to</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect                                    | Strong's #5647<br>BDB #712 |
| ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                     | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| ʿâb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]  | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |

**Translation:** You [both] know that I have served your father with all my strength. Jacob is going to make a decision which is going to affect his entire family. So, Jacob must lay down some preliminary facts which both of his wives know. Both women know that Jacob has worked faithfully for their father Laban.

Although God is now blessing Jacob, he has served Laban and continues to serve Laban by protecting and growing his sheep. His wives knew this.

Jacob is laying a foundational argument, to get his wives on his side. This is very difficult, under most circumstances, when the opposition is their father. However, what these women know is, Jacob has been very honest and hard-working on behalf of their father. He has not been underhanded; nor has he sloughed off in his job. They know this to be true; they know that Jacob is not exaggerating.

Genesis 31:4–6 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength,..." (ESV)

### Jacob's honest and faithful service to Laban (several commentators)

H. C. Leupold: *Jacob, however, knows himself to have been quite undeserving of such treatment as he has been receiving at Laban's hands, and he knows how thoroughly his wives understand the justice of his cause: they have seen day for day how faithfully their husband was serving their father.*<sup>129</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *The wives had been cognizant of Jacob's long hours and difficult working schedule in connection with their father. He worked 14 years for them and 6 more years for his own flocks and herds.*<sup>130</sup>

<sup>128</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:6 (slightly edited).

<sup>129</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>130</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:6.

### Jacob's honest and faithful service to Laban (several commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob served Laban with all his strength even though Laban was a terrible employer demonstrates the spiritual principle, which is to work hard for your employer as to the Lord even if the employer is unreasonable and you will be rewarded by the Lord (See Ephesians 6:5-8; 1 Peter 2:18-20; Colossians 3:22-24).*<sup>131</sup>

Jacob provided real work and service for Laban. He did not simply offer eye-service. Genesis 30:29 31:38–42 Ephesians 6:5–8 Colossians 3:22–25 Tit. 2:9 Titus 2:10 1Peter 2:18.<sup>132</sup>

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**Genesis 31:6** And you know that with all my power I have served your father,...

Jacob is certainly not the ideal person from the Old Testament. However, one thing which is clear—he was a hard and responsible worker. He did wonderful work on behalf of Laban and Laban’s wealth increased because of Jacob (which was because of Jacob’s relationship to God).

Jacob gets a bad rap for many of the things that he does—he always seems to choose the wrong way to do something. However, this does not mean that he was all bad. It is clear that, as an employee, he made Laban a boatload of money (measured, in those days, as a headcount of the animals owned).

*J. Vernon McGee: That is one thing upon which we can agree with Jacob and say to his credit. He had worked hard, but I'm of the opinion that we ought to give Laban credit for that. I believe that Laban got his money's worth out of anyone who worked for him.*<sup>133</sup>

Genesis 31:4–6 Jacob sent for his wives, Rachel and Leah, to come to the field where he was tending Laban’s flock. He said to them, “I have observed the countenance of your father, and he no longer favors me as he did before. However, despite this, the God of my father is with me. You both know that I have worked very hard for your father.” Jacob is making a pretty compelling argument; and I would suggest that he is not misreading Laban nor is he exaggerating his own faithfulness in his service to Laban. And, although L. M. Grant questions<sup>134</sup> that Jacob should provide such a strong defense of his own work under Laban, I believe that it is apropos. I think that his wives know this already, but that Jacob is summing up the circumstances that they are all faced with. They are all about to make a very big decision, so that means accurate information is called for. Unfortunately, none of them are willing to leave Haran based only upon God calling for them to leave.

**Application:** In our lives, we will *never* have a dream where God tells us to do this or that; we will never have a vision of God guiding us in our lives; we will never be hit lightly on the shoulder by lightning, to indicate whether we should go left or right. But, we can amass Bible doctrine in our souls and we can gather information about whatever big decision lies before us, and then act, based upon Bible doctrine and accurate information. Therefore, I believe that Jacob is doing exactly what he ought to be doing.

#### Genesis 31:7a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong's #        |
|--|--|------------------------|---------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh] | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as | simple wāw conjunction | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251 |

<sup>131</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 488); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>132</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:6.

<sup>133</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>134</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

## Genesis 31:7a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                     | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #      |
|--|---|---|-------------------------|
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v] | <i>father</i> , both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; <i>founder</i> , <i>civil leader</i> , <i>military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3      |
| hâthal (הָתַל) [pronounced haw-THAHL]    | <i>to deceive</i> when followed by the bêyth preposition; <i>to mock</i> , <i>to deride</i>                                   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel perfect                         | Strong's #2048 BDB #251 |

The NET Bible: *This rare verb means "to make a fool of" someone. It involves deceiving someone so that their public reputation suffers (see Exod 8:25).*<sup>135</sup>

This is not a word that necessarily means two different things, it refers to a deception which mocks the person who is being deceived. In Job 13:9, he says that his friends would mock God by their attempted deception of Him. This is the apparently the Piel of tâlal (לָלַל) [pronounced *taw-LAHL*], which is Strong's #8524 BDB #1068. Here, in Genesis 31:7, it is written hêthel (הָתַל) [pronounced *hay-THEHL*].

Owens says that this is the Hiphil perfect. The KJV+TVM of E-sword lists this as a Piel perfect; and the BDB lexicon of E-sword lists only a Piel and Pual of this verb.

BHSE - Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Enhanced) (in e-sword) lists this as a Hiphil perfect.

The ESV translates this verb *to mock*, *to deceive*, *to cheat*.

|  |   |  |                       |
|--|---|--|-----------------------|
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ] | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | No Strong's # BDB #88 |
|--|---|--|-----------------------|

**Translation:** *Nevertheless, your father has cheated me...* You will note above that there is a great deal of discussion and disagreement about the verb above. There is a question as to the verb form and the verb meaning. The most common translation in this passage appears to be *to cheat*.

In this business relationship, Laban has used deceptive business practices; he has cheated Jacob (in the sense that, they had an agreement and Laban unilaterally changed that agreement). What follows is how Laban has cheated Jacob.

**Application:** This is a problem which every person deals with at one time or another—where they interact with a person or with a business who cheats them. I brought a car in for a repair, was given a price (which I thought was too high), but nevertheless, agree for them to do the repair. I was charged nearly 4x the amount when they told me that the vehicle was ready. No phone call to me was ever made to warn me that they were going to charge me \$1800 to do a brake job. That the time, this was a very significant sum of money (about a month's pay, if memory serves). In some cases, there is no justice. You just have to let God take care of some of these things.

## Genesis 31:7b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong's #     |
|---|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction | No Strong's # BDB #251 |

<sup>135</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 13, 2016.

## Genesis 31:7b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| châlahp (חָלַף)<br>[pronounced <i>chaw-LAHF</i> ]                          | <i>to change, to interchange, to alter; to cause to revive; to sprout forth</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect              | Strong's #2498<br>BDB #322 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                                       | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                          | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object            | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| mas <sup>e</sup> kôreth (תְּרִיבָה)<br>[pronounced <i>mahs-KOH-rehth</i> ] | <i>wages; reward</i>  | feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #4909<br>BDB #969 |
| 'asârâh (אֶשְׂרֵה)<br>[pronounced <i>gah-saw-RAW</i> ]                     | <i>ten</i>  | feminine numeral   | Strong's #6235<br>BDB #796 |
| mônîym (מִנִּים)<br>[pronounced <i>moh-NEEM</i> ]                          | <i>times; parts, portions</i>   | masculine plural noun  | Strong's #4489<br>BDB #584 |

Clarke: *There is a strange diversity among the ancient versions, and ancient and modern interpreters, on the meaning of these words. The Hebrew is מִנִּים תְּרִיבָה asereth monim, which Aquila translates δεκα αριθμους ten numbers; Symmachus, δεκακις αριθμω , ten times in number; the Septuagint δεκα αμνων, ten lambs, with which Origen appears to agree. St. Augustine thinks that by ten lambs five years' wages is meant: that Laban had withheld from him all the party-coloured lambs which had been brought forth for five years, and because the ewes brought forth lambs twice in the year, bis gravidæ pecudes, therefore the number ten is used, Jacob having been defrauded of his part of the produce of ten births. It is supposed that the Septuagint use lambs for years, as Virgil does.*<sup>136</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *The Hebrew, a<sup>e</sup>sereth monim, is literally, as Aquila renders, "ten numbers;" and Symmachus, "ten times in number;" which probably implies an indefinite number.*<sup>137</sup>

**Translation:** ...and he has changed my wages ten times. In their 20 year relationship, Laban has changed Jacob's wages 10 times. It is not clear if this has been exactly ten times or if this simply indicates that Laban has done this many times.

As we have already studied, Laban had agreed to a particular wage. When this did not pay off as he expected it to, then he changed the wages.

Genesis 31:7a-b "Nevertheless, your father has cheated me and he has changed my wages ten times."

### "Laban has changed my wages 10 times" (Various Commentators)

Barnes: "Your father deceived me, and changed my wages ten times;" that is, as often as he could.<sup>138</sup>

Benson: That is, oft-times, as is often the signification of the number ten.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:7.

<sup>137</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:7.

<sup>138</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–13.

<sup>139</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:7–8.

## “Laban has changed my wages 10 times” (Various Commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *"And changed my wages ten times ..."* This is said to mean, merely "numerous times," after the customary Hebrew usage. "The number ten expresses the idea of completeness." It is used in Revelation simply to express multiplicity, as in the case of the "ten horns" (Revelation 18).<sup>140</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *Laban had deceived him and had changed his wages ten times, i.e., many times: ten, besides signifying a definite number, frequently stands in Scripture for many (cf. Leviticus 26:26, 1Samuel 1:8, Eccles. 7:9, Dan. 1:26, Amos 6:9, Zechariah 8:23).*<sup>141</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *[Jacob] wants them to recognise that their father has not quite dealt fairly with him. This may have in mind the deceit over Leah. But it clearly also indicates that there has been some manipulation of the terms of the contracts by Laban, possibly over the meaning of some of terms such as 'speckled', 'ringstraked', and so on. 'Ten times.' This means 'a number of times'.*<sup>142</sup>

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *Probably to be understood as a round number, meaning any number of times—as often as he could. The expression "ten times" is used for frequently, in Num. 14:22, and in other passages.*<sup>143</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *This seems to be a round number used as hyperbole, not exactly ten times (be careful of western literalism).*<sup>144</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *ten times...[is a] A phrase used to denote frequency, as in Genesis 31:41, Num. 14:22, Nehemiah 4:12, Job. 19:3, by a round number.*<sup>145</sup>

Clarke: *[I]t is most natural to suppose that Jacob uses the word ten times for an indefinite number, which we might safely translate frequently; and that it means an indefinite number in other parts of the sacred writings, is evident from Leviticus 26:26 : *Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven.* Eccles. 7:19 : *Wisdom strengthens the wise more than Ten mighty men the city.* Num. 14:22 : *Because all these men have tempted me now these Ten times.* Job. 19:3 : *These Ten times have you reproached me.* Zechariah 8:23 : *In those days – Ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew.* Revelation 2:10 : *You will have tribulation Ten days.*<sup>146</sup>*

Keil and Delitzsch: *"Ten times:" i.e., as often as possible, the ten as a round number expressing the idea of completeness.*<sup>147</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob's statement that Laban changed his wages "ten" times is a figure implying "enough is enough" since in the Bible the number ten signifies the perfection of the divine order, thus implying that from God's perspective, Laban had cheated him long enough and now God is intervening and commanding him to leave Laban.*

Wenstrom continues: *In Genesis 31:7-8 the reader learns what had not yet been revealed in Genesis 30, namely, that Laban had repeatedly changed the terms of the original contract he made with Jacob recorded in Genesis 30:25-36 in order to cheat Jacob .*

<sup>140</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Other references found on this page.

<sup>141</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Genesis 31:1–16.

<sup>142</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:4–9.

<sup>143</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:7.

<sup>144</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:7.

<sup>145</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:7.

<sup>146</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:7 (slightly edited).

<sup>147</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:9–13.

## “Laban has changed my wages 10 times” (Various Commentators)

Wenstrom continues: *Genesis 30:32 reveals that the original agreement stipulated that “every speckled and spotted sheep and every black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats” would be Jacob’s wages. However, Genesis 31:8 reveals that Laban changed the terms stipulated in the original agreement by changing Jacob’s wages to only the “speckled” animals among his flocks and then he changed it to only the “striped.”*

And Wenstrom concludes: *So it appears that Laban allowed only one of these markings at a time to be Jacob’s wages instead of giving him all the speckled, spotted sheep and goats. When the speckled animals multiplied, Laban would change the terms to only the spotted and when they multiplied, he changed it to the striped, thus it was always Laban’s intention to cheat Jacob by giving him what he thought would be a small number of the young of his flocks.*<sup>148</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Now we learn, what had not yet been revealed in chapter 30, that Laban had repeatedly altered and realtered the original agreement in an effort to fleece Jacob. Whereas at first it was merely stipulated that all that was unusual in colour should be Jacob’s (30:32), Laban had changed these terms so that only one particular class of the off-colour sheep or goats should be Jacob’s such as only “the speckled” (nequddim), i. e., those with smaller spots, or only “the striped ones” (‘aquddim), always hoping that surely the man Jacob could not continue to be so particularly favoured. The statement “ten times” here stands as a round number signifying as much as: just as often as he could...without a doubt, Laban was trying every possible demand or combination of demands of which he was capable [with the intention of lessening the number of sheep and goats which went to Jacob].*<sup>149</sup>

Leupold also adds: *Apparently, Jacob, secure in the confidence of divine favour, had acceded to each new request, exorbitant though it was.*<sup>150</sup>

Let me suggest that Laban was the boss, so that, when he changed Jacob’s wages, that was it. Maybe there was discussion, maybe there wasn’t, but there is nothing to indicate that Jacob’s confidence in God was complete. *After the fact*, Jacob recognized that, no matter what Laban did, God continued to prosper Jacob.

Leupold continually gives Jacob far more credit than he deserves. Jacob has grown spiritually over these past 20 years, to a point where he obeys the laws of divine establishment (obviously, he did not know them by that name).

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One small matter is, we do not know whether these wages were changed after the fact or not. Jacob states his case to his wives simply that his wages were changed; I do not think we have the verbiage to indicate that Laban or his sons went to take inventory of the sheep, and then said, “This one will not belong to you, because from here on out, only the striped ones will belong to you.” If this is what Laban did, that would clearly be cheating.

### Genesis 31:7c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong’s #        |
|--|---|------------------------|---------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or וי)<br>[pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #251 |

<sup>148</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 488); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>149</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>150</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## Genesis 31:7c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| lō' (לֹא or לוֹא)<br>[pronounced low]  | <i>not, no</i>   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation   | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| nāthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]  | <i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5414<br>BDB #678 |
| All of the BDB meanings for the Qal stem of nāthan are as follows: 1) <i>to give, put, set</i> ; 1a) (Qal); 1a1) <i>to give, bestow, grant, permit, ascribe, employ, devote, consecrate, dedicate, pay wages, sell, exchange, lend, commit, entrust, give over, deliver up, yield produce, occasion, produce, requite to, report, mention, utter, stretch out, extend</i> ; 1a2) <i>to put, set, put on, put upon, set, appoint, assign, designate</i> ; 1a3) <i>to make, constitute</i> . |  |  |                            |
| ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים)<br>[pronounced el-o-HEEM]  | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>                  | masculine plural construct   | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| lāmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| rā'a' (עָרַב) [pronounced raw-ĠAHĠ]  | <i>to make evil, to do evil, to do ill, to cause to do evil, to cause something injurious to be done, to do harm</i> | Hiphil infinitive construct  | Strong's #7489<br>BDB #949 |
| ʿîm (עִם) [pronounced ġeem]  | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>  | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix                             | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

**Translation:** *However, Elohim has not given him the occasion to do evil to me.* No matter how much Laban has tried, he has not been able to easily harm Jacob. Laban understands the situation as, “I win and you lose; or, I lose and you win.” So he had to somehow best Jacob when it came to the birth of the lambs and kids. However, God did not allow Laban to cheat Jacob in any way.

What God did not allow Laban to do to Jacob is the verb rā'a' (עָרַב) [pronounced rawġ-AHĠ] and its root meaning was *to spoil by breaking into pieces*. It has come to mean *to do evil to*. In the Hiphil stem, it means to cause this evil to occur. Jacob has a large household to maintain and a great many responsibilities. Laban, had God permitted it, would have been in a position to make Jacob's life very difficult to the point where he could not even provide for his own. However, despite Laban's lack of integrity in the business world, God still prospered Jacob. What this verse tells us that despite the evil things which occur to us and the evil people who surround us and attempt to bring about our downfall, it is God Who has the ultimate control. Even though every sour business deal with Laban was an attempt to shift the dollars from Jacob's pocket into Laban's, God continued to prosper Jacob and slowed or stopped the financial growth of Laban. In other words, the evil that other purpose against us can have no effect whatsoever upon us, if that is God's choice.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob's statement “God did not allow him (Laban) to hurt me” is an acknowledgment that God has been faithful in fulfilling His promise that He made to Jacob at Bethel twenty years prior to protect him, which is denoted in the phrase “I...will keep you” in Genesis 28:15.*<sup>151</sup>

<sup>151</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. ); accessed October 16, 2017.

Whenever Laban did wrong to Jacob by changing the wages, God overruled Laban so that no harm was done to Jacob (his net worth was not lessened). Jacob recognizes that his prosperity was God reversing Laban's dishonesty.

Dr. Bob Utley: *Jacob was supposed to get all of the off-colored animals, but when the off-colored animals produced more offspring, Laban began to take certain groups of them for his own. Every time he made a change, God blessed the remaining flock of Jacob, whether they were speckled or mottled or striped (cf. Genesis 31:8).*<sup>152</sup>

Furthermore, Jacob recognizes that God has done this on his behalf.

**Genesis 31:7** ...and your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not allow him to hurt me.

Whereas, Jacob was a faithful employee, Laban was not a good employer. What had happened over the past 6 or so years, after Jacob began working for a wage, Laban kept changing their agreement. Jacob might have too many blotched sheep and goats; so Laban would remove that kind of sheep from Jacob's wages. Still, God would see that Jacob was properly reimbursed every time.

You may remember that Laban seemed very reasonable at first, as someone who was willing to work out a reasonable deal with his employee, Jacob. However, we find out here, that changed. When Jacob appears to be doing too well for himself, Laban changes the deal. We will not be given any specifics on this; just a general statement found in vv. 8–9 below.

Jacob now explains how God kept Laban from doing evil to him. God did not allow Laban to cheat Jacob.

**If now he said 'speckled will be your wages;' and bore the flock speckled; and if then he said 'Striped will be your wages;' then bore the flock striped. And so takes away Elohim cattle of your father and so He gives [them] to me.**

Genesis  
31:8–9

**If he first [lit., so, thus, now] said, 'The speckled [ones] will be your wages;' the flock would bear speckled animals; and if he later said, 'The striped [ones] will be your wages;' then the flock would bear striped. God has taken away your father's cattle and He has given [them] to me.**

**If he first specified that speckled cattle would be my wages, the flock would bear speckled animals; but then he would change his mind and say, 'No, the striped ones will be your wage;' but the flock would then begin bearing striped animals. God has taken away your father's cattle and He has given them to me.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

If now he said 'speckled will be your wages;' and bore the flock speckled; and if then he said 'Striped will be your wages;' then bore the flock striped. And so takes away Elohim cattle of your father and so He gives [them] to me.

Targum (Onkelos)

If now he said, The streaked shall be thy wages; then all the flock bare streaked; and if now he said, The chequered shall be thy wages; all the flock bare chequered. And the Lord hath separated them from the cattle of your father, and hath given (them) to me.

<sup>152</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Genesis 31:7.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | If now he said, The streaked shall be thy wages, all the sheep bare streaked; and if now he said, The spotted-footed shall be thy wages, all the sheep bare those which were spotted in their feet: and the Lord hath taken away the flock of your father, and hath given (it) to me. [JERUSALEM. And the Word of the Lord hath taken away.] |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | If at any time he said: The speckled shall be your wages: all the sheep brought forth speckled: but when he said on the contrary: you shall take all the white ones for your wages: all the flocks brought forth white ones. And God has taken your father's substance, and given it to me.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | If he said this, 'The speckled will be your wages,' then all the flock bore speckled. If he said this, 'The streaked will be your wages,' and then all the flock bore streaked. Thus God has taken away your father's livestock, and given them to me.   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | If he said thus, The speckled shall be your wages, then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said thus, The spotted shall be your wages; then all the flock bore spotted. Thus God has selected some of your fathers cattle, and given them to me.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | If he should say thus, The speckled shall be your reward, then all the cattle would bear speckled; and if he should say, The white shall be your reward, then would all the cattle bear white. So God has taken away all the cattle of your father, and given them to me.  |
| Significant differences: | The exact descriptions do not line up; however, the principle is the same—they are simply descriptions of oddly-colored sheep and goats.   |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English      | If he said, All those in the flock which have marks are to be yours, then all the flock gave birth to marked young; and if he said, All the banded ones are to be yours, then all the flock had banded young. So God has taken away your father's cattle and has given them to me.  |
| Easy English                | Sometimes Laban said, "The animals with different colours on their skin will be your payment." Then the animals gave birth to young ones with different colours on their skins. Sometimes he said, "The animals with marks on them will be your payment." Then the animals gave birth to young ones with marks on them. In this way God took your father's animals, and gave them to me.  |
| Easy-to-Read Version        | "At one time Laban said, 'You can keep all the goats with spots. This will be your pay.' After he said this, all the animals gave birth to spotted goats, so they were all mine. But then Laban said, 'I will keep the spotted goats. You can have all the striped goats. That will be your pay.' After he said this, all the animals gave birth to striped goats. So God has taken the animals away from your father and has given them to me. |
| International Children's B. | At one time Laban said, 'You can have all the speckled goats as your pay.' After that, all the animals gave birth to speckled young ones. But then Laban said, 'You can have all the streaked goats as your pay.' After that, all the animals gave birth to streaked babies. So God has taken the animals away from your father. And God has given them to me.  |
| <i>The Message</i>          | But God never let him really hurt me. If he said, 'Your wages will consist of speckled animals' the whole flock would start having speckled lambs and kids. And if he said, 'From now on your wages will be streaked animals' the whole flock would have streaked ones. Over and over God used your father's livestock to reward me.  |
| New Simplified Bible        | »When Laban said, 'The speckled goats shall be your wages,' all the flocks produced speckled young. When he said, 'The striped goats shall be your wages,' all the flocks produced striped young. »This way God has taken sheep and goats from your father and given them to me.  |

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Common English Bible    | If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your payment,' the whole flock gave birth to speckled young. And if he said, 'The striped ones will be your payment,' the whole flock gave birth to striped young. God took away your father's livestock and gave them to me.   |
| Contemporary English V. | When your father said the speckled sheep would be my wages, all of them were speckled. And when he said the spotted ones would be mine, all of them were spotted. That's how God has taken sheep and goats from your father and given them to me.  |
| The Living Bible        | But God has not permitted him to do me any harm! For if he said the speckled animals would be mine, then all the flock produced speckled; and when he changed and said I could have the streaked ones, then all the lambs were streaked! In this way God has made me wealthy at your father's expense. V. 7 is included for context. |
| New Berkeley Version    | When he said this: 'The speckled will be your wages,' then all the animals bore speckled young, and when he said, 'The striped will be your wages,' then all the livestock bore striped young. In this way God has taken away your father's stock and has given it to me.  |
| New Century Version     | When Laban said, 'You can have all the speckled animals as your pay,' all the animals gave birth to speckled young ones. But when he said, 'You can have all the streaked animals as your pay,' all the flocks gave birth to streaked babies. So God has taken the animals away from your father and has given them to me.           |
| New Life Version        | If he said, 'The animals that have spots will be your pay,' then all the flock gave birth to young ones with spots. If he said, 'The animals with black marks will be your pay,' then all the flock gave birth to young ones with black marks. So God has taken away your father's animals and has given them to me.                 |
| New Living Translation  | For if he said, 'The speckled animals will be your wages,' the whole flock began to produce speckled young. And when he changed his mind and said, 'The striped animals will be your wages,' then the whole flock produced striped young. In this way, God has taken your father's animals and given them to me.                     |

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | For if he said, <i>The speckled will be your reward</i> ; then all the cattle would give birth to the speckled. And if he would have said, <i>The white ones will be your reward</i> ; all the cattle would have been born white. So it was God who has taken all these cattle from your father and given them to me.  |
| International Standard V    | "When Laban said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flock gave birth to speckled ones. Then when he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' all the flock gave birth to streaked offspring.<br>"So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.   |
| Revised Knox Bible          | As it was, whenever he said, The speckled beasts shall be your wages, it was to speckled lambs that all my ewes gave birth; when he changed about, and said, you shall have all the white lambs for your pay, all my flocks bore white. That is how God has taken away your father's wealth and given it to me.  |
| Translation for Translators | When Laban said, 'The speckled animals are the ones that I will give you to be your wages,' then all the animals gave birth to young ones that were speckled. When he changed and said, 'The ones that have black and white stripes on them will be your wages,' then all the animals gave birth to young ones that were striped. 9 In that way, God has taken away the livestock that belonged to your father and has given them to me. |

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | He was to say: The speckled are to be your wages. -- even the small cattle is to have bore forth speckled. He was to say: The striped are to be your wages. -- even is to have bore forth of the small cattle, the striped. He of mighty ones was to snatch away the livestock of your father, and was to give them to me.   |
| Conservapedia           | "If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the cattle gave birth to speckled calves. If he said, "The striped ones will be your wages,' then the cattle all gave birth to striped calves [Jacob conveniently leaves out the methods he used to ensure these outcomes.]. In that way, God has taken away [Literally, "rescued."] your father's cattle and given them to me |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible      | For when he said, ' The spotted shall be your wages,' all the sheep were spotted : — but if he said, ' The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the sheep were streaked ; so God took away the flocks of your father and gave them to me.   |
| HCSB                    | But God has not let him harm me. If he said, 'The spotted sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born spotted. If he said, 'The streaked sheep will be your wages,' then all the sheep were born streaked. God has taken away your father's herds and given them to me.  |
| H. C. Leupold           | If he said thus: The speckled ones shall be your wage, then the entire flock bore speckled ones. But if he said: The striped ones shall be your wage, then the entire flock bore striped ones. So God has taken away your father's herd and given it to me.  |
| Tree of Life Version    | If he would say, 'the spotted ones will be your salary,' then the flocks would give birth to spotted ones. Or if he would say, 'the striped ones will be your salary,' then all the flocks would give birth to striped ones. So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.   |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | If he said, 'The speckled animals will be your wages,' then all the flock bore speckled young. If he said, 'The striped will be your wages,' then the whole flock bore striped young. In this way God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | If he said, the speckled will be your wages then all the flocks gendered speckled, and if he said, the streaked will be your wages then all the flocks were gendered streaked. Thus Elohim has taken away the flocks of your dad, and has given them to me.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | So if he says, dotted will be your wages--- and all the sheep will be born dotted. And if he says--- striped will be your wages--- and all the sheep will be born striped. And God confiscated your fathers cattle, and gave to me.  |

### Catholic Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Christian Community (1988) | Whenever he said: 'The spotted ones will be your wages,' then all the ewes had spotted lambs. And whenever he said: 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the ewes produced streaked lambs. It is God who has taken your father's livestock in that way and has given it to me.   |
| The Heritage Bible         | If he said like this, The speckled shall be your wages, then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said, The spotted shall be your wages, then all the flock bore spotted. And God has snatched away the livestock of your father, and given them to me.  |
| New American Bible (2002)  | Whenever your father said, 'The speckled animals shall be your wages,' the entire flock would bear speckled young; whenever he said, 'The streaked animals shall be your wages,' the entire flock would bear streaked young. Thus God reclaimed your father's livestock and gave it to me. [8-12] This Elohist account of the miraculous increase in Jacob's flock differs somewhat from the Yahwist account given in ⇒ Genesis 30:32-42. <sup>153</sup> |

<sup>153</sup> This footnote is not found in the 2011 version; probably because it is hokum. Jacob tried something which did not work; but who actually oversaw the breeding was God.

New Jerusalem Bible Whenever he said, "The spotted ones will be your wages," all the animals produced spotted young; whenever he said, "The striped ones will be your wages," all the animals produced striped young. Thus God has reclaimed your father's livestock and given it to me.

New English Bible If Laban said, "The spotted ones shall be your wages", then all the flock bore spotted young; and if he said, "The striped ones shall be your wages", then all the flock bore striped young. God has taken away your father's property and has given it to me.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible If he said, 'The speckled will be your wages,' then all the animals gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked will be your wages,' then all the animals gave birth to streaked young. This is how God has taken away your father's animals and given them to me.

The Complete Tanach If he would say thus, 'Speckled ones shall be your wages,' all the animals would bear speckled ones, and if he would say thus, 'Ringed ones shall be your wages,' all the animals would bear ringed ones. Thus, God separated your father's livestock and gave it to me.

exeGesés companion Bible ...if he says thus, The branded are your hire;  
then all the flocks birth branded:  
and if he says thus, The ringstraked are your hire;  
then all the flocks birth ringstraked:  
thus Elohim strips the chattel of your father  
and gives them to me.

JPS (Tanakh—1985) If he said thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks would drop speckled young; and if he said thus, 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks would drop streaked young. God has taken away your father's livestock and given it to me.

Kaplan Translation If he said, 'Your pay will be the spotted ones,' then all the animals gave birth to spotted young. If he said, 'Ringed ones will be your wage,' then all the animals dropped ringed ones. God thus eroded your father's livestock and gave it to me.

Orthodox Jewish Bible If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy sachar; then all the tzon bore speckled; and if he said thus, The streaked shall be thy sachar; then bore all the tzon streaked.  
Thus Elohim hath taken away the mikneh of your av, and given them to me.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible* If he said, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then the entire flock gave birth to speckled [young]; and if he said, 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then the entire flock gave birth to streaked [young]. Thus God has taken away the flocks of your father and given them to me.

The Expanded Bible When Laban said, 'You can have all the speckled animals as your ·pay [wages],' all the animals gave birth to speckled young ones. But when he said, 'You can have all the streaked animals as your ·pay [wages],' all the flocks gave birth to streaked babies [30:37–43]. So God has taken the ·animals [livestock] away from your father and has given them to me.

Kretzmann's Commentary If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled; and if he said thus, The ring-straked (banded) shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ring-straked. When Laban noted that his cattle were bearing in favor of Jacob, according to the original contract, he changed the stipulation from time to time, making it ever more difficult for Jacob to gain, since the provisions were narrowed more with every new agreement. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your

father, and given them to me. Jacob thus confesses and acknowledges with thankfulness that it was the Lord who had watched over his interests, turned the evil intention in his favor, and multiplied that part of the flock which was set apart for his wages.

NET Bible®

If he said, 'The speckled animals [*Heb* "speckled" (twice this verse). The word "animals" (after the first occurrence of "speckled") and "offspring" (after the second) have been supplied in the translation for stylistic reasons. The same two terms ("animals" and "offspring") have been supplied after the two occurrences of "streaked" later in this verse.] will be your wage,' then the entire flock gave birth to speckled offspring. But if he said, 'The streaked animals will be your wage,' then the entire flock gave birth to streaked offspring. In this way God has snatched away your father's livestock and given them to me.

The Pulpit Commentary

If he (i.e. Laban) said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages;—by the original contract Jacob had been promised all the parti-colored animals (Genesis 30:32);" here it seems as if Laban, struck with the remarkable increase of these, took the earliest opportunity of so modifying the original stipulation as to limit Jacob's portion to one sort only, viz. the speckled. Yet this dishonorable breach of faith on the part of Laban was of no avail; for, when the next lambing season came—then (it was discovered that) all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus (changing the sort of animals assigned to his son—in-law), The ringstraked shall be thy hire (the result was as before); then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

Thus—literally, and (as the result of this)—God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. In ascribing to God what he had himself effected by (so-called) fraud, this language of Jacob appears to some inexcusable (Kalisch); in passing over his own stratagem in silence Jacob has been charged with not telling the whole truth to his wives (Keil). A more charitable consideration of Jacob's statement, however, discerns in it an evidence of his piety, which recognized and gratefully acknowledged that not his own "consummate cunning, 'but Jehovah's watchful care had enabled him to outwit the dishonest craft of Laban (Rosenmüller, Ainsworth, Bush, Candlish, Murphy).

The Voice

[**Jacob:**] If your father said, "The speckled will be your payment," then all of the flock became speckled; and if he said, "the striped will be your payment," then all of the flock became striped. In this way, God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans.

...if in this way he will say, the speckled ones will exist as your wage then all of the flocks will bring forth speckled ones and if in this way he will say, striped ones will exist as your wage then all of the flocks will bring forth striped ones, and Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> delivered the livestock of your father and he gave to me,...

Concordant Literal Version

If thus he is saying: 'The speckled shall be your hire,' then bear do all the flock speckled. And if thus he is saying: 'The striped shall be your hire,' then bear do all the flock striped. And rescuing is the Elohim the cattle of your father and is giving them to me.

Emphasized Bible

If thus he saith, The speckled, shall be thy wages, then do all the flock bring forth speckled,—But if thus he saith, The ring-straked, shall be thy wages, then do all the flock bring forth ring-straked. So hath God stripped away the herds of your father, and given them to me.

Modern English Version

If he said, 'The speckled will be your wages,' then all the flock produced speckled. If he said, 'The striped will be your pay,' then all the flock produced striped. In this way God has taken away your father's flock and given them to me.

NASB

If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock

brought forth striped. Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given them to me.

New King James Version

If he said thus: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: ‘The streaked shall be your wages,’ then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.

Third Millennium Bible

If he said thus: ‘The speckled shall be thy wages,’ then all the animals bore speckled; and if he said thus: ‘The ringstreaked shall be thy hire,’ then all the animals bore ringstreaked. Thus God hath taken away the flocks of your father, and given them to me.

Young’s Updated LT

“If he say thus: The speckled are your hire, then bare all the flock speckled ones; and if he say thus: The ring-streaked are your hire, then bare all the flock ring-streaked; and God takes away the substance of your father, and does give to me. And God takes away the substance of your father, and does give to me.

**The gist of this passage:**

Whatever Laban decided would be Jacob’s wages, that is the sort of breed Laban’s animals would produce.

8-9

| Genesis 31:8a   |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong’s #         |
| ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]  | <i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when</i> (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event) | primarily an hypothetical particle                       | Strong's #518<br>BDB #49   |
| The particle ʾîm (אִם) can be used as a demonstrative ( <i>lo, behold</i> ), an interrogative (usually expecting a negative response and often used with other particles and rhetorically), and as a conditional particle ( <i>if, though</i> ); an indication of a wish or desire ( <i>oh that, if only</i> ; this is a rare usage). |   |  |                            |
| Gesenius writes: <i>Its primary power I regard as demonstrative, lo! Behold!</i> <sup>154</sup>   |   |  |                            |
| The NET Bible: <i>In the protasis (“if” section) of this conditional clause, the imperfect verbal form has a customary nuance – whatever he would say worked to Jacob’s benefit.</i> <sup>155</sup>   |   |  |                            |
| kôh (כֹּה) [pronounced koh]   | <i>so, thus, here, hence; now; in the meantime</i>  | adverb   | Strong’s #3541<br>BDB #462 |
| ʾâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]  | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>       | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong’s #559<br>BDB #55   |
| nâqôd (נֶאֱמַר) [pronounced naw-KODE]   | <i>spotted, speckled; marked with a brand</i>   | masculine plural adjective                               | Strong’s #5348<br>BDB #666 |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]  | <i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |

<sup>154</sup> Gesenius *Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Baker Books; ©1979; p. 55.

<sup>155</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 13, 2016.

## Genesis 31:8a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|-------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| mas <sup>e</sup> kôreth (מַשְׂכֹּרֶת)<br>[pronounced mahs-KOH-rehth] | wages; reward           | feminine singular noun<br>with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person<br>masculine singular suffix | Strong's #4909<br>BDB #969 |

**Translation:** If he first [lit., so, thus, now] said, 'The speckled [ones] will be your wages;'... Jacob began to specify how Laban would change the wages on him. Jacob does not give a listing of each and every change and the circumstances of them, but he gives two examples.

I took some liberties with the adverb kôh (כֹּה) [pronounced koh], which means *so, thus, here, hence; now; in the meantime*. Strong's #3541 BDB #462. I translated this *first*, to suggest that Laban chose to do one thing for awhile; and then switched up the game later.

## Genesis 31:8b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו)<br>[pronounced weh] | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as        | simple wâw conjunction                                      | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| yâlad (יָלַד) [pronounced yaw-LAHD]                                | to give birth, to bear, to be born, to bear, to bring forth, to beget | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect                  | Strong's #3205<br>BDB #408 |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced koh]  | the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of  | masculine singular construct followed by a definite article | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced tzohn]                                    | small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks                          | feminine singular collective noun with the definite article | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |
| nâqôd (נֹקֵד) [pronounced naw-KODE]                                | spotted, speckled; marked with a brand                                | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #5348<br>BDB #666 |

**Translation:** ...the flock would bear speckled animals;... Jacob understood that God was causing this to happen. Laban would say, "The speckled animals will be yours." Then the flock would begin bearing speckled animals. Once that happened, Laban would change everything up.

Here is how it worked: Laban allowed Jacob to keep some of the flock. He might decide all the speckled young would belong to Jacob; then, according to this passage (which is something which Jacob's wives actually observed or heard about), their flocks would begin to produce speckled young.

The original agreement gave Jacob all of the oddly colored sheep and goats.

## Genesis 31:8c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong's #        |
|--|--|------------------------|---------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו)<br>[pronounced weh] | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as | simple wâw conjunction | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251 |

## Genesis 31:8c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]  | <i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when</i> (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event) | primarily an hypothetical particle   | Strong's #518<br>BDB #49   |
| The particle ʾîm (אִם) can be used as a demonstrative ( <i>lo, behold</i> ), an interrogative (usually expecting a negative response and often used with other particles and rhetorically), and as a conditional particle ( <i>if, though</i> ); an indication of a wish or desire ( <i>oh that, if only</i> ; this is a rare usage). |   |  |                            |
| Gesenius writes: <i>Its primary power I regard as demonstrative, lo! Behold!</i> <sup>156</sup>   |   |  |                            |
| kôh (כֹּה) [pronounced koh]   | <i>so, thus, here, hence; now; in the meantime</i>  | adverb   | Strong's #3541<br>BDB #462 |
| ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]  | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>       | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                         | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| ʿâqôd (עֲקוֹד) [pronounced gaw-CODE]  | <i>striped, banded; streaked</i>  | masculine plural adjective   | Strong's #6124<br>BDB #785 |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]  | <i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                         | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| mas <sup>e</sup> kôreth (תַּרְכֻּשֵׁת) [pronounced mahs-KOH-reth]   | <i>wages; reward</i>  | feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #4909<br>BDB #969 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| yâlad (יָלַד) [pronounced yaw-LAHD]   | <i>to give birth, to bear, to be born, to bear, to bring forth, to beget</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect                                       | Strong's #3205<br>BDB #408 |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]  | <i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>   | masculine singular construct followed by a definite article                      | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| tsôh (צֹהַן) [pronounced tzohn]   | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>   | feminine singular collective noun with the definite article                      | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |
| ʿâqôd (עֲקוֹד) [pronounced gaw-CODE]  | <i>striped, banded; streaked</i>  | masculine plural adjective   | Strong's #6124<br>BDB #785 |

**Translation:** ...and if he later said, 'The striped [ones] will be your wages;' then the flock would bear striped. So Laban would say, "Your payment will be striped animals;" and then the herds would begin to produce striped animals. It was God Who did this. God saw to it that the newly born would be striped. Jacob's scheme did not have anything to do with this.

<sup>156</sup> Gesenius *Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Baker Books; ©1979; p. 55.

Here, Jacob gives an illustration—not of the soured business deals, but of hypothetically what would occur if Laban said this or that. Jacob has prospered because God has prospered him. If Laban had decided to make the spotted livestock Jacob's as Jacob's wages, then nearly every calve and lamb born thereafter would be spotted. God controlled the breeding, Laban and Jacob did not. Jacob had earlier tried some hocus pocus (Genesis 30:37–39), but God blessed him despite his goofy idea. Jacob may have originally thought that what he did was a fantastic, revolutionary idea, but he was not blessed do to his activity with his livestock, but he was blessed directly by God, despite his ignorant behavior.

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob then explained how it was that the newborn cattle all happened to correspond so remarkably to the specifications in his [newly changed] contract with Laban for the animals he would receive for his hire.*<sup>157</sup>

You may recall that Jacob had this clever scheme to affect the breeding of the flocks; and he had them drinking water and looking at almond branches which were striped or mottled or whatever. However, here, Jacob acknowledges that, it was not his clever plan to affect the breeding of the sheep and goats; it was God who took care of it. When Laban changed the deal, then God changes the animals which came out. So, Laban said, “You will be paid in striped goats (or sheep); and then his animals would begin to produce a lot of striped babies.



We know from genetic studies that certain characteristics can skip a generation or two, and then show up several generations later. That is what was happening.

Even today, unusually marked sheep or goats are called Jacob's sheep (or goats). **Jacob's sheep** (a photograph); from [Ruby Peak Farms](#); accessed November 3, 2017.

Genesis 31:8 If he first specified that speckled cattle would be my wages, the flock would bear speckled animals; bur then he would change his mind and say, 'No, the striped ones will be your wage;' but the flock would then begin bearing striped animals.”

### Laban continually changing their agreement (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *This verse describes in detail how Laban tried to change their agreement. However, every time he changed it, God changed the breeding habits of the goats and sheep to benefit Jacob (cf. Genesis 31:9).*<sup>158</sup>

Benson: *It appears that Laban, through envy and covetousness, often broke his agreement made with Jacob, and altered it as he thought fit, and that Jacob patiently yielded to all such changes.*<sup>159</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 480.

<sup>158</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:8.

<sup>159</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:7–8.

## Laban continually changing their agreement (various commentators)

Gill: *Laban was at first highly pleased with it, as judging it would be a very good one to him, as he might reasonably think indeed: and it is highly probable he did not attempt any alteration the first year, but observing Jacob's cattle of the speckled sort, &c. prodigiously increasing, he did not choose to abide by the any longer. Now it must be observed, that the sheep in Mesopotamia, as in Italy (x), brought forth the young twice a year; so that every yearning time, which was ten times in five years, Laban made an alteration in Jacob's wages; one time he would let him have only the speckled, and not the ringstraked; another time the ringstraked, and not the speckled; and so changed every time, according as he observed the prevailing colour was, as may be concluded from Genesis 31:8.*<sup>160</sup>

NEV commentary: *Laban was obviously aghast at how Jacob's flocks were growing so rapidly, and tried to amend the original agreement so that some of the increased numbers would be his. He is portrayed as an avaricious liar and deceiver; although Jacob had been little better. The difference between Jacob and Laban was simply God's grace, and Jacob's eventual openness to this.*<sup>161</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob...told them their father no longer felt toward him as he formerly did, because of his increasing prosperity. He recounted numerous instances when Laban had deceived him and when he had changed his wages for no reason except to hinder Jacob's increase in wealth. (Evidently Laban had frequently altered his original agreement with Jacob).*<sup>162</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

**Genesis 31:8** If he said this, 'The speckled will be your wages, then all the flocks bore speckled.' And if he said this, 'The striped will be your hire, then all the flocks bore striped.'

This was the providence of God. Whatever Laban said would be Jacob's wages, God would bless the flocks of Jacob with that particular type. So, if Laban said, "Listen, the speckled sheep will be the only ones you can keep for yourself;" the sheep under Jacob's control would all begin producing speckled sheep.

We know that God oversaw what was happening, and God saw to it that Jacob was blessed with prosperity, despite his own scheming. We studied Jacob's goofy scheme in the previous chapter, which was simply illustrative of Jacob trying to do God's job. We understood this to be energy of the flesh, which accomplishes nothing. When it came to Jacob's scheme, there was a lot of energy expended. He had to cut the branches and then they we cut or scrape the branches so that they would have specific markings; which were then placed into the water troughs of the livestock. All of this took time and effort; and none of it resulted in anything being done.

It has never been up to Jacob to make certain that God blessed him. It is up to God to bless him or not. What Jacob did in order to achieve God's blessing was one more example of Jacob trying to do a right thing in a wrong way. It was right, since Jacob is in the line of promise, for God to bless him. However, it was wrong for Jacob to try to make this come to pass through his own human efforts. Jacob did not have to do any of the things which he did. As God gave him direction, he should act—but always within reasonable moral boundaries. Jacob continually violated reasonable moral boundaries when dealing with others.

This is a principle that every believer needs to understand: you may be treated unfairly at work; you may have a lousy boss—God is still able to overrule all of that. If you are over 30 years old, then you have had at least one bad job with at least one lousy boss—maybe several (or, depending on your orientation to authority, it is possible you think that most of your bosses have been bad, when they have been decent bosses).

<sup>160</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:7.

<sup>161</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

<sup>162</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 479.

In any case, by that point in time, you have suffered a myriad of injustices. I still recall from decades ago being accused of cheating on a take-home test by a college professor and having to retake the test. I barely knew the person I was supposed to have cheated with. Injustice is a part of life. God can overrule injustice (which is what He was doing when it came to Jacob's income). Jacob, as usual, tried some lame scheme (having sheep look at peeled almond branches); yet God still blessed Jacob, despite his schemes.

However, what God does not fix or override, He expects for us to deal with or to endure.

This does not mean that you cannot look for new work; this does not mean that you cannot explore other job opportunities under lousy working conditions. Sometimes God uses employment situations to move us from point A to point B. Every life is different and God tailor-makes our lives to suit us. As believers in the Church Age, during which time we receive no direct revelation from God, we need to spend our lives being filled with the Spirit and learning the Word of God, so that we are able to grow spiritually. This will give us enough information in order to make the difficult decisions in our lives.

One thing which I have experienced and I know others have experienced it as well—I have had a few difficult decisions in my life, and sometimes, in Bible class, I am given the answer. I was being encouraged to leave one particular job, and it is something which I considered. But, I also received Bible teaching that, you do not simply leave a job because things are difficult there or because it is not a perfect job (no such job exists). I chose to stay at that time and that was the right choice.

When I stopped teaching, eventually, it was the right thing to do. It was a major life decision and God was there guiding me the whole time—not audibly, not with hallucinations, not with carefully placed bolts of lightning, but simply from knowing Bible doctrine.

Now that you have become a believer, perhaps you resent God a little bit—that He does not act more forcefully in your life. You picture God as guiding people around in the Old Testament, but not giving you the same guidance. That is a confused impression that you have. God spoke to very few people directly—even in the Old Testament. In the pre-canon era, God guided very few people directly. Jacob is over 40 when he left for Paddan-Aram and God spoke to him once in a dream (if memory serves, he was 57). And now that it is time for him to return to Canaan, God apparently speaks to him a second time. So, it is not as if God is there every single day of Jacob's life telling him where to go and what to do.

Secondly, think back when you were a teen. Who could make the best decisions for your life? You or your parents? In retrospect, you know your parents would have made the best decisions for you. They have the benefit of both wisdom and some objectivity regarding your life. But, do you think that you want your parents following you around every minute of the day telling you what to do, where to go, who to speak to, when to work, when to study, when to eat? Of course not! You would have complained that they were treating you like a prisoner!

One of the great blessings of life is having free will and being able to determine what you are going to do with your life. God does not have to be with us every minute of the day telling us what to do. We learn the principles and we make the decisions; and we take responsibility for these decisions. The decisions which we make often have consequences which last for day, years or even a lifetime.

Jacob's knowledge of God is far more limited than ours (ideally speaking, if you have spent time learning Who God is). Jacob has what his father Abraham has told him (the first 20+ chapters of Genesis and the book of Job); so, from time to time, he might need a little guidance. But that was a different time and that was a different spiritual program.

**Application:** Our guidance in the Church Age is having the Word of God in our thinking.

Jacob did recognize God's overruling will. Even though Laban attempted to cheat him, God would bless Jacob anyway.

At this point, Jacob acknowledges that God blessed him; he was not blessed by his goofy breeding techniques:

Genesis 31:8–9 *If he first specified that speckled cattle would be my wages, the flock would bear speckled animals; but then he would change his mind and say, ‘No, the striped ones will be your wage;’ but the flock would then begin bearing striped animals. God has taken away your father’s cattle and He has given them to me.”*

I should warn you that there might not be any spiritual benefit in this doctrine. It is to straighten out a minor question which might be in the back of your mind. You may be wondering, *at first, which sheep belonged to Jacob could be determined by a simple visual inspection; but now, how is this done?*

### How exactly was inventory kept?

1. When all of this starts out, all of the animals with the oddly colored markings would belong to Jacob. The black goats and white sheep belonged to Laban; all of the others belonged to Jacob.
2. Laban already culled out the odd-colored animals from Jacob’s herd.
3. Now, as long as Jacob and Laban had the same agreement, then one could visually inspect the livestock under Jacob’s control, and easily pick out those who belong to Jacob.
4. However, it comes to pass that Laban is upset because so many animals are being born with odd markings. Therefore, he goes to Jacob and says, “Only the striped ones are yours.” And then, 6 months later, he says, “Only the blotched will be yours.” Now, how do we keep all of this inventoried? You cannot simply look at the sheep and goats and separate them out by color. During one breeding season (or more), all the oddly colored sheep and goats belong to Jacob. However, once this is changed, then how do they keep track of who owns what? Jacob owns some striped sheep; but then, Laban changes the agreement and no longer does Jacob get the striped sheep. How do we distinguish between Jacob’s striped sheep and Laban’s?
5. There is no indication that there was any branding or ear tags (I am not sure of the proper term here).
6. As soon as Laban decides to make a change, someone has to go out and inventory all of Jacob’s sheep and goats, and determine how many are Jacob’s and how many are Laban’s. That will be the base numbers; and the person who records this information may need to record just what Jacob owns at that point. He may have, at first, simply recorded *Jacob has 20 sheep and 20 goats*; but, at some point, the new designation of sheep and goats have to be taken into consideration.
7. So, in order to keep track, a *neutral* third party—probably one of Laban’s sons—would have to come out and take specific records of what types of new sheep were given birth to, as well as what kinds already belonged to Jacob.
8. In other words, careful records had to be kept; and someone needed to ferry these records back to Laban’s office (which is likely, just his tent).
9. So, all of this can be done; but it would require time and manpower in order to do it.
10. Now think back to the first verse of this chapter. *Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, “Jacob has taken all that was our father’s, and from what was our father’s he has gained all this wealth.”* (ESV). So, how does Jacob hear the Laban’s sons say, if they are with their livestock a 3-day’s journey away (Genesis 30:36)? If Laban’s sons are coming to inventory Jacob’s sheep every 6 months, then Jacob is going to have an opportunity to overhear them complaining to one another about Jacob having too many sheep and goats.
11. There may be another explanation for how Jacob’s sheep and goats were tracked and distinguished, but this simple method of inventory strikes me as the method Laban probably employed.

My only point here is, if you are concerned with, *how could this be done?* It can be done.

Laban’s big problem is, he knows that God is looking out for Jacob (or, I should say, he *knew* this in the past). However, it appears that this divine truth is no longer in Laban’s possession (like Jacob’s sheep).

| Genesis 31:9a   |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâtsal (נָצַל) [pronounced naw-TSAHL]   | <i>to snatch away, to deliver, to rescue, to snatch out of danger, to preserve, to recover</i>        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect                     | Strong's #5337<br>BDB #664 |
| Dr. Bob Utley: <i>This is a strong VERB...which in the Hiphil stem denotes "snatching away," cf. Genesis 31:9; Genesis 31:16. It is used of delivering prey from wild animal attacks (cf. 1Samuel 17:34–35; Ezekiel 34:10; Amo. 3:12). As Laban took away Jacob's rightful wages, now God snatches away his flock and gives it to Jacob.</i> <sup>163</sup> |   |   |                            |
| ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]  | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural noun   | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                     | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| mîq <sup>e</sup> neh (מִקְנֵה) [pronounced mik-NEH]   | <i>cattle, livestock (specifically sheep, cows and goats); herds, flocks</i>                          | masculine singular (collective) plural noun; construct form                     | Strong's #4735<br>BDB #889 |
| ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]  | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |

**Translation:** [God has taken away your father's cattle...](#) Jacob recognizes that it is God which takes from Laban's cattle. Jacob had his own schemes about specifying the kind of goats that would be born; but he recognizes here that it is all God's doing.

Jacob is looking at his wives and making sure that they are on the same page as him. Even though this is speculation, Jacob is making an argument to convince his wives to go with him to Canaan (they have never been outside their home of Haran). So, logically, as he argues to convince them, he is looking into their faces for expression—of shock, of concern, of agreement.

By the way, you should notice that Jacob does not gather his wives, stand them at attention, and then tell them what they are going to do as a family. He will state the facts as he sees them and then his wives will speak and they will give their opinion of the situation.

There are innumerable times in the Bible where it is clear that women have their say.

<sup>163</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Genesis 31:9.

| Genesis 31:9b                          |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]        | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]  | <i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                             | Strong's #5414<br>BDB #678 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ] | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** ...and He has given [them] to me. God gives Laban's cattle to Jacob; he knows this and he is making certain that his wives know this. Laban and his sons certainly knew this as well (Genesis 31:1, 16—at one time, they knew this). Their problem is, they either forgot it or they could not accept it; and they could not integrate these events with Bible doctrine. They did not know enough Bible doctrine to understand what was happening in their own lives. In fact, I think that it is likely that Laban had believed in the Revealed God, but his sons never did (given that Laban is named but his sons are not<sup>164</sup>).

God tells us: **For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.** (Psalm 50:10; ESV). Then, Jesus in a parable said, **“Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to Me? Or do you begrudge My generosity?”** (Matthew 20:15; ESV, capitalized)

Jacob tells his daughters: **God has taken away your father's cattle and He has given them to me.** (Genesis 31:9) Here Jacob publically (at least to his wives) tells them that his prosperity and Laban's loss are attributable to God and to nothing else. Jacob recognizes that there was clearly a loss on Laban's side and a gain on his. God performed this primarily due to blessing by association, although Jacob is showing some spiritual growth.

J. Vernon McGee: *Jacob is explaining to Rachel and Leah that it is God who has blessed him, to the extent that Laban and his sons have become very jealous of him; in fact, they hate him.*<sup>165</sup>

Jacob's spiritual growth will be an issue in this chapter; and I want it to be clear that Jacob has shown some spiritual maturity. However, he is a long ways from being spiritually mature.

Observation of this transfer of wealth would have been simple. Laban comes around and says, “From now on, you only get the blotched sheep as your own.” Well, thereafter, the young which are born most turn out to be blotched—even if there had been few blotched young born before this.

Bear in mind, Laban could have also determined that Jacob could only keep the blotched females (or blotched males). 10 times<sup>166</sup> Laban changed the rules on Jacob. Whether this is a literal 10 times or whether Laban simply changed the agreement on many occasions, we do not know. I would be more inclined to consider this to be a slight exaggeration, akin to, *every time I turned around, he was changing my wages on me.*

When it comes to the coloring of the animals, this is not something which can be faked. Either a lamb has stripes or it does not. There is little that a person who does not understand breeding for certain characteristics can do about it. They simply let whatever animals breed, breed. About the only thing that Jacob did, after apparently

<sup>164</sup> I realize that this is not a hard-and-fast rule; but it seems to be the general case.

<sup>165</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>166</sup> Or, *many times.*

abandoning his branches in the trough method, was he bred the strongest sheep; and they seemed to yield the most sheep for Jacob (which is consistent with biology<sup>167</sup>).

Changing the wages many times suggests that someone was monitoring Jacob and his flocks quite closely. We do not know any of the details. Perhaps Laban said, “Give me a bi-yearly tally of the animals born, and which are mine and which are yours.” Upon receiving the stats for the first year, perhaps Laban said, “That can’t be right!” Then either he or one of his sons (or a servant) would go out to survey the situation. Now, even though this is all speculation on my part, it makes sense that, *if* Laban was changing Jacob’s wages, then he had a reason for doing so. I don’t think that he would have just changed Jacob’s wages on a whim. So he would have to have some numbers to consider (whether provided by Jacob or by Laban’s sons, we do not know). Personally, I favor getting Laban’s sons in on this for three reasons: (1) Laban is older and less inclined to be directly involved in the business<sup>168</sup>; (2) Laban’s sons are all upset about Jacob taking away their inheritance. That would suggest to me that, more than simply hearing their father gripe about Jacob’s herd getting larger, that they had their eyes on the situation as well. (3) Also, Jacob is able to overhear the negative comments of Jacob’s sons if they are checking his herd out (and that would logically be the topic of discussion).

Jacob’s wives, who are listening to Jacob put forth this argument, have no doubt heard him talk about these things as he comes home (however often a shepherd returns home); so his summation of the circumstances is not new to them. And if Jacob was aware of what Laban’s sons said about him; no doubt, his wives were privy to their opinions as well.

Jacob, at this time, is making an argument to get his wives to go with him out of their homeland—although they may not be aware at first why Jacob has brought them out to the field and why he is telling them all of this. In **vv. 11a, 13**, Jacob will tell his wives what this is all about.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. sees it somewhat differently: *Jacob had never previously informed his wives about the terrible situation between him and their father out of respect for their love for their father but now he had to present the complete picture to them since the Lord wants him to leave Laban. Jacob begins by pointing out to both women the change in their father’s attitude towards him, which was caused by the Lord intervening and instructing him in the use of selective breeding techniques and prospering him at the expense of Laban. This conversation with his wives reveals that Jacob has grown up quite a bit spiritually in the last twenty years since he openly proclaims his faith in the Lord and His promises and gives all the credit to the Lord for blessing him despite the antagonism of Laban and his sons towards him.*<sup>169</sup>

Personally, I cannot see how Jacob would have gone for 20 years without saying anything about his work conditions to his wives. However, I don’t know whether we can find undeniable Scriptural support for either position.

Genesis 31:8–9 “If he first specified that speckled cattle would be my wages, the flock would bear speckled animals; but then he would change his mind and say, ‘No, the striped ones will be your wage;’ but the flock would then begin bearing striped animals. God has taken away your father’s cattle and He has given them to me.”

### God oversees blessing to Jacob, despite Laban’s actions (many commentators)

Rev. Joseph Benson: *[I]t was indeed God who ordered this matter; for it can scarcely be supposed that any natural causes whatever, without his peculiar providence, could produce so many different changes in a thing of this nature, without once failing.*<sup>170</sup>

<sup>167</sup> The strongest sheep and goats are those where certain characteristics are not bred out of them.

<sup>168</sup> Although, he will pursue after Jacob later in this chapter.

<sup>169</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 487); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>170</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:7–8.

## God oversees blessing to Jacob, despite Laban's actions (many commentators)

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob made no claim that it was by his own ability or ingenuity that he had acquired such wealth; he gave all the credit to the Lord, as indeed he should have done, because his prosperity was entirely due to the Lord.*<sup>171</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Here it is Laban that has specified the wages, and arbitrarily changed them (cf. Genesis 31:41) from time to time. But in every case, by the providence of God, not by Jacob's cleverness, the result has worked out advantageously to Jacob.*<sup>172</sup>

Wesley: *Thus the righteous God paid Jacob for his hard service out of Laban's estate; as afterwards he paid the seed of Jacob for their service of the Egyptians with their spoils.*<sup>173</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob's statement that God took away from Laban his flocks and gave them to him is further indication that Jacob did not attempt to cheat Laban and acknowledges that the justice of God has ruled in his favor and thus God has sovereignly chosen to give Laban's livestock to him.*

Wenstrom continues: *The fact that God ruled in favor of Jacob is a fulfillment of the blessing pronounced upon Jacob by his father Isaac, recorded in Genesis 27:29, namely, that those who bless Jacob will be blessed and those who curse him will be cursed. Therefore, when Isaac pronounces this blessing on Jacob, he is stating in effect that like his grandfather Abraham, the Lord would identify with the cause of Jacob, thus, blessing Jacob would be equivalent to doing it to God whereas cursing Jacob would in effect be cursing God.*<sup>174</sup>

And Wenstrom concludes: *Laban "cursed" Jacob in the sense that he dealt unjustly and deceitfully with Jacob for twenty years and so by taking away Laban's flocks and giving them to Jacob, God was pronouncing judgment upon Laban.*<sup>175</sup>

NEV commentary: *Jacob didn't steal Laban's animals, but his own flock did grow from the stock of black and spotted animals which Laban originally agreed to give to Jacob. Their increase was as it were taken away from Laban and given to Jacob. But Jacob insists this was done by God, and perhaps this is an admission that the paganism and folklore bunk science he had used was not the real cause of the great increase.*<sup>176</sup>

L. M. Grant: *it was true that he had served Laban with great diligence. Here we learn that Laban had changed Jacob's wages ten times. When we saw that Jacob was gaining greatly by one bargain, he would change the terms of his wages. Then the sheep would bear in another way to Jacob's advantage (vs.7-8). Thus he says that God had taken Laban's flocks and given them to Jacob. He does not tell them of his own trickery in the matter: evidently he had been able to hide this from everyone except the Lord.*<sup>177</sup>

After awhile, even Jacob recognized that this was God's doing. H. C. Leupold: *Jacob himself was led to ascribe all success he had to God's providence. On the other hand, it must have been very strange that Laban could not sense divine interference.*<sup>178</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 479.

<sup>172</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:7.

<sup>173</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:9.

<sup>174</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 488); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>175</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 489); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>176</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

<sup>177</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>178</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## God oversees blessing to Jacob, despite Laban's actions (many commentators)

The simple explanation is, Jacob's faith was advancing, slowly but surely (he needed a great many object lessons). On the other hand, whatever faith Laban possessed was retrogressing, in part from mental attitude sins and in part from his association with the heathen culture of Paddan-aram. So Jacob, after Laban changed his salary a few times, realized that God was at work. Laban, on the other hand, was greedy and jealous that no matter what he did, Jacob was blessed (and Laban did not associate this with God—after all, he had his own gods).

In any case, this is an important thing that Leupold points out: two people can see the exact same thing, and one understands that it is the hand of God and the other does not.

Psalm 103:6 [The LORD works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.](#) (ESV)

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[Genesis 31:9](#) [And God has taken away the flocks of your father, and has given them to me.](#)

Jacob is pointing out to his wives something which they themselves have observed. Whatever Laban arbitrarily decided would be Jacob's wages, that would be what would be produced. God did this; and Jacob recognizes that. Jacob's observations here are correct.

Jacob's prosperity is not a result of his schemes; it is a result of what God has done.

Jacob is speaking to his wives about their future plans and about a dream that he had where God spoke to him.

H. C. Leupold: *[S]urely, Laban had not lost everything, nor had Jacob come into possession of all. But God certainly had taken away from the one and given to the other.*<sup>179</sup> Jacob was blessed enough to where, not only had Laban and his sons noticed, but it angered them as well.

Laban and his sons never thought, *the same God Who blesses Jacob is our God as well.* So, whereas Jacob may not be in a state of spiritual maturity, Laban was far, far behind and his own sons were even worse off. This is why the line of blessing was with Jacob and never with Laban. We can actually quantify the retrogression of the faith of Laban and his family here as compared to Genesis 24, when we were last with this family.

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:4–9 [So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field. And said to them, "I have been seeing your father's attitude, that it is not toward me as formerly, but the god of my father has been with me. And you know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me."](#) "If he spoke thus, 'the speckled shall be your wages', then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped will become your wages', then all the flock brought forth striped. Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given it to me.

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:4–9

1. Jacob decides upon a course of action based on the information he has.
2. The fact that he was not conducting himself in an open and straight-forward fashion is evidenced by calling Rachel and Leah out to the field.
3. He wanted to talk to them in complete secrecy, and no doubt had not revealed his thinking on this matter to them before.
4. There may have been some question as to whether or not he thought that he could trust these two
5. He divides his remarks into two distinct sections, vs 5-9 and and vs 10-13.

<sup>179</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:4–9

6. The first section deals with the physical aspects of what has been occurring, while the second section deals with the Divine aspects.
7. He points out to these two women that he has been observing Laban for some time and has noted a marked difference in his overt demeanor.
8. A difference that they had no doubt observed, as well.
9. Laban is not attempting to hide his true feeling toward Jacob, something he at least did in the past.
10. He points out that God has been for him and no true harm has come to him in spite of Laban's overt hostility.
11. He cites his faithfulness to Laban, a fact that these two women would have been keenly aware of.
12. They would have certainly known how often and hard he had worked for their father over the course of their 20 years together.
13. He then points out that Laban has demonstrated himself to be unreliable and deceitful for no reason.
14. We find out here that Laban had altered and attempted to alter the original contract with Jacob many times.
15. The number 10 is designed to be an exact count of the times Laban has tried to cheat Jacob.
16. Jacob worked for a person who was a monetary reversionist and one who did not care for his faithful workers.
17. Nevertheless, Jacob hung in there and kept his word, fulfilling his part of the agreement to the letter.
18. He did not react to unfairness and oppression and run away or attempt to change his niche, but faithfully did his job.
19. This he did because he recognized that God was watching over him and taking care of him, evidence that he has grown spiritually.
20. He acknowledges that God has protected him in spite of all Laban's attempts to cheat or harm him.
21. These attempts certainly consisted of attempting to change the original agreement so that Jacob would not prosper.
22. Originally all the off-colored animals were to become Jacob's, and the normal colored animals were to be Laban's.
23. Laban attempted to make it only the spotted, or only the patched, or only the striped, etc.
24. Each time he changed the agreement, the herds would give birth to the exact animals which Jacob was to receive.
25. Even Jacob recognized that this was not the result of his dubious plan of prenatal influence, but the power of God in operation.
26. The statement of vs 9 is not to be taken in an absolute sense, Laban had not lost everything and Jacob had not acquired all that Laban had possessed.
27. There had certainly been a broad shift in the relative fortunes of the two men, and Jacob certainly had acquired a lot of wealth from the flocks of Laban.
28. Jacob recognized the hand of God in the proceedings, but Laban did not and would not come to the conclusion that God was against him.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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Jacob first makes mention (as the author of this narrative) of what God says to him back in v. 3—which words appear to cause him to spring into action. Gen. 31:3–4 **Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you." So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was...** So, what appears to be the case is, God tells Jacob to return to the land of Canaan, and so Jacob

then speaks to his wives to feel them out for their viewpoint on this matter. In this passage, he reveals this dream to his wives (and some suggest that perhaps there are two dreams<sup>180</sup> here).

Assuming that the order of vv. 5–13 (Jacob’s words to his wives) are chronological, Jacob, after giving his wives a background of what his life has been, now tells them *why* he has called them out there. Obviously, he did not simply call them out so that he could complain about Laban. Although Jacob never actually says this, in v. 13, we ought to understand this as Jacob saying, *now here is why I called you out here; now, let’s get down to brass tacks; this is my point; I did not just call you gals out here to complain.*

Now, how did Jacob know that his flocks were increasing because of God? He had a dream, in which God told him this. Therefore, Jacob is not going to bring up any of this nonsense about placing cut branches into water troughs; but he will tell his wives what God has done and said. At this point, we begin the dream (that is, Jacob tells his wives what he has dreamt):

**And so he is in a conceiving of the flock and so I lift up my [two] eyes and so I see in a dream and, behold, the he-goats the ones leaping over the flock, [were] striped, spotted, and mottled. And so says unto me an Angel of Elohim, in a dream, ‘Jacob.’ And so I say, “Behold me.’And so He says ‘Lift up now your eyes and see all the male goats—those leaping over the flock—striped, spotted and marked [ones]. For I am seeing all that Laban is doing to you. I [am] ’El of Bethel, where you anointed there a pillar, where you vowed to Me there a vow. Now rise up [and] go forth from the land the this and return unto a land of your birth.’ ”**

Genesis  
31:10–13

**And it was during the mating season of the flock when I lifted up my eyes and I could see, in a dream, [that] he-goats were leaping over the flock—[they were] striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of Elohim said to me, ‘Jacob.’ I replied, ‘Here I [am].’He then said, ‘Lift up your eyes now and look at all of the male goats—those [which] are leaping over the flocks—the striped, spotted and marked [ones]; because I see all that Laban is doing to you. I [am] ’El of Bethel, [which is] where you anointed a pillar. You [also] vowed to Me there a vow. Now rise up [and] go forth from this land and return to the land of your birth [or, *kindred*].’ ”**

**During the flock’s mating season, I lifted up my eyes in a dream and looked, and I saw he-goats leaping over the flock; the he-goats were striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob.’ I replied, ‘I am right here.’ He then said, ‘Lift up your eyes now and look at these male goats which are leaping over the flocks—the goats that are marked with stripes, spots and blotches. Know that I see all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, which is where you anointed a pillar and also where you made a vow to Me. Now you need to rise up and leave this land and return to your birthplace.’ ”**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so he is in a conceiving of the flock and so I lift up my [two] eyes and so I see in a dream and, behold, the he-goats the ones leaping over the flock, [were] striped, spotted, and mottled. And so says unto me an Angel of Elohim, in a dream, ‘Jacob.’ And so I say, “Behold me.’And so He says ‘Lift up now your eyes and see all the male goats—those leaping over the flock—striped, spotted and marked [ones]. For I am seeing all that Laban is doing to you. I [am] ’El of Bethel, where you anointed there a pillar, where you vowed to Me there a vow. Now rise up [and] go forth from the land the this and return unto a land of your birth.’ ”

<sup>180</sup> In the first dream, God would reassure Jacob that He is looking out for him; and in the second dream, God tells Jacob that it is time to move out.

- Targum (Onkelos) And it was at the time when the flocks conceived, I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the flock were chequered, streaked, and speckled. And the angel of the Lord said to me in a dream, Jacob. And I said, Behold, I am. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the flock are chequered, streaked, and speckled: because all that Laban hath done to thee is manifest before Me. I am Eloha [Sam. Vers. "I am the Most Mighty."], who appeared to thee at Bethel, where thou didst anoint the pillar, and where before Me thou didst swear the oath: arise now, go from this land, and return to the land of thy birth.
- Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) And it was at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and, behold, the goats which rose upon the flock were spotted in their feet, or streaked or white in their backs. And the Angel of the Lord said to me, in a dream, Jakob. And I said, Behold me. [JERUSALEM. Jakob answered in the holy tongue, and said, Behold me.] And He said, Lift up now thine eyes and see: all the goats that rise upon the flock are spotted in their feet, or streaked or white in their backs : because all the injury that Laban hath done thee is manifest before me. I am Eloha who did reveal Myself to thee at Beth El where thou didst anoint the pillar, and swear the oath before Me. Arise now, go forth from this land, and return to the land of my birth.
- Revised Douay-Rheims For after that time came of the ewes conceiving, I lifted up my eyes, and saw in my sleep that the males which leaped upon the females were of diverse colors, and spotted, and speckled. And the angel of God said to me in my sleep: Jacob? And I answered: Here I am. And he said: Lift up your eyes, and see that all the males leaping upon the females, are of divers colors, spotted, and speckled. For I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you did anoint the stone, and make a vow to me. Now therefore arise, and go out of this land, and return into your native country.
- Aramaic ESV of Peshitta It happened during mating season that I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which leaped on the flock were streaked, speckled, and grizzled. The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Ya'aqub,' and I said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Now lift up your eyes, and behold, all the male goats which leap on the flock are streaked, speckled, and grizzled, for I have seen all that Laban does to you. I am God of Beit'el, where you anointed a pillar, where you vowed a vow to me. Now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your birth.'"
- Peshitta (Syriac) And it came to pass at the time when the sheep conceive, I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams that leaped upon the sheep were speckled, spotted, and striped. And the angel of God said to me in a dream, Jacob; and I said, Here am I. Then he said, Lift up now your eyes, and see; all the rams that leap upon the sheep are speckled, spotted, and ringstreaked; for I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the God of Beth-el, the place where you anointed a pillar to me, and where you vowed a vow to me; now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your kindred.
- Septuagint (Greek) And it came to pass when the cattle conceived and were with young, that I beheld with mine eyes in sleep, and behold the he-goats and the rams leaping on the sheep and the she-goats, speckled and variegated and spotted with ash-coloured spots. And the angel of God said to me in a dream, Jacob; and I said, What is it? And he said, Look up with your eyes, and behold the he-goats and the rams leaping on the sheep and the she-goats, speckled and variegated and spotted with ash-coloured spots; for I have seen all things that Laban does to you. I am God that appeared to you in the place of God where you anointed a pillar to me, and vowed to me there a vow; now then arise and depart out of this land, depart into the land of your nativity, and I will be with you.

**Significant differences:** The Greek adds some additional words. Both the Greek and one of the targums seem to give more of a description of the male sheep (rams) that are leaping. The Greeks appears to take too much leeway with the Hebrew when Jacob answers the Lord.

As usual, there is additional verbiage in the targums. The Greek adds on some additional text at the end.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English | And at the time when the flock were with young, I saw in a dream that all the he-goats which were joined with the she-goats were banded and marked and coloured. And in my dream the angel of the Lord said to me, Jacob: and I said, Here am I. And he said, See how all the he-goats are banded and marked and coloured: for I have seen what Laban has done to you. I am the God of Beth-el, where you put oil on the pillar and took an oath to me: now then, come out of this land and go back to the country of your birth.   |
| Easy English           | I had a dream. It was at the time when the animals became pregnant. I looked up. I saw that the male animals had different colours on their skin. The angel of God spoke to me in the dream. He said "Jacob." I replied, "Yes." And the angel said, "Look up. See all the male animals have different colours on their skin. I have seen the bad things that Laban has done to you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel. This is where you poured oil on the stone. And this is where you made a promise to me. Now leave this land. Go back to the land where your father lived."   |
| Easy-to-Read Version   | "I had a dream during the time when the animals were mating. I saw that the only male goats that were mating were the ones with stripes and spots. The angel of God spoke to me in that dream. The angel said, 'Jacob!'<br>"I answered, 'Yes!'<br>"The angel said, 'Look, only the striped and spotted goats are mating. I am causing this to happen. I have seen all the wrong things Laban has been doing to you. I am doing this so that you can have all the new baby goats. I am the God who came to you at Bethel, and there you made an altar, poured olive oil on it, and made a promise to me. Now I want you to be ready to go back to the country where you were born.'" |
| Good News Bible (TEV)  | "During the breeding season I had a dream, and I saw that the male goats that were mating were striped, spotted, and speckled. The angel of God spoke to me in the dream and said, 'Jacob!' 'Yes,' I answered. 'Look,' he continued, 'all the male goats that are mating are striped, spotted, and speckled. I am making this happen because I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, where you dedicated a stone as a memorial by pouring olive oil on it and where you made a vow to me. Now get ready and go back to the land where you were born.'"  |
| <i>The Message</i>     | "Once, while the flocks were mating, I had a dream and saw the billy goats, all of them streaked, speckled, and mottled, mounting their mates. In the dream an angel of God called out to me, 'Jacob!'<br>"I said, 'Yes?'<br>"He said, 'Watch closely. Notice that all the goats in the flock that are mating are streaked, speckled, and mottled. I know what Laban's been doing to you. I'm the God of Bethel where you consecrated a pillar and made a vow to me. Now be on your way, get out of this place, go home to your birthplace.'"   |
| Names of God Bible     | "During the mating season I had a dream: I looked up and saw that the male goats which were mating were striped, speckled, or spotted. In the dream the Messenger of <i>Elohim</i> called to me, 'Jacob!' And I answered, 'Yes, here I am.' He said, 'Look  |

up and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, or spotted, because I have seen everything that Laban is doing to you. I am the El who appeared to you at Bethel, where you poured olive oil on a stone marker for a holy purpose and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land, and go back to the land of your relatives.”

NIRV

“Once during the mating season I had a dream. In my dream I looked and saw male goats mating with the flock. The goats had stripes, speckles or spots. The angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ I answered, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Look around you. See the male goats mating with the flock. All of them have stripes, speckles or spots. That’s because I have seen everything that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel. That is where you poured olive oil on a sacred stone. There you made a promise to me. Now leave this land. Go back to your own land.’ ”

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Contemporary English V.

Once, when the flocks were mating, I dreamed that all the rams were either spotted or speckled. Then God's angel called me by name. I answered, and he said, "Notice that all the rams are either spotted or speckled. I know everything Laban is doing to you, and I am the God you worshiped at Bethel, when you poured olive oil on a rock and made a promise to me. Leave here right away and return to the land where you were born."

The Living Bible

“And at the mating season, I had a dream, and saw that the he-goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and mottled. Then, in my dream, the Angel of God called to me and told me that I should mate the white female goats with streaked, speckled, and mottled male goats. ‘For I have seen all that Laban has done to you,’ the Angel said. ‘I am the God you met at Bethel,’ he continued, ‘the place where you anointed the pillar and made a vow to serve me. Now leave this country and return to the land of your birth.’ ”

New Berkeley Version

“In a dream the Angel of the LORD said to me: Jacob! and I said, ‘Here am I.’ He said: Look and observes how all the he-goats that leap upon the flock are striped, speckled and mottled; for I have seen everything Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a memorial pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now, get ready, move out of this country and go back to your native land.”

New Century Version

“I had a dream during the season when the flocks were mating. I saw that the only male goats who were mating were streaked, speckled, or spotted. The angel of God spoke to me in that dream and said, ‘Jacob!’ I answered, ‘Yes!’ The angel said, ‘Look! Only the streaked, speckled, or spotted male goats are mating. I have seen all the wrong things Laban has been doing to you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, where you poured olive oil on the stone you set up on end and where you made a promise to me. Now I want you to leave here and go back to the land where you were born.’ ”

New Life Version

I had a dream at the time the flocks were mating. I looked up and saw that the male goats which were mating with the female goats had black marks and spots. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Look and see how all the male goats that are mating with the others have black marks and spots. For I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you set up a stone in honor to Me, and where you made a promise to Me. Now get up, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’ ”

New Living Translation

“One time during the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the females were streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’ And I replied, ‘Yes, here I am.’

“The angel said, ‘Look up, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females of your flock. For I have seen how Laban

has treated you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.”

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | <p>'Why, while the cattle were pregnant with their young, while I was sleeping, {Look!} I saw billy goats and rams jumping on the nanny goats and sheep that were all speckled, striped, and spotted with ash-colored spots. Then a messenger from God called me in the dream, saying, <i>Jacob!</i> And I said, <i>What is it?</i> And he said, <i>Look up and see the billy goats and rams jumping on the nanny goats and sheep... they are all speckled, striped, and spotted with ash-colored spots. Now, I've seen all things that Laban did to you; for I'm the God who appeared to you at Bethel where you poured oil on a pillar to Me and [where you] swore an oath to Me. So now, get up and leave this land. Return to the land of your birth, and I will be with you!</i>'</p>  |
| Beck's American Translation | <p>"Once, when the flocks were mating, I had a dream: I looked up and saw that the he-goats mating with the flock were striped, speckled, and spotted. "In the dream God's angel called to me, 'Jacob.'"<br/>         "'Yes,' I answered.<br/>         "'Look,' he said, 'and see how all the he-goats mating with the flock are striped, speckled, and spotted, because I have seen everything Laban is doing to you. I am the God you saw at Bethel, where you poured oil on a stone and made a vow to me. Come, then, leave this country, and go back to your homeland.' "</p>   |
| International Standard V    | <p>As it was, when it was time for the livestock to breed, I once looked up in a dream, and the male goats that were mating [Lit. <i>climbing up</i>] with the flock were producing streaked, speckled, and spotted offspring.<br/>         "Later, the angel of God spoke to me in a dream, 'Jacob.'<br/>         "'Here I am,' I replied<br/>         "'Look around!' he said. 'Go ahead, look! All the male goats have been mating with the flock, producing offspring that are streaked, speckled, and spotted, because I've been watching everything that Laban has done to you. I am the God of Bethel, the place where you consecrated that stone and made a vow to me. Now get up, leave this territory, and return to your native land [Lit. <i>to the land of your birth</i>].'"</p>  |
| Revised Knox Bible          | <p>I had a dream at the time when to my ewes were mating; as I looked round, I could see none but speckled and spotted and blotched rams coupling with the ewes. And in my dream, an angel of God called me by name, and when I answered, I am here, at your command, he said, Look about you, and mark well that all the sires coupling with the dams are speckled, spotted, or blotched; that is because I have taken good note of all Laban's dealings with you. I am the God who dwells at Bethel, where you did anoint the stone, and did take a vow to me. It is time for you, now, to bestir yourself, to leave this country, and go back to the country of your birth.</p>  |
| Translation for Translators | <p>One time, when the animals were mating, I had a dream. In my dream I looked up and was surprised to see that some of the male goats that were mating with the female goats had black and white stripes on them, some were speckled, and some were spotted. An angel who was sent by God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob!' I replied, 'I am here!' He said to me, 'Look up and you will see that all the male goats that are mating have black and white stripes on them, or are speckled or spotted. This is happening because I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am God who appeared to you at Bethel, where you set up a stone to show that the place was holy, and you poured olive oil on the stone and made a solemn promise to me. So now leave this land immediately, and return to the land where you were born.' "</p> |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible    | At the time that the small cattle are to conceive, I was to lift up my eyes, and was to perceive in a dream: The bucks are coming up of the small cattle, striped, speckled, and spotted. An angelic messenger of he of mighty ones, was to say in the dream: Jacob! -- even was he to direct me, and was to say: Be lifting up your eyes and be perceiving, the bucks are coming up of the small cattle, striped, speckled and spotted; for I have seen that Laban is doing. I am he of mighty ones at Beth-el, where you is to have anointed the pillar, even is to have vowed a vow to me. Be rising up, and be leading out of these solid grounds, and be turning back to the solid grounds of your kindred.                              |
| Conservapedia         | So it happened during the mating season of the cattle, I lifted up my eyes, and had a dream, and in it the billy-goats that were the most vigorous at mating were striped, specked and dappled. The messenger of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Behold me.' He said, 'Lift up your eyes, and see: all the billy goats that are vigorously mating are striped, speckled, and dappled, because I have seen everything that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the monument, and where you vowed a vow to me: now rise, and get out of this country, and go back to the land of your kin." A calculated speech for ensuring their loyalty. In a word, propaganda. <sup>181</sup> |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible    | " It also happened in the season of the heat of the sheep, that I raised my eyes in a dream and saw the rams leaping on the streaked, speckled and spotted sheep, and the Messenger of God said to me in the* dream, 'Jacob;' and I replied "I am here.' Then he said, ' Lift up your eyes and see all the rams leaping on the streaked, speckled and spotted sheep, for I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the God of the House of God [ <i>Beth-el</i> in Hebrew means " House of God."— F. F.] which you consecrated there in the pillar which you dedicated to me, — where you vowed a Gift. Go from this country, and return to the country of your birth. ' "   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale) | For in bucking time, I lifted up mine eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams that bucked the sheep were streaked, spotted and party. And the angel of God spoke unto me in a dream saying: Jacob? And I answered: here am I. And he said: lift up your eyes and see, how all the rams that leap upon the sheep are streaked, spotted and party: for I have seen all that Laban does unto you. I am the God of Bethel where you anointed the stone, and where you vowed a vow unto me. Now arise and get you out of this country, and return unto the land where you was born.  |
| HCSB                  | "When the flocks were breeding, I saw in a dream that the streaked, spotted, and speckled males were mating with the females. In that dream the Angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' and I said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Look up and see: all the males that are mating with the flocks are streaked, spotted, and speckled, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you poured oil on the stone marker and made a solemn vow to Me. Get up, leave this land, and return to your native land.'"   |
| Jubilee Bible 2000    | And it came to pass at the time that the sheep conceived, that I lifted up my eyes and saw in dreams, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the females were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled. And the angel of God spoke unto me in dreams, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes and see, all the rams which leap upon the sheep are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled; for I have seen all that Laban has done unto thee. I am the God of Bethel, where thou didst anoint the pillar and where thou didst vow a vow unto me. Now arise, go out from this land and return unto the land of thy nature.   |
| Lexham English Bible  | Now it happened [that] at the time of the mating of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams mounting the flock [were] streaked, speckled, and dappled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I [am].' And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see--all the rams mounting the flock [are] streaked, speckled, and dappled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing  |

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<sup>181</sup> This is from Conservapedia; and I think they have got it wrong here.

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|-------------------------|---|
| H. C. Leupold           | to you. I [am] the God of Bethel where you anointed a stone pillar, where you made a vow to me. Now get up, go out from this land and return to the land of your birth." And it happened at the time when the flock was hot in breeding that I lifted up my eyes and saw things in a dream, and, lo, rams that were leaping upon the goats were striped and speckled and spotted. And the angel of God said unto me in a dream, Jacob; and I said: Here I am. And he said unto me. Lift up now thine eyes and see: all the rams that are leaping upon the goats are striped, speckled and spotted, for I have taken note of all that Laban hath done to thee. I am the God of Bethel where thou didst anoint a pillar and didst vow a vow unto me. Up now, go forth from this land and return to the land of thy birth. |
| Tree of Life Version    | Now it happened when the flocks were in heat that I lifted up my eyes and saw, in a dream, behold, the males going up to the flocks were striped, spotted and speckled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Hineni.' He said, 'Lift up your eyes and see that all the males going up to the flocks are striped, spotted and speckled. For I have seen everything Laban has done to you. I am the God of Beth-El where you anointed a memorial stone, where you made a vow to Me. Get up now and leave this land, and return to the land of your relatives.'"   |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Once at the time of breeding season, I saw in a dream the male goats that were mating with the flock. The male goats were striped, speckled, and spotted. The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I said, 'Here I am.' He said, 'Lift up your eyes and see all the male goats that are breeding with the flock. They are striped, speckled, and spotted, for I have seen everything that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to me. Now rise up and leave this land and return to the land of your birth.'"   |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then the flocks again conceived and I raised my eyes, and saw in a dream that the male-goats that leaped on the goats were streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then the Angel of Elohim spoke to me in a dream saying, Jacob, and I replied, here I am. And he said, Lift up now your eyes, and look at all the male- goats that leap upon the goats that are streaked, speckled, and spotted, because I have seen all that Laban does to you. I am the Elohim of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you pledged the votive offering to me, now get up and leave this land, and return to the land of your relatives.   |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And it was before the sheep conceived, and my eyes lifted and I saw in a dream, that the male goats tugging the ewes, striped, dotted, and spotted. And an angel of the God said to me in a dream "Jacob"; and I said "Here I am". And he said, lift up your eyes, and see all the male goats tugging the ewes, striped, dotted, and spotted. Because I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the god of Bethel, where you anointed a monument, where you vowed a vow to me; now rise up, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.   |

**Catholic Bibles:**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Christian Community (1988) | For, in the breeding season, when I was looking up, I saw in a dream that the rams mating with the ewes were streaked, spotted or speckled. And the angel in the dream said to me: 'Jacob.' 'Here I am,' I replied. He then said: 'Look up and see that all the rams mating with the ewes are streaked, spotted or speckled. I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel where you anointed a pillar and vowed to me by oath. Now get ready, leave this country and return to the land of your birth.' |
| The Heritage Bible         | And it was at the time that the flock animals conceived, that I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and lo, the rams which ascended upon the flock animals were striped, spotted, and speckled. And the Messenger of God spoke to me in a dream, Jacob, and I said, Lo. And he said, Lift up now your eyes, and see; all the rams  |

which ascend upon the flock animals are striped, spotted, and speckled, because I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed there the memorial column, there where you vowed a vow to me; now rise up, go out from this land, and return to the land of your kindred.

**31:10** The dream God gave Jacob shows clearly that the multiplying of Jacob's cattle was an act of God, and that in every way he acted in total honesty and integrity with Laban, in spite of the fact that Laban never dealt honestly with him. And Jacob's prosperity is in direct response to his vow in Gen 28 that (1) Jehovah God would be his God, (2) that he would maintain the house of God, and (3) he would tithe a tenth of all to God, Gen 31:13.

New American Bible (2002) Once, in the breeding season, I had a dream in which I saw mating he-goats that were streaked, speckled and mottled. In the dream God's messenger called to me, 'Jacob!' 'Here!' I replied. Then he said: 'Note well. All the he-goats in the flock, as they mate, are streaked, speckled and mottled, for I have seen all the things that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God who appeared to you in Bethel, where you anointed a memorial stone and made a vow to me. Up, then! Leave this land and return to the land of your birth.'"

New Jerusalem Bible Once, when the animals were on heat, I suddenly saw in a dream that the he-goats covering the females were striped or spotted or piebald. In the dream the angel of God called to me, "Jacob!" I said, "Here I am." He said, "Now take note: all the he-goats covering the females are striped or spotted or piebald -- for I too have noted all the things that Laban has been doing to you, I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, where you poured oil on a pillar and made a vow to me. On your feet, then, leave this country and return to the land of your birth." '

New English Bible In the season when the flocks were on heat, I had a dream: I looked up and saw that the he-goats mounting the flock were striped and spotted and dappled. The angel of God said to me in my dream, "Jacob", and I replied, "Here I am", and he said, "Look up and see: all the he-goats mounting the flock are striped and spotted and dappled. I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel where you anointed a sacred pillar and where you made your vow. Now leave this country at once and return to the land of your birth." '

Revised English Bible In the season when the flocks were in heat, I had a dream in which I saw that the he-goats which were mating were striped and spotted and dappled. The angel of God called to me in the dream, 'Jacob!' and I replied, 'Here I am!' He said, 'See what is happening: all the he-goats mating are striped and spotted and dappled, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel where you anointed a sacred pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this country at once and return to your native land.'"

### **Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible Once, when the animals were mating, I had a dream: I looked up and there in front of me the male goats which mated with the females were streaked, speckled and mottled. Then, in the dream, the angel of God said to me, 'Ya'akov!' and I replied, 'Here I am.' He continued, 'Raise your eyes now, and look: all the male goats mating with the females are streaked, speckled and mottled; for I have seen everything Lavan has been doing to you. I am the God of Beit-El [See Genesis 28:19.], where you anointed a standing-stone with oil, where you vowed your vow to me. Now get up, get out of this land, and return to the land where you were born.'"

The Complete Tanach And it came to pass at the time the animals came into heat, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the he goats that mounted the animals were ringed, speckled, and striped.

**and behold, the he-goats:** Although Laban had separated them all, so that the animals would not conceive their likeness, the angels were bringing them from the flock that had been given over into the hands of Laban's sons to the flock that was in Jacob's hands. — [from Gen. Rabbah 73:10]

**and striped:** Heb. מִיְדָרְבוּ [To be explained] as the Targum renders: וְיַחֲזִיפוּ and open, faissie in Old French, striped. A white thread encircles his body all around, and its stripes are open and penetrating from one to the other, but I have no evidence from Scripture.

And an angel of God said to me in a dream, 'Jacob!' And I said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Now lift your eyes and see [that] all the he goats mounting the animals are ringed, speckled, and striped, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Beth el, where you anointed a monument, where you pronounced to Me a vow. Now, arise, go forth from this land and return to the land of your birth.'"

**I am the God of Beth-el:** Heb. לֹא-תִיב לָא, like לֹא-תִיב לָא. The "hey" is superfluous, and it is the way of the Scriptures to speak this way, like "For you are coming to the land of (הָאָרֶץ) Canaan" (Num. 34:2).

**where you anointed:** This is an expression of grandeur and greatness, just as one is anointed king. So [is the meaning of] "and he poured oil on top of it" (above, 28:18), to be anointed as an altar. — [following Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel]

**where you pronounced to Me a vow:** And you must pay it up, for you said, "it shall be the house of God" (Gen. 28:22), that you would offer up sacrifices there. — [from Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 35]

exeGeses companion Bible

And so be it, at the time the flocks conceive,  
I lift my eyes and see in a dream, and behold,  
the he goats ascending on the flocks  
are ringstraked, branded and grisled.  
And the angel of Elohim says to me in a dream,  
Yaaqov!  
And I say, Here - !  
And he says, Lift up, I beseech, your eyes and see,  
all the he goats ascending on the flocks  
are ringstraked, branded and grisled:  
for I see all Laban works to you.  
I - El of Beth El  
- where you anointed the monolith  
and where you vowed a vow to me:  
now rise, get from this land  
and return to the land of your kindred.

Israeli Authorized Version

And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled. And the angel of Elohim spake unto me in a dream, saying, Yaakov: And I said, Here am I. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. I am the Elohim of Beit-El, 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.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

"Once, at the mating time of the flocks, I had a dream in which I saw that the he-goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and mottled. 11And in the dream an angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' 'Here,' I answered. 12And he said, 'Note well that all the he-goats which are mating with the flock are streaked, speckled, and mottled; for I have noted all that Laban has been doing to you. 13I

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Kaplan Translation    | <p>am the God of Beth-el, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now, arise and leave this land and return to your native land.' ”</p> <p>'During the breeding season, I suddenly had a vision [Literally a dream.]. I saw that the bucks mounting the sheep were ringed, spotted and flecked.</p> <p>'An angel called to me in God's name, 'Jacob!' - and I replied 'Yes.' He said, 'Raise your eyes, and you will see that the bucks mounting the sheep are ringed, spotted and flecked. Let this be a sign that I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Beth El, where you anointed a pillar and made an oath to Me. Now set out and leave this land. Return to the land where you were born.' ”</p> |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible | <p>And it came to pass at the time that the tzon breed, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a chalom, and, hinei, the male goats mounting the tzon were streaked, speckled, and spotted.</p> <p>And the Malach HaElohim spoke unto me in a chalom saying, Ya'akov: And I said, Hineni.</p> <p>And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the male goats leaping upon the tzon are streaked, speckled, and spotted; for I have seen all that Lavan doeth unto thee.</p> <p>I am HaEl Beit-El, where thou anointedst a matzevah (pillar), and where thou vowedst a neder (vow) unto Me: now arise, get thee out from HaAretz Hazot, and return unto thy eretz moledet.</p>   |
| The Scriptures 1998   | <p>“And it came to be, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and looked in a dream and saw the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and mottled.</p> <p>“And the Messenger of Elohim spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Ya’aqob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’</p> <p>“And He said, ‘Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.</p> <p>‘I am the Ęl of Běyth Ęl, where you anointed the standing column and where you made a vow to Me. Now rise up, get out of this land, and return to the land of your relatives.’ ”</p>   |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| The Amplified Bible    | <p>And it happened at the time when the flock conceived that I looked up and saw in a dream that the rams which mated [with the female goats] were streaked, speckled, and spotted. And the Angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Look up and see, all the rams which are mating [with the flock] are streaked, speckled, and spotted; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, and where you made a vow to Me; now stand up, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’”</p>  |
| The Expanded Bible     | <p>“I had a dream during the season when the flocks were ·mating [<sup>l</sup>in heat]. I saw that the only male goats who were ·mating [mounting; <sup>l</sup>going up] were streaked, speckled, or spotted. The ·angel [messenger] of God [16:7] spoke to me in that dream and said, ‘Jacob!’ I answered, ‘Yes!’ The ·angel [messenger] said, ‘Look [<sup>l</sup>Raise up your eyes and see]! Only the streaked, speckled, or spotted male goats are ·mating [mounting; <sup>l</sup>going up]. I have seen all ·the wrong things [<sup>l</sup>that which] Laban has been doing to you. I am the God ·who appeared to you at [<sup>l</sup>of] Bethel, where you ·poured olive oil on [anointed] the ·stone you set up on end [pillar; 28:18–19] and where you made a ·promise [vow] to me. Now I want you to leave ·here [<sup>l</sup>this land] and go back to the land where you were born.’ ”</p> |
| Kretzmann’s Commentary | <p>And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ring-straked, speckled, and grisled (dappled). It was, accordingly, the dispensation</p>   |

of God which had governed the increase of Jacob's flocks, without which even the keenest business sagacity would have availed him nothing. **And the Angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob; and I said, Here am I.** This is again the Angel of the Lord in a special sense, Jehovah, the Son of God, as He often revealed Himself to His children in the Old Testament. **And he said, Lift up now thine eyes and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ring-straked, speckled, and grisled; for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.** Apparently Jacob had had a number of visions in the course of the six years, the Lord indicating to him that He was looking out for his interests, but the climax had come in the recent dream. **I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me.** The Angel of the Lord was identical with the God of Bethel, with the God who revealed Himself at Bethel as exalted above the angels. Jacob had confessed his faith in the true God both by consecrating the place at Bethel and by making his earnest vow. **Now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.** Jacob thus urged not only the envy and injustice of Laban, but the direct command of God as well, for their immediate flight.

NET Bible®

“Once [The sentence begins with the temporal indicator, “and it happened at the time of.”] **during breeding season I saw** [*Heb* “in the time of the breeding of the flock I lifted up my eyes and I saw.”] **in a dream that the male goats mating with** [*Heb* “going up on,” that is, mounting for intercourse.] **the flock were streaked, speckled, and spotted. In the dream the angel of God said to me, ‘Jacob!’ ‘Here I am!’ I replied. Then he said, ‘Observe** [*Heb* “lift up (now) your eyes and see.”] **that all the male goats mating with** [*Heb* “going up on,” that is, mounting for intercourse.] **the flock are streaked, speckled, or spotted, for I have observed all that Laban has done to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the sacred stone and made a vow to me. Now leave this land immediately** [*Heb* “arise, leave!”] **and return to your native land.”**

The Pulpit Commentary

**And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived** (this obviously goes back to the commencement of the six years' service), **that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams**—עִזִּים, he-goats, from an unused root, to be ready, perhaps because ready and prompt for fighting (Gesenius, sub voce)—**which leaped** (literally, going up) **upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled. The grisled** (beruddim, from barad, to scatter hail) **were spotted animals**, as if they had been sprinkled with hail, not a fifth sort in addition to the four already mentioned (Rosenmüller), but the same as the teluim of Genesis 30:35 (Kalisch). Wordsworth observes that the English term grisled, from the French word grele, hail, is a literal translation of the Hebrew. Gesenius connects with the Hebrew root the words πάρδος, pardus, leopard (so called from its spots), and the French broder, to embroider. The LXX. understand the עִזִּים to include both sheep and goats, and translate οἱ τράγοι καὶ οἱ κριοὶ ἀναβαίνοντες ἐπὶ τὰ πρόβατα καὶ τὰς αἴγας.

**And the angel of God**—literally, the angel (or Maleach) of Elohim, i.e. of the God who was with me and protecting me, though himself continuing unseen—**spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I** (vide Genesis 20:1, Genesis 20:11).

**And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.** Since all the parti-colored animals had already been removed (Genesis 30:35), this vision must have been intended to assure him that the flocks would produce speckled and spotted progeny all the same as if the ringstraked and grisled rams and he-goats had not been removed from their midst (cf. Kurtz, § 78). To insist upon a contradiction between this account of the increase of Jacob's flocks and that mentioned in Genesis 30:37 is to forget that both may be true. Equally arbitrary does it seem to be to accuse Jacob of fraud in adopting the artifice of the pilled rods (Kalisch). Without resorting

to the supposition that he acted under God's guidance (Wordsworth), we may believe that the dream suggested the expedient referred to, in which some see Jacob's unbelief and impatience (Kurtz, Gosman in Lange), and others a praiseworthy instance of self-help (Keil). For I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. If the preceding clause appears to imply that the vision was sent to Jacob at the beginning of the six years' service, the present clause scents to point to the end of that period as the date of its occurrence; in which case it would require to be understood as a Divine intimation to Jacob that his immense wealth was not to be ascribed to the success of his own stratagem, but to the blessing of God (Delitzsch). The difficulty of harmonizing the two views has led to the suggestion that Jacob here mixes the accounts of two different visions accorded to him, at the commencement and at the close of the period of servitude (Nachmanides, Rosenmóller, Kurtz, ('Speaker's Commentary,' Murphy, Candlish).

**I am the God of Bethel**,—the angel here identifies himself with Jehovah (vide Genesis 28:13). Contrary to usual custom, הָאֵל, though in the construct, state, has the art.—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 —i.e. to the land of Canaan, which was Jacob's true inheritance.

#### The Voice

**[Jacob:]** During the mating season of the flock, I once paid attention to a dream, and in the dream, I saw the male goats that mated with the flock were striped, speckled, and mottled. Then God's messenger said to me in the dream, "Jacob!" and I answered, "I'm here." And the messenger said, "Look up right now, and see all of the goats that are mating with the flock are striped, speckled, and mottled because I have noticed everything Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, the place where you poured oil on a pillar and made a vow to Me. Now get up, leave this land, and return to the land where you were born."

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and it came to pass in the appointed time of the heat of the flocks and I lifted up my eyes and I saw in the dream and look, the male goats going up upon the flocks were striped ones, speckled ones and spotted ones, and the messenger of the Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> said to me in the dream, Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup>, and I said, here am I, and he said, please lift up your eyes and see all the male goats going up upon the flocks were striped ones, speckled ones and spotted ones given that I saw all which Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> is doing to you, I am the mighty one of Beyt-El <sup>[House of El]</sup> where you smeared there a monument where you made a vow to me there a vow, now rise, go out from this land and turn back to the land of your kindred,...

#### Context Group Version

At the time that the flock conceived, I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and, look, the he-goats which leaped on the flock were ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled. And the messenger of God said to me in the dream, Jacob: and I said, Here I am. And he said, Lift up now your eyes, and see, all the he-goats which leap on the flock are ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban does to you. I am the God of Beth-el, where you anointed a pillar, where you vowed a vow to me: now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your birth.

#### Emphasized Bible

And it came to pass in the season when the flock were in heat, then lifted I mine eyes and beheld in a dream,—and lo! the he-goats that were leaping upon the flock, were ring-straked speckled and dappled. And the messenger of God said unto me in a dream, Jacob! and I said, Behold me! Then he said Lift, I pray thee, thine eyes and behold All, the he-goats that are leaping upon the flock are ring-straked, speckled, and dappled,—for I have seen all that Laban, has been doing to thee. I, am the GOD of Beth-el, where thou didst anoint a pillar, where thou didst vow to me a vow,—Now, rise, go forth out of this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Modern English Version     | “When the livestock conceived, I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the male goats mating with the flock were striped, speckled, and spotted. The angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Now lift up your eyes and see all the male goats which mate with the flock are striped, speckled, and spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has done to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, where you vowed a vow to Me. Now arise, and get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.’ ”   |
| NASB                       | And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating were striped, speckled, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’”  |
| New King James Version     | “And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, ‘Jacob.’ And I said, ‘Here I am.’ And He said, ‘Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.’”   |
| Updated Bible Version 2.11 | And it came to pass at the time that the flock conceived, that I lifted up my eyes, and saw in a dream, and, look, the he-goats which leaped on the flock were ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled. And the angel of God said to me in the dream, Jacob: and I said, Here I am. And he said, Lift up now your eyes, and see, all the he-goats which leap on the flock are ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban does to you. I am the God of Beth-el, where you anointed a pillar, where you vowed a vow to me: now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your nativity.   |
| Young’s Updated LT         | “And it comes to pass at the time of the flock conceiving, that I lift up mine eyes and see in a dream, and lo, the he-goats, which are going up on the flock, are ring-streaked, speckled, and grisled; and the messenger of God says unto me in the dream, Jacob, and I say, Here am I. “And He says, Lift up, I pray you, your eyes, and see—all the he-goats which are going up on the flock are ring-streaked, speckled, and grisled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you; I am the God of Bethel where you have anointed a standing pillar, where you have vowed a vow to me; now, arise, go out from this land, and turn back unto the land of your birth.” |

**The gist of this passage:** Jacob tells his wives about a previous dream in which God spoke to him and has told him to return to the Land of Promise.

10-13

It is not clear how many dreams Jacob had or when he had it (or, them). I believe that there was but one dream. There is at least one commentator who suggests that Jacob slanted the dream in order to get his wives to go along with him (which position I strongly disagree with). All of this will be open for discussion.

## Genesis 31:10a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]  | <i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| Without a specific subject and object, the verb hâyâh often means <i>and it will come to be, and it will come to pass, then it came to pass</i> (with the wâw consecutive). It may be more idiomatically rendered <i>subsequently, afterwards, later on, in the course of time, after which</i> . Generally, the verb does not match the gender whatever nearby noun could be the subject (and, as often, there is no noun nearby which would fulfill the conditions of being a subject). |  |   |                            |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>                                  | a preposition of proximity                                  | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| 'êth (תָּעַת) [pronounced gayth]  | <i>time, the right time, the proper time; opportunity</i>  | feminine singular construct                                 | Strong's #6256<br>BDB #773 |
| With the bêyth preposition, this means <i>at the right time, at the proper time</i> .   |  |   |                            |
| yâcham (יָחַם) [pronounced yaw-KHAHM]   | <i>to conceive (sexual); to be warm with sexual desire; to have sexual intercourse; to conceive; to be in heat (used of animals)</i> | Piel infinitive construct                                   | Strong's #3179<br>BDB #404 |
| Owens translates this <i>mating season</i> as a Piel infinitive construct.  |  |   |                            |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced tzohn]   | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>  | feminine singular collective noun with the definite article | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |

**Translation:** *And it was during the mating season of the flock...* Jacob is going to describe to his wives what he saw in a dream. Now, either this dream took place during the mating season of the flock; or that was the time frame of the dream. I would think that both are true (the actual time of the dream was the mating season; and Jacob was observing the mating season in his dream). I do not see any indication that there are two dreams being portrayed here. By identifying *when* this dream took place, Jacob seems to be placing this dream a ways back in the past. I would guess, he had this dream during the most recent mating season (I believe the flocks mate in the spring and fall?).

One of the things which confused me about this vision/dream is, it does not appear to be something which Jacob had last night (although, even that is unclear), as he speaks of it occurring during the mating season of the flock. In any case, Jacob just told his wives that it is God Who is prospering him; and now he presents proof of that assertion.

What appears to be the case is, this is a dream which Jacob already had some time ago, back during the mating season. He does not say, "Last night" or "Two days ago"; he instead references the mating season, which suggests that he has this dream this year, but in a previous season (today, we may refer back to Spring or Summer; or refer back to a specific month).

God is going to give Jacob marching orders in this dream; and Jacob finally decides to do what God has told him to do a season ago. It appears that God uses circumstances and the thoughts and actions of other people to prod Jacob in the direction of Canaan.

This is an important fact, as Jacob has matured someone spiritually, but he was not matured to the point to move when God said, "Move out." God gives this order to Jacob in v. 13, but it appears that time has passed between the giving of the order and Jacob speaking to his wives. Also, there are several verses in the early part of this chapter which give Jacob ample reason to move out of Paddan-aram. Let me suggest that those additional reasons were more important to Jacob regarding this impending move.

| Genesis 31:10b   |   |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                  |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                               | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| nâsâ' (נָסָא) [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i> ]             | <i>to lift up, to bear, to carry</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect                     | Strong's #5375<br>BDB #669          |
| 'êynayim (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced <i>gay-nah-YIM</i> ]   | <i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>                            | feminine dual noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                               | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]             | <i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect                     | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906          |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ] | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>               | a preposition of proximity   | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88           |
| châlôwm (חֹלֶם) [pronounced <i>khuh-LOHM</i> ]         | <i>dream</i>  | masculine singular noun  | Strong's #2472<br>BDB #321          |

**Translation:** ...when I lifted up my eyes and I could see, in a dream,... Jacob looks up and he sees in a dream or some kind of a vision. We do not know if Jacob has shared his dream of the angels with his wives; but he is treating this dream as clearly important and related to what he has been talking about.

*Kaplan: Literally, 'I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream.' The phrase, 'lifting eyes,' in general, is usually translated as raising eyes or looking up. This is very difficult here, since why would one look up to see a dream? Therefore, it seems to be an idiom denoting seeing with new concentration or in a new light (see Genesis 13:10, 18:2, 24,63, 22:4,13, 33:1, 43:29, etc.). If taken literally, the verse here would be interpreted, 'I lifted my eyes and saw a vision [in the sky].' The expression of 'lifting eyes' can also denote concentration, contemplation and meditation: 'I contemplated the scene and had a vision.' It is surprising that none of the commentaries discuss this. See Genesis 31:12.<sup>182</sup>*

<sup>182</sup> From [Bible.ort.org](http://Bible.ort.org); footnote; accessed November 14, 2016.

## Genesis 31:10c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                          |
|---|---|---|---|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction                                      | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                   |
| hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i> ]  | <i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note; pay attention, get this, check this out</i> | interjection,<br>demonstrative particle                     | Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006)<br>BDB #243 |
| This seems to attempt to take others and put them in the place of the person saying this (so that they see the same thing); or to grab the attention of the reader. From the many times I have seen this word used in a narrative, I believe that we may update the translation to, <i>he observed [that]</i> . This goes along with the idea that this word is to cause us to see things from the viewpoint of someone in the narrative. |   |   |   |
| ʿattûd (עֲטֹד) [pronounced <i>ghat-TOOD</i> ]   | <i>ram; male goat; chief one</i>  | masculine plural noun                                       | Strong's #6260<br>BDB #800                  |
| ʿâlâh (עֲלֵה) [pronounced <i>ghaw-LAWH</i> ]  | <i>those going up, ascending ones, those coming up, ones climbing up; those leaping</i>                                       | masculine plural, Qal active participle                     | Strong's #5927<br>BDB #748                  |
| ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>ghah</i> ]   | <i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>   | preposition of relative proximity                           | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752                  |
| tsôʿn (צֹאן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i> ]   | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>   | feminine singular collective noun with the definite article | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838                  |
| ʿâqôd (עֲקֹד) [pronounced <i>ghaw-CODE</i> ]  | <i>striped, banded; streaked</i>  | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #6124<br>BDB #785                  |
| nâqôd (נֶאֱקֹד) [pronounced <i>naw-KODE</i> ]   | <i>spotted, speckled; marked with a brand</i>   | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #5348<br>BDB #666                  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction                                      | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                   |
| bârôd (בָּרוֹד) [pronounced <i>baw-RODE</i> ]   | <i>spotted, marked</i>  | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #1261<br>BDB #136                  |

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *The original word, beroodim, from barad, "hail" means marked with white spots like hail; to which our word grisled, from the old French gresle, now grêle, hail, perfectly agrees; hence greslé, spotted with white on a dark ground.*<sup>183</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:10.

**God Rescues the Speckled Lambs** (Bible Journaling); from [Pinterest](#); accessed October 21, 2017. I don't know that this is a great example of Bible journaling (God is *not* rescuing lambs, but giving them to Jacob). But I love this kind of artsy stuff in a Bible.

GENESIS 31:7

**GOD**  
rescues  
the  
**SPECKLED**  
**LAMBS.**




with all my strength, <sup>7</sup>yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me. <sup>8</sup>If he said, 'The spotted shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. <sup>9</sup>Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and all the flock bore striped. <sup>10</sup>In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled. <sup>11</sup>Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!' <sup>12</sup>And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. <sup>13</sup>I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'" <sup>14</sup>Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father's house? <sup>15</sup>Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has indeed devoured our money. <sup>16</sup>All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do."  
<sup>17</sup>So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. <sup>18</sup>He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. <sup>19</sup>Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household gods. <sup>20</sup>And Jacob tricked <sup>1</sup>Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he intended to flee. <sup>21</sup>He fled with all that he had and arose and crossed the Euphrates, <sup>2</sup>and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.  
<sup>22</sup>When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, <sup>23</sup>he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead. <sup>24</sup>But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."  
<sup>25</sup>And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. <sup>26</sup>And Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword? <sup>27</sup>Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre? <sup>28</sup>And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. <sup>29</sup>It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' <sup>30</sup>And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?" <sup>31</sup>Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. <sup>32</sup>Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen point out what I have that is yours, and take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.  
<sup>33</sup>So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the female servants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's. <sup>34</sup>Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel saddle and sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent, but did not find them. <sup>35</sup>And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the women are upon me." So he searched but did not find the household gods.  
<sup>36</sup>Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? <sup>37</sup>For you have felt through all my goods; what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before your kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two. <sup>38</sup>These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. <sup>39</sup>What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen or not."  
<sup>1</sup>Hebrew stole the heart of; also verses 26, 27 <sup>2</sup>Hebrew the River <sup>3</sup>The Hebrew for your is plural here

Advent  
7 30 12.3.16

**Translation:**...[that] he-goats were leaping over the flock—[they were] striped, spotted and mottled. What he sees is the he-goats which are striped, spotted and mottled. They are leaping over the rest of the flock. This means that these variously colored cattle are overrunning Laban's flock; they have taken over Laban's flock.

Dr. Bob Utley: *This describes a subsequent vision that Jacob had concerning the animals which would belong to him. It was not Jacob's manipulation of certain techniques (i.e., Genesis 30:37–43), but God's grace, that caused Jacob's portion of the flock to prosper (cf. Genesis 31:9, and esp. Genesis 31:12).*<sup>184</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *God had shown it to Jacob in a dream...The actual animals that mated, however, were not ring-streaked, speckled, and spotted at all, but were animals in the solid-color flock belonging to Laban. The meaning of the dream, quite plainly, is that these animals were heterozygous, rather than homozygous, carrying the particular genes for streaks, spots, and speckles, even though their own coats were all solid color. God could see into the gene structure, though Jacob could not, and he knew the true nature of the animals. Jacob had learned from experience that a certain small proportion of the descendants of even pure-colored animals would be off-colored; but he had no way of knowing which ones, or of controlling them. God knew which ones, and [He] could control them.*<sup>185</sup>

God, as omniscient, sees much more information than we do when looking at a sheep.<sup>186</sup>

The significance of what Jacob is seeing will be explored further in vv. 12–13.

**Genesis 31:10** And at the time the cattle conceived, I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were striped, speckled, and mottled.

People do have a tendency to dream about work; but that is not what Jacob is doing here. God will speak to him in this dream. Therefore, this is a dream fraught with meaning.

First we should look at the word 'attûd (אַתּוּד) [pronounced *áhht-TOOD*], which means, *ram; male goat; chief one*. Strong's #6260 BDB #800. The second word to look at is tsô'n (צֹן) [pronounced *tzohn*], which means, *small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks*. Strong's #6629 BDB #838. It is the rams or male-goats which are striped, speckled and mottled, and they are overrunning the cattle or the flock. These are the animals which would belong to Jacob, and they are overwhelming the flock itself that he is responsible for.

### Genesis 31:11a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                       | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #        |
|--|---|---|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]    | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ] | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect      | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55  |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced <i>ehl</i> ]         | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>                               | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39  |

<sup>184</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Genesis 31:10.

<sup>185</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 480 (slightly edited).

<sup>186</sup> The very idea of God *looking at a sheep* is an anthropomorphism.

## Genesis 31:11a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology             | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| mal'âkē (מַלְאָכָה)<br>[pronounced mahf'-<br>AWK <sup>q</sup> ]  | <i>messenger or angel</i> ; this word has been used for a prophet (Isaiah 42:19) and priest (Mal. 2:7)      | masculine singular construct | Strong's #4397<br>BDB #521 |
| 'Ēlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים)<br>[pronounced el-o-HEEM]                    | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels</i> ; transliterated <i>Elohim</i> | masculine plural noun        | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| bē (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                           | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>         | a preposition of proximity   | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| chālôwm (חֲלוֹם)<br>[pronounced khuh-<br>LOHM]                   | <i>dream</i>  | masculine singular noun      | Strong's #2472<br>BDB #321 |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב)<br>[pronounced yah-ŷuh-<br>KOH <sup>BV</sup> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent</i> and is transliterated <i>Jacob</i>                   | masculine proper noun        | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |

**Translation:** In the dream, the Angel of Elohim said to me, 'Jacob.' Jacob knows that he is in a dream, but the Angel of God is real, nevertheless. The Angel of God speaks to him by name.

We often think of the Bible being filled with events where God steps into the picture, and, to some degree that is true. After all, if you are writing about what you remember, surely you will include encounters with God as opposed to walking your Scottie dog on a summer's eve or taking a drink of water out of a cool, flowing river. I have many times referred to Genesis as "This History of God and Man." So, God is often here, in the Bible, in some form or another (even if He is working behind the scenes). But when one considers the length of history which is covered, God's appearances on the scene of history are few and far between. God certainly shows up in virtually every chapter in one form or another; but when comparing these appearances to the vast backdrop of 2000 years of human history, these are not very many appearances.

Because we have the complete Word of God today, and because we all have God the Holy Spirit, God has no need to contact us today within our dreams. Everything that we need, we have. God does not have to bop us on the right shoulder and say, "Right turn, Clyde." If you understand the Word of God, you do not need that kind of direction.

## Genesis 31:11b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's #        |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (וּ)<br>[pronounced wah] | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |

## Genesis 31:11b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                 | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                          |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| 'āmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]   | to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect                                       | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55                    |
| hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced hin-NAY] | lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note; pay attention, get this, check this out         | interjection, demonstrative particle with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006)<br>BDB #243 |

We find similar phrasing in Genesis 22:1 Exodus 3:4 1Samuel 3:4, 6, 8, 16 Isaiah 58:9.<sup>187</sup>

**Translation:** I replied, 'Here I [am].' Jacob responds to the Angel. Quite often, God is the first to speak; and often, this is because the person God is speaking to is out of fellowship.

**Genesis 31:11** And the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob!' And I said, 'Here I am.'

And God comes to Jacob in this dream and speaks to him. As we have discussed on many occasions, the *Angel of God* = *the Messenger of God* = *God*. We studied this back in **Genesis 16** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)), and it can be found online here: the **Angel of Y<sup>e</sup>howah** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

Genesis 31:10–11 [Jacob is speaking to his wives] "During the flock's mating season, I lifted up my eyes in a dream and looked, and I saw he-goats leaping over the flock; the he-goats were striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of God said to me, 'Jacob.' I replied, 'I am right here.'"

### The Angel of God (many commentators)

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *This is, as elsewhere, the angel or messenger who speaks in the person of God himself.*<sup>188</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *Again, the angel of the Lord is a personification of Deity (i.e., Genesis 16:7–13 Genesis 18:1 Genesis 19:1 Genesis 21:17 Genesis 21:19 Genesis 22:11–15 Genesis 31:11 Genesis 31:13 Genesis 32:24 Genesis 32:30 Genesis 48:15–16 Exodus 3:2 Exodus 3:4 Exodus 13:21 Exodus 14:19 Judges 6:12 Judges 6:14 Zechariah 3:1–2). He speaks for YHWH.*<sup>189</sup> I would suggest that the Angel of the Lord IS Deity.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The "angel of God" is the preincarnate Christ since in Genesis 31:13, He states to Jacob that He is the "God of Bethel."*<sup>190</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *The one who addresses Jacob is "the angel of God." Yet in verse 13 this person identifies himself with God and so cannot have been a created angel but must have been divine. Here 16:7-11 as well as 22:11, 15...The fact that previously He was called "angel of Yahweh" but here "angel of God" makes no appreciable difference.*<sup>191</sup>

<sup>187</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:11 (this may be exactly the same phrasing; I did not personally check).

<sup>188</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:11.

<sup>189</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; www.freebiblecommentary.org; from e-sword; Genesis 31:11.

<sup>190</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 489); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>191</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

For Jacob to see *God*, God must appear in some sort of visual manifestation. God chooses the form of an angel, which is, apparently, not unlike the form of a man. (can an angel take different forms? Do they have a physical manifestation and a spiritual one?)

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Genesis 31:12a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]  | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                     | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55            |
| nâsâ' (נָסַא') [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i> ]   | <i>lift up, bear, carry</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative                    | Strong's #5375<br>BDB #669          |
| nâ' (נָא) [pronounced <i>naw</i> ]  | <i>now; please, I pray you, I respectfully implore (ask, or request of) you, I urge you</i>   | a primitive particle of incitement and entreaty                              | Strong's #4994<br>BDB #609          |
| <p>Nâ' is used for a submissive and modest request. It is used to express a wish (Job 32:21: "<a href="#">Oh, that I may not respect any man's person</a>"); to incite or to urge (Jer. 5:24); it is depreciatory when affixed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person with a particle of negation (do not, I implore you—see Genesis 33:10 19:18); with the it expresses a wish or request (Psalm 124 129:1 SOS 7:9), a challenge (Jer. 17:15), asking leave (Genesis 18:4), and depreciation with a negation (Genesis 18:32). In many of these examples, we would express this with the addition of the word <i>let</i>.</p> |   |  |                                     |
| 'êynayim (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced <i>gay-nah-YIM</i> ]  | <i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>  | feminine dual noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251           |
| râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]  | <i>look, see, behold, view, see here, listen up</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative                    | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906          |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]  | <i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>   | masculine singular construct followed by a definite article                  | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481          |
| 'attûd (אֲתוּד) [pronounced <i>gaht-TOOD</i> ]  | <i>ram; male goat; chief one</i>  | masculine plural noun with the definite article                              | Strong's #6260<br>BDB #800          |
| 'âlâh (אֲלָהִים) [pronounced <i>gaw-LAWH</i> ]  | <i>those going up, ascending ones, those coming up, ones climbing up; those leaping</i>   | masculine plural, Qal active participle                                      | Strong's #5927<br>BDB #748          |
| 'al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gah</i> ]  | <i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>   | preposition of relative proximity  | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752          |

## Genesis 31:12a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| tsôḥ (צֹחַ) [pronounced tzohn]                                   | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>                   | feminine singular collective noun with the definite article | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |
| ʿâqôd (עֲקוֹד) [pronounced ġaw-CODE]                             | <i>striped, banded; streaked</i>                                      | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #6124<br>BDB #785 |
| nâqôd (נֶאֱקוֹד) [pronounced naw-KODE]                           | <i>spotted, speckled; marked with a brand</i>                         | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #5348<br>BDB #666 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וַ) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction                                      | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| bârôd (בָּרוֹד) [pronounced baw-RODE]                            | <i>spotted, marked</i>  | masculine plural adjective                                  | Strong's #1261<br>BDB #136 |

**Translation:** He then said, 'Lift up your eyes now and look at all of the male goats—those [which] are leaping over the flocks—the striped, spotted and marked [ones];... The Angel of God then tells Jacob, "I want you to look at the male goats that are leaping over the flocks. The striped, spotted and blotched ones. Jacob is to look at this and to think about what it all means.

Remember that Jacob developed this hair-brained scheme where he set up tree branches in front of the animals when they drank their water, and expected that the markings on these branches would affect their breeding. God tells Jacob that He did this; He oversaw the breeding of Jacob's animals so that Jacob benefitted from it.

Gill: *[It is] not that the rams in the flock were really of those colours, for they were all white, but so they were represented to Jacob in the vision.*<sup>192</sup>

God, in the dream, directs Jacob's eyes toward the goats which are breeding (I am assuming that is what is meant by them *leaping over the flocks*). They are *striped, spotted and marked*. But, in reality, the mating sheep were all white or the mating goats were all black. So God is directing Jacob toward the idea that these are, in truth, spotted, striped and marked animals—but that is somewhat hidden to most people. Let me state this a different way—despite how they actually look, they are genetically designed to produce spotted, striped and marked animals. God is able to look at the genetics of the animals involved and see what they will produce.

Not sure if the *leaping animals* is a reference to mating animals?

Some commentators<sup>193</sup> have connected this dream to Jacob's breeding scheme. Some have said this dream justifies his scheme (or that he used the dream to justify his breeding scheme) or something along those lines. Personally, I see this dream as completely superceding Jacob's breeding scheme.

Jacob will credit God with his increase of sheep and goats. Jacob never says (here or elsewhere), "And so God showed me how to breed these kinds of sheep and goats that my flocks might increase."

To think that God was giving Jacob instructions as how to breed his animals would be illogical here. First problem is, when did God appear to Jacob? In order for this to guide Jacob in his breeding, it would have to occur prior to Jacob and Laban coming to an agreement. Why would God appear to Jacob, saying, "Here is how I want you

<sup>192</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:10.

<sup>193</sup> Like <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017. Some commentary made it seem like Jacob used this dream to justify his scheme; other commentary indicated that there is no connection between the two.

to breed these animals” (without actually telling Jacob what to do); and then tell him, “Oh, time for you to go...but wait for 6 more years if you want to.”

What makes more sense is, God appears to Jacob, tells him, “This is what I have been doing with your livestock; and this is why you have increased in your personal holdings.” Then God adds, “And now it is time for you to leave Paddan-aram.”

God oversees the breeding; God has it handled. What Jacob was doing had absolutely no effect whatsoever on the increase of his flock. I believe that is the point (or one of the points) of this dream.

| Genesis 31:12b  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]   | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition   | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| râ'âh (ראה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]  | <i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect   | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906 |
| 'êth (את) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]   | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                                  | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>   | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article                   | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| 'âsher (אשר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                                       | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied                                 | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| Lâbân (לבן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]                           | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location   | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| 'âsâh (עשה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]                                       | <i>doing, making, manufacturing, constructing, fashioning, forming, preparing; producing</i>                      | Qal active participle  | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]                                    | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** ...because I see all that Laban is doing to you. While you are looking, bear in mind that I am with you and I know all that Laban has done to you.

God tells Jacob, “I have not missed what was happening to you. I have noticed that Laban has been cheating you.” The implication is, God has been taking care of that problem. “You take a look at those goats,” God says, “And figure it out—I know what Laban has been doing to you.” By this, Jacob realizes that it has been God, all of this time, looking out for him; when Laban changed how Jacob would be paid (“Okay, this year, you will get all of the grayish lambs”) and then God would see to it that there would be an abundant *crop* of grayish lambs.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The Lord's statement to Jacob, "for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you" is a reference to the omniscience of God in the sense that God knows perfectly, eternally and simultaneously all that is knowable, both the actual and the possible and thus has all knowledge of every event in human and angelic history.*<sup>194</sup>

Examples of God watching and seeing what is happening: Genesis 31:42 Exodus 3:7, 9 Leviticus 19:13 Deut. 24:15 Psalm 12:5 139:3 Eccles. 5:8 Acts 7:34 Ephesians 6:9.<sup>195</sup> Prov. 15:3 **The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.** (ESV)

Wenstrom then concludes: *Therefore, the Lord's statement "for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you" would indicate to Jacob that the Lord knew perfectly, eternally and simultaneously everything that had transpired between him and Laban.*<sup>196</sup>

**Genesis 31:12** And He said, 'Lift up your eyes and see all the rams which leap upon the cattle, that they are striped, speckled, and mottled. For I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.

God tells Jacob, "I want you to observe what you have been seeing—that the striped, speckled and mottled goats (or rams) are over the rest of the flock. I am doing that, because I see what Laban has done to you." God has given preeminence to Jacob's animals; the striped, speckled and mottled are the ones *jumping over* the others. The word found here is the masculine plural, Qal active participle of 'âlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced *gaw-LAWH*], which means, *those going up, ascending ones, those coming up, ones climbing up; those leaping*. Strong's #5927 BDB #748.

Genesis 31:10–12 During the flock's mating season, I lifted up my eyes in a dream and looked, and I saw he-goats leaping over the flock; the he-goats were striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of God said to me, 'Jacob.' I replied, 'I am right here.' He then said, 'Lift up your eyes now and look at these male goats which are leaping over the flocks—the goats that are marked with stripes, spots and blotches. Know that I see all that Laban is doing to you.'

### Jacob's fleshly efforts and God's divine providence (various commentators)

Dr. Robert Dean: *Then we saw after that Jacob uses an ancient Near Eastern superstition to try to increase his own holdings among the flocks of Jacob. He does this strange thing where he takes the sticks and he strips off the bark so that they are stripped. He pounds those into the ground so that as the sheep and goats are mating that this will somehow influence the production so that they will produce stripped and spotted offspring which he has made a deal with Laban that he would get all of the stripped and spotted offspring. But what we discover in chapter 31 is that God appears to him in a dream and speaks to him and says, "That didn't work. It was Me."*<sup>197</sup>

L. M. Grant: *He speaks of a dream in which he saw the goats mating in the way that would benefit him, and of the angel of God speaking to indicate that it was God who had caused the animals to bear in such a way as to be to Jacob's advantage. This is no doubt true, but it shows us that there was no need for Jacob to resort to his deceitful actions. God would bless him apart from this. He tells him that He has seen all that Laban was doing to him.*<sup>198</sup>

<sup>194</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 489); accessed October 16, 2017 (slightly edited).

<sup>195</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:12.

<sup>196</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 489); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>197</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](http://DeanBibleMinistries.com); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>198</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

## Jacob's fleshly efforts and God's divine providence (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *Here is supplementary information to that given in Genesis 30, and it appears that the parti-colored cattle were due to a providential act of God, and not in any way connected with the peeled rods (except, possibly, by their being some kind of test of Jacob's faith). The key thing in his enrichment was the fore-knowledge afforded by the divine dream that lay behind his choice of wages.*<sup>199</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *God says, "I did it!" We don't need to look for natural explanations, although I am confident that God used one of them. However, since God didn't tell us which one it is, we simply do not know. There are several explanations, and you may take the one you want, but I like this one: God says, "I saw what Laban was doing to you, and I blessed you."*<sup>200</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

God sees what is happening and God intercedes, despite Laban's dishonesty. We will be cheated all of our lives—not just as believers, but even simply as people. This is what the world does to us. And, bear in mind, Laban appears to be a believer. When Abraham's servant came to his family to get a wife for Isaac, Laban and Bethuel, because the servant claimed that this was all of God, said, "**The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken.**" (Genesis 24:50b–51) They appear to acquiesce rather than to be argumentative about this situation.

My point here is, as a believer, your worst problems in life might be other believers (usually, it is yourself; and then it is other believers). The Word of God gives us guidance of how to deal with this; for one thing, a lawsuit is the wrong way to approach it.

## Genesis 31:13a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| ʾānōkîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>awn-oh-KEE</i> ]                               | <i>I, me;</i> (sometimes a verb is implied)                         | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun             | Strong's #595<br>BDB #59   |
| ʾĒl (אֱל) [pronounced <i>ALE</i> ]  | <i>God, god, mighty one, strong, hero;</i> transliterated <i>EI</i> | masculine singular noun                                      | Strong's #410<br>BDB #42   |
| Owens does not list this as a construct; but he translates it as a construct. |   |  |                            |
| Bêyth-ʾēl (בֵּית־אֱל) [pronounced <i>bayth-AYHL</i> ]                         | <i>house of God;</i> transliterated <i>Bethel</i>                   | masculine proper noun  | Strong's #1008<br>BDB #110 |
| ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                                  | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>                          | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| mâshach (מָשַׁח) [pronounced <i>maw-SHAHKH</i> ]                              | <i>to smear, to anoint</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect     | Strong's #4886<br>BDB #602 |

<sup>199</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>200</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

## Genesis 31:13a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings                                  | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong's #                 |
|--|--|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced shawm]                                   | <i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i> | adverb of place        | Strong's #8033<br>BDB #1027        |
| matstsêbâh (מַצֵּבָה) [pronounced mahtz-tzay <sup>b</sup> -VAWH] | <i>pillar, sculpted images</i>                           | feminine singular noun | Strong's #4676 & #4678<br>BDB #663 |

**Translation:** I [am] 'El of Bethel, [which is] where you anointed a pillar. The One before Jacob in this dream is not a mere angel; this is the God of his father Abraham; the God of Bethel. It was at Bethel where Jacob erected a pillar and anointed that pillar.

Genesis 31:13a I [am] 'El of Bethel, [which is] where you anointed a pillar.

### "I am the God of Bethel" (various commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The Lord's statement "I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me" was a reminder to Jacob of his worship at Bethel, which was in response to the theophany, divine promises and vision of elect angels, and which worship is recorded in Genesis 28:16-22.*<sup>201</sup>

Chuck Smith: *So it is interesting that God announces to him, "I am the God of Bethel. Come back to the place of your family. I am the God that met you there in Bethel"*<sup>202</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Very definitely God identifies Himself to Jacob as the one who formerly had appeared at Bethel and to whom Jacob had anointed a pillar (matstseba) and vowed a vow. This is another way of saying that what He had promised then to do for Jacob is now actually being done. For assuredly, but for divine interference Jacob would have suffered irreparable loss.*<sup>203</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *God...reminded Jacob that He had spoken to him at Bethel, twenty years before. In the vow, made at that time, when he had set up and anointed a pillar in commemoration of God's promise, Jacob had contemplated someday returning to his father's house in peace. Now the time had come, and God told him to be on his way, returning to his homeland. God had certainly taken care of him in the past, prospering him in a marvelous way, despite many obstacles, just as He had promised.*<sup>204</sup>

Whether 'Ēl (אֱל) [pronounced ALE] or 'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM], most translations render this God. It is possible that this is somewhat of a play on words. *Bethel* is actually Bêyth-'êl (בֵּית אֱל) [pronounced bayth-AYHL], where the final syllable is the reference to God. God is saying, "I am the El of Beth-El."

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The NET Bible: *In Gen 28:18 the text simply reported that Jacob poured oil on top of the stone. Now that pouring is interpreted by the Lord as an anointing. Jacob had consecrated the place.*<sup>205</sup>

<sup>201</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 489–490); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>202</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:11–13.

<sup>203</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>204</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 480.

<sup>205</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

| Genesis 31:13b                         |   |  |                             |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
| 'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]   | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied                       | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81    |
| nâdar (נָדַר) [pronounced naw-DAHR]    | <i>to vow, to make a promise, to make a commitment, to give a word of assurance concerning a matter, to give one's personal and honorable guarantee, to make a solemn oath or pledge to do or not to do a thing</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                           | Strong's #5087<br>BDB #623  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ] | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| shâm (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced shawm]      | <i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>  | adverb of place  | Strong's #8033<br>BDB #1027 |
| nêder (נֶדֶר) [pronounced NAY-der]     | <i>a vow, a promise, a personal guarantee, the giving of one's word of assurance, a commitment</i>  | masculine singular noun  | Strong's #5088<br>BDB #623  |

**Translation:** You [also] vowed to Me there a vow. The Angel reminds Jacob that he had vowed to Him at that place. Back in Bethel, Jacob made a vow to God. Now, it is very possible that no one knows the content of that vow apart from Jacob and God (or, if Jacob spoke it aloud, then it is possible that his mother's servant, who I believe accompanied him, was there).

The NET Bible: *The second clause reminds Jacob of the vow he made to the Lord when he anointed the stone (Gen 28:20-22). God is now going to take him back to the land, and so he will have to fulfill his vow.*<sup>206</sup>

It is this verse, God refers back to the events of the end of Genesis 28. In Bethel, Jacob has a dream in Genesis 28:10–17. The next morning, Jacob stands a stone on end and pours oil over it (Genesis 28:18, 22). When the Angel of God speaks to Jacob in a dream, He says, “I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me.” (Genesis 31:13a). In other words, this dream that Jacob had was pretty extensive; and yet, it has apparently taken him a little while to decide that he needs to take his family to Canaan now.

| Genesis 31:13c                         |                                      |   |                            |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings              | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| 'attâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced gâht-TAWH] | <i>now, at this time, already</i>    | adverb of time  | Strong's #6258<br>BDB #773 |
| qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced koom]          | <i>stand, rise up, arise, get up</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative | Strong's #6965<br>BDB #877 |

<sup>206</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

| Genesis 31:13c  |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                        |
| yâtsâ' (יֵצֵא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH]   | go [come] out, go [come] forth; rise [up]   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative          | Strong's #3318<br>BDB #422                |
| The NET Bible: <i>The first imperative draws attention to the need for immediate action.</i> <sup>207</sup> |   |  |   |
| min (מִן) [pronounced min]  | from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than                             | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577                |
| 'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]   | earth (all or a portion thereof), land, territory, country, continent; ground, soil; under the ground [Sheol] | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #776<br>BDB #75                  |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]  | here, this, this one; thus; possibly another  | masculine singular demonstrative adjective with a definite article | Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |

**Translation:** Now rise up [and] go forth from this land... Jacob has been outside of the Land of Promise for 20 years now, and God is telling him to rise up and leave the land where he is.

The NET Bible: *The decision to leave was a wise one in view of the changed attitude in Laban and his sons. But more than that, it was the will of God. Jacob needed to respond to God's call – the circumstances simply made it easier.*<sup>208</sup>

It appears that he did not respond to God's marching orders immediately. Based upon what we have studied, it appears that Jacob decides to obey God a few months later. That would not be out of character for Jacob.

Later on in this narrative, there is going to be a passage where Rachel steals some idols from her father. This gives us one reason why God wanted Jacob and his sons out of there—He did not want Jacob's sons to grow up idolatrous and with sympathies towards idolatry.

J. Vernon McGee: *"Now arise, get out from this land, and return unto the land of your kindred." God wants him to leave Haran because he has at this time eleven boys who are growing up, and they are already beginning to learn some things which they should not be learning. God wants to get Jacob and these boys away from the place of idolatry just as He got Abraham out of a home of idolatry.*<sup>209</sup>

Recall that Abraham was to separate from his own family; and we might suppose that there was some idolatry going on. Now, Laban respected the God of Abraham (as we see in Genesis 24); but he apparently also had a place for the idols of his land, as his daughter Rachel will steal them from him.

<sup>207</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

<sup>208</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

<sup>209</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017 (slightly edited).

| Genesis 31:13d  |  |  |                            |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]         | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced shoo <sup>b</sup> v]                          | return, turn, turn back, reminisce, restore something, bring back something, revive, recover something, make restitution | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative                        | Strong's #7725<br>BDB #996 |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]   | unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to                         | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)                    | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |
| 'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]                                     | earth (all or a portion thereof), land, territory, country, continent, ground, soil; under the ground [Sheol]            | feminine singular construct  | Strong's #776<br>BDB #75   |
| môwl <sup>e</sup> deth (מִוְלַדֶּת) [pronounced moh <sup>e</sup> -DETH] | birth, origin, native; kindred, family; progeny, [female] offspring, children; circumstances of birth                    | feminine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #4138<br>BDB #409 |

**Translation:** ...and return to the land of your birth [or, kindred].’ ” The land of Jacob’s birth is the land of Canaan.

This is actually somewhat humorous. Jacob has spent vv. 5–12 explaining what the problems were with staying in Haran. And then, at the very end, he tacks on this little fact: “Oh, yeah—almost forgot—God told us to leave here as well.” We do not know exactly when Jacob had this dream and God spoke to him (or even if this is a **single dream**); but it certainly seems as though considerable time elapsed between the dream and Jacob’s telling of it (a month, a year?).

H. C. Leupold: *13b v. 3. It is the climax of this dream revelation. The time for departure is at hand. This land of adoption must be forsaken. The land of birth is to be sought. Such a declaration as Jacob here reports must have deeply influenced Jacob’s wives. It would not seem as though this divine vision had ever been told to them before. Jacob knew that sacred spiritual experiences were not to be discussed too freely. Perhaps, too, his wives were not yet spiritually ready for this information. Coming to them at this juncture, it may have been overwhelming in its impression.*<sup>210</sup>

Even though this is the climax of the dream, this was not enough to cause Jacob or his wives to leave Haran. Otherwise, the next morning after the dream, Jacob would have summoned his wives and said, “Last night, I had a dream...”

Matthew Henry does not quite get this right: *He came...[there to Haran] by orders from Heaven, and there he would stay till he was ordered back.*<sup>211</sup> God directly told Jacob to return; but He allowed circumstances to proceed as they did in order for Jacob to go to Haran in the first place.

Genesis 31:10–13 **During the flock’s mating season, I lifted up my eyes in a dream and looked, and I saw he-goats leaping over the flock; the he-goats were striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of God said**

<sup>210</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>211</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–16.

to me, 'Jacob.' I replied, 'I am right here.' He then said, 'Lift up your eyes now and look at these male goats which are leaping over the flocks—the goats that are marked with stripes, spots and blotches. Know that I see all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, which is where you anointed a pillar and also where you made a vow to Me. Now you need to rise up and leave this land and return to your birthplace.' ”

This the most recent communication between God and Jacob. God spoke in a dream to Jacob. God has just spoken directly to Jacob to tell him to return to the land of Canaan (Genesis 31:3). The contents of that second dream<sup>212</sup> are not revealed in their entirety until now. So, it appears that this is the same dream, which Jacob apparently had awhile back (a few weeks or months ago). The important part of the dream is spoken of back in v. 3; but that was not necessarily all that God said to Jacob, according to this passage.

We have discussed the various other possibilities. God could have come to Jacob in two dreams, where in one, He says, “Go back to Canaan” and, in the other, God says, “Go back to Canaan; and also, you are being blessed because of Me.” The way I read and interpret this, we are speaking of the same dream.

Had someone else written this, he may have gone over every single detail twice (at the beginning of the chapter and when Jacob tells his wives about the dream). Jacob doesn't write that way, however.

Because of what Jacob is, some have suggested that maybe he is lying to his wives about this portion of the dream. However, at least most of what he is saying is true—God did give him prosperity by whatever livestock were designated as his, those suddenly became the dominant offspring population. This was all God's work; so, even if Jacob was lying about the dream, what he is saying is actually true. For this reason, I believe that God did communicate to him and that he is telling his wives the truth. Furthermore, I think that it is less likely that Jacob would lie to his wives about this. Apparently, he has just withheld information for a time (a week or a month or two).

God's revelation to Jacob covered (1) his prosperity and Laban's loss; (2) the command to leave this area. Since God has commanded Jacob to leave, then Jacob could leave in an honorable way; and (3) a reminder of Who is speaking to him. However, it also appears that Jacob did not obey God immediately. (What a surprise!)

What Jacob should have done is, immediately gone directly to Laban, tell Laban that God has spoken to him and that he needs to leave. He intends to take his rightful portion and he is gone. However, since he does not, he will set off a series of events that could have been avoided.

*Fuller: He must not go to Canaan with a view to promote his own temporal interest, but to introduce the knowledge and worship of the true God. This was the great end which Jehovah had in view in all that he did for Abraham's posterity, and they must never lose sight of it.*<sup>213</sup>

*Whedon: In Genesis 30:37–43, we have the human side of Jacob's procedure. We there see his artifice and cunning. Here is another view, not at all in conflict with that, but designed to show that all Jacob's tricks were as nothing without supernatural interference. God interposed to favour Jacob, not because of his guile or cunning, still less to sanction any thing of the kind as an example for others. Probably such dreams had come repeatedly during the last four or five years, and at the end of the sixth year of his independent service he received the revelation of Genesis 31:11–13.*<sup>214</sup> God's supernatural influence is probably confined to normal genetics, which God oversees.

**Genesis 31:13** I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar, where you vowed a vow to Me. Now arise, get out from this land, and return to the land of your kindred.' ”

<sup>212</sup> The first dream occurring 20 years ago in Bethel when Jacob was just about to leave Canaan.

<sup>213</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:11–13 (suggestive comments).

<sup>214</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:11.

The Angel of God tells Jacob that He is the God of Bethel (this is where Jacob had the dream about the angels going up and down between heaven and earth).

Jacob's vow is Gen. 28:20–22 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that you give me I will give a full tenth to You." (ESV; capitalized)

God tells Jacob that it is now time to return to the Land of Promise.

Although I recognized early on that this dream could be understood to be one or two dreams, I am surprised as to how many commentators would weigh in on this topic.

### Does Jacob Have One or Two Dreams from God? (A discussion)

#### One Dream:

Whedon: *He refers probably to the same revelation as that of Genesis 31:3. This word came to him in a dream, in which was repeated the vision of many a previous dream. Genesis 31:10.*<sup>215</sup>

If it is one dream, then Jacob reveals it to his wives sometime after the fact (a month or a few months later); and the breeding stuff informs Jacob of what God has been doing (that is, God has been overseeing the breeding).

#### Two Dreams:

First off, I am surprised that so many good commentators believed that there are two dreams here.

James Burton Coffman: *Kline agreed that the dream mentioned in this chapter "referred to two dreams, the earlier one (regarding the speckled cattle), and the later one (with the divine command to leave Laban)." After the Hebrew style, the dreams are not clearly distinguished here, except by the subject matter. Thomas Whitelaw also perceived that, "The dream here (Genesis 31:10) goes back to the commencement of the six years' service." All of the problems that critics find in this area are due solely to their failure to understand what is written.*<sup>216</sup>

Barnes: *Jacob seems here to record two dreams, the former of which is dated at the rutting season. The dream indicates the result by a symbolic representation, which ascribes it rather to the God of nature than to the man of art. The second dream makes allusion to the former as a process still going on up to the present time. This appears to be an encouragement to Jacob now to commit himself to the Lord on his way home. The angel of the Lord, we observe, announces himself as the God of Bethel, and recalls to Jacob the pillar and the vow. The angel, then, is Yahweh manifesting himself to human apprehension.*<sup>217</sup>

Gill: *The same Angel that appeared to Jacob in a dream, at the beginning of his six years' servitude, now appeared to him at the close of it, declaring himself to be the God of Bethel; or that God that manifested himself to him at Bethel, as Onkelos and Jonathan paraphrase the words; for this is a distinct vision from that in the preceding verses, concerning the rams of different colours, and are both put together for the sake of brevity, and because they belong to the same affair.*<sup>218</sup>

<sup>215</sup> Whedon's *Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:11.

<sup>216</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional references here.

<sup>217</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–13.

<sup>218</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:13.

## Does Jacob Have One or Two Dreams from God? (A discussion)

The problem with Gill's interpretation is, why did God appear to Jacob in the first place, 6 years ago. Was it just to say, "Don't worry, Jacob; I got this"? If that were the case, then Jacob would have had no reason to attempt his goofy breeding scheme.

Let me put this another way. Laban has told Jacob that he wants him to stay and name his wages; and that is exactly what Jacob did. So, why does God need to appear to Jacob soon thereafter and say, "Everything's under control, Jacob"? Jacob and Laban have come to an agreement; God is not really needed to step in, apart from seeing to the breeding of Jacob's flocks. He does not have to tell Jacob that He is going to do that. God did not appear to Joseph and tell him, "Don't worry; everything is going to be alright." When God appears to a patriarch, there is generally a reason for it.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The dream that is recorded in Genesis 31:10-12 and is to be distinguished from the dream that is recorded in Genesis 31:3 since in the former, the Lord informs Jacob that He is ruling in his favor and judging Laban whereas in the latter, the Lord tells him to leave Laban and head home to Canaan. Genesis 31:10-12 refers to the events recorded in Genesis 30:37-43 since in the dream God makes reference to Jacob's contract with Laban, which stipulated that Jacob would receive as his wages, the "spotted, speckled and striped" of Laban's flock.*

First off, there is nothing in the text which distinguishes the two dreams (and I do not believe that there were two dreams).

Wenstrom also seems to take the opinion that the Lord was behind Jacob's breeding schemes: *The selective breeding techniques that Jacob employs that are recorded in Genesis 30:37-43 were given to him by the Lord in a dream which is implied in Genesis 31:10-12 since the Lord states to Jacob that He is responsible for these techniques being successful. Genesis 31:10-12 records that during the time that the animals were in heat and mating by the water troughs Jacob saw in the dream that the males that were impregnating the females were described as "striped, speckled and mottled."*<sup>219</sup>

As I have stated, these breeding techniques, in my opinion, are entirely an invention of Jacob's. He considered the situation and figured how he could set the parameters of his salary and beat Laban at his own game. The purpose of God recording that in Scripture was the theme of Genesis 30: there is man's way, which does not succeed (Rachel's mandrakes, Jacob's breeding schemes); and there is God's way which always succeeds. We can always trust God's methods; man's efforts are irrelevant to the whole process.

Do not misapply that statement and think that we just need to sit on a park bench and God will do everything for us.

Now, to the broader picture here of the dreams, one or two? If I am understanding this second group of commentators correctly, the first dream gives Jacob assurance and the second dream tells Jacob to move out. I understand the importance of having the second dream; but I am less convinced of a need for the first dream (assuming that these are separate dreams). Jacob has lived under Laban for 14 years; is there some reason that he needs reassurance for the next 5 or 6 years (or, at whatever point this *first* dream seemed to occur)? Is not the actual outcome of his breeding not enough reassurance? Is Jacob so unthinking that he is unable to look at what is happening and figure it out?

In my opinion, God came to Jacob twice regarding Paddan-aram: (1) once before he had gotten very far on his trip to the east, when Jacob was still in Bethel; and (2) when it was time to leave Paddan-aram. I do not see any real purpose for God coming to Jacob in between and telling him, "I'm here; things are going great!"

<sup>219</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 489); accessed October 16, 2017.

## Does Jacob Have One or Two Dreams from God? (A discussion)

Don't misunderstand me—some people would love for God to come to them in a dream and say, "I'm here; things are going great!" However, we have divine promises which cover this—and so did Jacob. God had given promises to his father and grandfather—which promises Jacob was aware of—and God made promises directly to Jacob when he was in Bethel. Gen. 28:13–15 *And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."* (ESV; capitalized)

Not sure about this dream thing:

Dr. Thomas Constable: *It is unclear from what Jacob reported to his wives when the Angel of God appeared to him in the dream (Genesis 31:10–13). This may have occurred before or at the same time as the revelation referred to earlier in this passage. It seems likely, however, that this was the same revelation, God's second to Jacob.*<sup>220</sup>

The idea that the dream was distorted by Jacob will be discussed in a separate doctrine.

The big picture is, God does not need to come to Jacob in year 15 or 16 and tell him that everything is okay. Jacob can see that with his own eyes. God did not generally come to Jacob in a dream to say, "Don't worry, J, I got your back."

God does come to Jacob when he needs to be guided or reassured of his actions (when he is about to leave the land of Canaan for Haran; when he is about to leave Canaan for Egypt; and here, when God wants Jacob to return to Canaan). "I got your back, little buddy," just is not in the same league as these other dreams.

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I was surprised to find that at least three commentators suggested that Jacob exaggerated or distorted his dreams in order to convince his wives to move to Canaan.

I will allow Dr. Peter Pett and Keil and Delitzsch to make their arguments; and then conclude them to be wrong at the end of this doctrine (just in case you want to skip over their opinions).

## Did Jacob distort these dreams he had to convince his wives? (a discussion)

Leupold speaks to whether this dream was a product of Jacob's overactive imagination: *We must first dispose of the problem whether God actually inspired this dream and actually spoke in the dream to Jacob, or whether the dream was conjured up by Jacob's excited imagination or subconscious mind which had been busied rather intensively with the problem the dream reflects. Keil and Strack and others, without offering proof, assume the latter. They do not attribute deception to Jacob; they allow that he may have had such a dream but simply state, e. g., "it is certain that God did not show Jacob the rams in a dream" (Strack).*

<sup>220</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Genesis 31:1–21.

## Did Jacob distort these dreams he had to convince his wives? (a discussion)

Leupold concludes that such a position is untenable: *However, such a dream of a man of God, if it were a subjective delusion and yet reported in the Scriptures, would be quite without comparison. In fact, in all other cases such men were sure that a divine revelation had come to them, and Jacob is no less sure than they. As for the question whether God will stoop to reveal such trivial, if not even unseemly, matters as the details of breeding, it must be remembered that such matters could hardly be offensive and trivial to a shepherd like Jacob. It is an injustice to the man Jacob to assume that he reported as a divine revelation a dream whose origin may have seemed doubtful to him and used the dream to influence his wives and to justify himself.*<sup>221</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *[H]is account of the dream, in which he saw that the rams that leaped upon the cattle were all of various colours, and heard the voice of the angel of God calling his attention to what had been seen, in the words, "I have seen all that Laban has done to you," may contain actual truth; and the dream may be regarded as a divine revelation, which was either sent to explain to him now, at the end of the sixth year, "that it was not his stratagem, but the providence of God which had prevented him from falling a victim to Laban's avarice, and had brought him such wealth" (Delitzsch); or, if the dream occurred at an earlier period, was meant to teach him, that "the help of God, without any such self-help, could procure him justice and safety in spite of Laban's selfish covetousness" (Kurtz). It is very difficult to decide between these two interpretations.*

Keil and Delitzsch continue: *As Jehovah's instructions to him to return were not given till the end of his period of service, and Jacob connects them so closely with the vision of the rams that they seem contemporaneous, Delitzsch's view appears to deserve the preference. But the  $\nu\psi\eta$  in Genesis 31:12, "all that Laban is doing to you," does not exactly suit this meaning; and we should rather expect to find  $\nu\psi\eta$  used at the end of the time of service. The participle rather favours Kurtz's view, that Jacob had the vision of the rams and the explanation from the angel at the beginning of the last six years of service, but that in his communication to his wives, in which there was no necessity to preserve a strict continuity or distinction of time, he connected it with the divine instructions to return to his home, which he received at the end of his time of service. But if we decide in favour of this view, we have no further guarantee for the objective reality of the vision of the rams, since nothing is said about it in the historical account, and it is nowhere stated that the wealth obtained by Jacob's craftiness was the result of the divine blessing.*

More from Keil and Delitzsch: *The attempt so unmistakeably apparent in Jacob's whole conversation with his wives, to place his dealing with Laban in the most favourable light for himself, excites the suspicion, that the vision of which he spoke was nothing more than a natural dream, the materials being supplied by the three thoughts that were most frequently in his mind, by night as well as by day, viz., (1) his own schemes and their success; (2) the promise received at Bethel; (3) the wish to justify his actions to his own conscience; and that these were wrought up by an excited imagination into a visionary dream, of the divine origin of which Jacob himself may not have had the slightest doubt. – In Genesis 31:13  $\eta\lambda\eta$  has the article in the construct state, contrary to the ordinary rule.*<sup>222</sup>

Whedon sums up their position: *Keil argues that this dream was largely the work of Jacob's excited imagination.*<sup>223</sup>

<sup>221</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017 (slightly edited; he used the word *analogy*, which I replaced with the word *comparison*. .

<sup>222</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:9–13 (slightly edited).

<sup>223</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:13.

## Did Jacob distort these dreams he had to convince his wives? (a discussion)

Dr. Peter Pett seems to take a dim view of Jacob and his explanation of his dream: *This may have resulted from a genuine dream, but it is Jacob's interpretation of the situation for his wives' consumption. He is representing a mythical picture of he-goats acting on their own volition under God's control, when in fact it was he and his men who carefully ensured what happened. It may well have been through a dream that he came to recognise the importance of interbreeding but he does not want his wives to realise that he has manipulated the situation with regard to their father, and therefore he ignores the human connection. He then incorporates his theophany in this mythical 'dream' to give the 'dream' a sense of validity and sacredness.*<sup>224</sup>

Pett's skepticism continues: *"The God of Bethel where you anointed a pillar and where you vowed a vow to me." Not quite the simple words of verse 3. He has told his wives of his vivid experience of God at Bethel and now uses that to impress them. Whether God actually spoke these words at the recent theophany we do not know. They were for the wives' consumption. Yet they are on the whole true nonetheless. But their importance lay in their association with the command to return home. It is that which he wishes to impress on his wives.*<sup>225</sup>

That Jacob is a man of schemes, I have no doubt. However, I have serious doubts that he would have lied about or distorted a dream from God.

Furthermore, this dream is presented in Scripture without additional commentary (like, *but God had not given this dream to Jacob*). So, if this dream can be questioned as to its accuracy, then all dreams in Scripture are subject to the same scrutiny and virtually any recorded dream is suspect.

Basically, you can take one of two positions of doubt here: (1) Jacob made up the dream entirely and all of it was fake; or (2) Jacob simply exaggerated the dream in order to convince his wives. To make such an allegation, as Pett, Keil and Delitzsch did, what exactly do they think was exaggerated? Did God not oversee the breeding of Laban's animals to Jacob's benefit? This had to be confirmed by Jacob's wives as true; they could see it with their own eyes. Besides, Laban and his sons were complaining. Then did Jacob make up the part about God saying, "Time to move back to Canaan"? Everything else seems to work together for that end; so it seems unlikely to me that Jacob made up that aspect of his dream.

Let me restate this, so I do not appear to be hedging: this was a dream from God, told by Jacob exactly as it happened.

H. C. Leupold makes a similar unequivocal statement: *This dream, then, is not for the purpose of suggesting to Jacob what lambs and what kids he is to select the next time he bargains with Laban, for, as we just learned, Laban was the one who kept altering the terms of the agreement. This dream is rather a revelation given to Jacob at a particular breeding time to make him aware of the fact that even this matter was being regulated entirely by God's providence, and that Jacob could put full confidence in God to guard his best interests.*<sup>226</sup>

Let me add that, this helped to guide Jacob to do the right thing. As we move forward in his life, Jacob resists God and resists the truth, but not entirely and not in every case. Assuming that this dream occurred somewhat in the past (a few days or a few weeks), we may recognize that Jacob was not going to move *only* on God's say-so. Much of this chapter is devoted to that various things which occurred which guided Jacob to pack up and move.

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Jacob needs to convince his wives to go with him to Canaan, and let me suggest that it would be a bad idea on his part to try to lie to them or bend the truth in order to convince them.

<sup>224</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:10–12.

<sup>225</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:13.

<sup>226</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## Convincing his wives to reject their family ties (commentators/discussion)

Dr. Peter Pett believed that Jacob made up some of the things he told his wives: *[Jacob] was aware that his going would not be easy. He must first win over his wives, and then he would have the problem of his position in the tribal confederacy. They would not be happy with him if he sought to diminish the confederacy. So he concocts a convenient story for his wives based loosely on the truth.*<sup>227</sup>

Pett continues: *Jacob's summary of the situation which follows is rather tongue in cheek. He has, as we know, played his part in manoeuvring the situation but now he puts all his success down to God. He is trying to win his wives over. His arguments are wide ranging and extensive.*

Pett concludes: *Jacob carefully puts the position to his wives without introducing any suggestion of his own manipulations. He is clearly not certain how they will feel about things. He wants them to think that all is of God and that he has had little to do with it. Then he introduces the theophany he has experienced.*<sup>228</sup>

Verse-by-verse ministry.org: *Jacob is the head of the household and the husband, and by culture, law and according to God's plan for the family, Jacob could make this decision without his wives' consent. But that wouldn't have been the loving or smart thing to do. A loving husband values his wife's opinion and values his wife's insight. A loving husband gives time for deliberation and exploring options. A loving husband demonstrates his own willingness to listen to the Lord and following His word. And a loving husband is willing to do all these things as he leads his family in obeying the voice of the Lord.*<sup>229</sup>

There was something in verse-by-verse ministries here that bothered me, and I could not put my finger on it. Perhaps my problem is this: each marriage is a unique pairing of people and there will be varying degrees of input by the wife, depending upon the couple, the situation, and even the culture of the time. Is it a good idea, in general, to consult and discuss things over with the wife? Of course! Marriage is a partnership. However, there is one leader in this partnership and one follower (or more, if there are children).

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob, after his heartfelt rehearsal of the situation to his wives, was relieved to hear them both assure him they would gladly go with him. They knew their life was with Jacob. Their father no longer was concerned about their future; whatever inheritance they might once have had would not go to them but to their brothers.*

Morris continues: *They had watched closely, thought silently, the actions of their father and brothers in contrast with those of Jacob, and they could well understand why God had blessed Jacob. They both loved him, and they realized it was to their own best interests, as well as those of their children, for them all to leave their father's home and go with Jacob to his own land.*<sup>230</sup>

One must bear in mind, Jacob cannot simply leave on his own. His sons and daughters are the Jewish race. They are God's chosen people. Much of the rest of the book of Genesis is about preserving and isolating them from the rest of the world.

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Genesis 31:4–13 Jacob sent for his wives, Rachel and Leah, to come to the field where he was tending Laban's flock. He said to them, "I have observed the countenance of your father, and he no longer favors me as he did before. However, despite this, the God of my father is with me. You both know that I have worked very hard for your father. Nevertheless, your father has cheated me and he had changed my wages many times. However, God has not allowed him to do evil to me. If he first specified that speckled cattle would be my wages, the flock

<sup>227</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:3.

<sup>228</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:4–9.

<sup>229</sup> From [https://www.versebyverseministry.org/images/uploads/genesis\\_30a.pdf](https://www.versebyverseministry.org/images/uploads/genesis_30a.pdf) accessed October 15, 2017. ©2017 - Verse By Verse Ministry International (<http://www.versebyverseministry.org>). May be copied and distributed in its original, unedited form, including this copyright statement, and no fee is collected for its distribution.

<sup>230</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 481.

would bear speckled animals; but then he would change his mind and say, 'No, the striped ones will be your wage;' but the flock would then begin bearing striped animals. God has taken away your father's cattle and He has given them to me. During the flock's mating season, I lifted up my eyes in a dream and looked, and I saw he-goats leaping over the flock; the he-goats were striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of God said to me, 'Jacob.' I replied, 'I am right here.' He then said, 'Lift up your eyes now and look at these male goats which are leaping over the flocks—the goats that are marked with stripes, spots and blotches. Know that I see all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, which is where you anointed a pillar and also where you made a vow to Me. Now you need to rise up and leave this land and return to your birthplace.' ”

Based upon what Jacob says, and based upon the answer that his wives give him, it sounds as if this subject of eventually returning to the Land of Promise had not been breached before. That is, Jacob has always known about the future of his descendants to live in Canaan (his descendants, right now, are made up of 11 sons and 1 or more daughters). It does not appear that he conveyed this to his wives prior to this time. On the other hand, it does appear that Jacob's wives are familiar with his God; and perhaps familiar with Jacob's first dream in Bethel.

Now, if the wives are familiar with Jacob's first dream, then they may be aware of God's promises to Jacob regarding the land of Canaan. This does not mean that they thought about these promises and applied them to themselves. For instance, the Bible is filled with promises and you have probably heard dozens or even hundreds of them. Do you apply these promises every time you are in a jam? Probably not. Sometimes, maybe; but all the time, I doubt it (mature believers will apply these promises more often, of course).

*Dr. Peter Pett: Jacob is very conscious that his wives are part of their tribe and that they may elect to remain with them. That is where their portion is and their inheritance. But he need not have worried. It is clear that they feel that Laban has demonstrated by his actions that he sees them as no longer having a part in the tribe. Laban had behaved badly and it would now rebound on him. They felt that they owed him no loyalty.<sup>231</sup>*

I think what Jacob did was quite sensible. He gathered his wives and told them what he believed to be a good appraisal of their circumstances; and why they should move to Canaan. I do not think he realized just how *onboard* they would be.

There is a fiction out there that women in the ancient world were no better than cattle, to be bought and sold like slaves, allowed no opinions or thoughts. This is not what the Bible records, and this is a prime example. Jacob does not get his wives together and tell them, "We're leaving. Get the kids, pack everything, and don't tell anyone what you are doing." Jacob, instead, gets his two wives together, where they can freely discuss their situation, and explains what he thinks they ought to do. He is not issuing any commands. He is not treating them like cattle. In my opinion, Jacob is being entirely honest with them; furthermore, I believe him to be genuinely interested in their opinions of their situation and about the idea of moving. Obviously, Jacob wants them to move; and no doubt, he is somewhat relieved when they appear to take his side of the matter.

There will be a third dream. God will come to Laban and speak to him in a dream in v. 24.

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:10–13 "And it came about at the time when the flock was mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mounting the flock were striped, speckled and mottled. Then the Angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob' and I said, 'here I am'. And he said, 'please lift up your eyes and observe that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.' 'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.'"

<sup>231</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:14–15.

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:10–13

1. Jacob now relates to the two women information to which they had not been privy.
2. With the tension and turmoil which had existed in the household, Jacob likely wondered if he could trust these two women with sensitive information.
3. There is no evidence that he had much in the way of spiritual conversations with either one of them.
4. A sensitive matter like a Divine dream would not be something he would readily share with them.
5. But due to the fact that he was planning on relocating back to Canaan, he gives them sufficient information to win their cooperation.
6. He tells them about a dream he had at the time when the flocks customarily mated, which occurred twice a year.
7. He does not fix a time for the dream, but since he connects it with the command to depart Haran, it was probably during the sixth year.
8. In Jacob's dream the males which were reproducing were all striped, speckled or multi-colored.
9. In reality all these males were solid color.
10. The fact that they were not solid in the dream indicated God's intervention in the laws of breeding.
11. This explains why so many solid animals brought forth so many multi-colored animals.
12. The angel of God addresses Jacob who responds that he is paying attention.
13. He specifically points out to Jacob what He is doing in regard to the breeding flocks.
14. He further points out that He is doing this based on Laban's treatment of Jacob during the preceding years.
15. God keeps very close accounts on how people treat his children.
16. He, like a good father, desires the best for His children and does not take kindly to anyone abusing them.
17. Via omniscience, God is always perfectly aware of when the positive believer is being mistreated.
18. It does not matter to Him whether he is being abused by a believer or by an unbeliever, He is equally displeased.
19. He will act in judgment against those who mistreat positive volition.
20. God intervened in spite of Jacob's human viewpoint lapse with the rods and the attempted pre-natal influence.
21. Jacob never did attempt to jam Laban, or take things into his own hands in terms of discipline.
22. Lessons for believers include:
  - 1) Do not attempt to be God's whip on anyone.
  - 2) Apply doctrine and faith—rest the fact that God will take care of you.
  - 3) Be very careful how you treat other believers, esp. positive believers in this local family.
  - 4) Do not resort to human viewpoint solutions if you are abused.
  - 5) Constantly pray about your detractors and problems.
23. The angel of Elohiym identifies Himself as God, a fact we should already be aware of.
24. He identifies Himself as the same One Who had appeared to him at Bethel, where Jacob anointed the pillar and made his goofy vow.
25. God then orders him back to Canaan, which was His will in the matter all along.
26. Although Jacob now has the resources to fulfill his vow, God does not encourage this.
27. He reminds him of Bethel to point out to Jacob how far he has come spiritually in his understanding.
28. Beyond this, it would remind Jacob of the fact that God had been totally faithful to His promises, even under very adverse circumstances.
29. There is nothing or no one who can thwart the plan of God for the believer except the believer himself.
30. If God be for us, who can be against us?? Rom. 8:28ff

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:4–13 So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field and said to them, "I see your father's attitude, that it is not friendly toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me. "You know that I have served your father with all my strength. "Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me.

"If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth striped. "Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me. "And it came about at the time when the flock were mating [were mounting upon the flock] that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream were striped, speckled, and mottled.

"Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'" "He said, 'Lift up now your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. 'I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.'"

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:4–13

Conference with His Wives (vv. 4-16)

Jacob's Appeal (vv. 5-13)

1. In this scene we have a dialogue between Jacob and his two wives Rachel and Leah.
2. Against the growing hostility within the Laban branch of the family against the vulnerable Jacob, he summons his two wives to a very secretive meeting.
3. Jacob selects a location for this meeting where there is no chance of anyone eavesdropping (v.4).
4. When Jacob makes his move to take leave of Laban he must be sure both his wives are fully committed to him and his flight back to his homeland in Canaan.
5. Jacob's speech to win over his wives consists of three parts.
6. First, he reminds them of the things he has done for Laban and how Laban has repeatedly cheated him; then he reminds them of what God has done for him under these conditions; and finally, he informs them that God has appeared to him and told him to leave.
7. Whether or not Rachel and Leah had detected Laban's change of demeanor, Jacob puts in front of them the antagonistic face Laban has been showing him.
8. He goes on to immediately assert that even though he is held in disdain by their father, he is in the divine favor (v.5).
9. All his wives have to do is look at the evidence of Jacob's sudden prospering and their father's sudden demise and know who God favors.
10. So for them it is do we side with our father or do we side with God who has favored so greatly their husband.
11. In v. 6 Jacob reiterates something that they were well aware of having lived with Jacob for twenty years.
12. Jacob labored as hard as any man ever has over this period of time both before and after he received a standard wage.
13. V. 6 is an example of an appeal to experience.
14. Jacob places this aspect of his behavior in the best light.
15. As far as his work ethic was concerned under less than favorable conditions it was above reproach.
16. The wives would concur that Jacob indeed gave his service to Laban his all.
17. This sets the stage for an open criticism of his father-in-law (v.8).
18. The Hebrew reads: "your father has made a fool of me..."
19. "Changed my wages ten times" may be hyperbole for time after time.
20. Or it could refer to the precise number of times Jacob was shafted by Laban.
21. Certainly his wives would have known the details of Laban's treachery.
22. By the way such actions apart from divine intervention would have harmed the entire household.
23. Jacob quickly adds: "God did not allow him to harm me."
24. Again, Jacob pits Laban against God (see v.5).
25. Jacob wisely does not make mention of the occasion on his wedding night where Laban really made a

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:4–13

- public fool of Jacob!
26. Instead he confines his words to the most recent examples of Laban's renegeing (v.8).
  27. The examples he presents to his wives deals only with goats and not sheep.
  28. Jacob recalls two agreements involving speckled and stripped animals.
  29. We learn that it was Laban's custom after a successful breeding season for Jacob that he would change the original contract further limiting Jacob to just striped or speckled goats.
  30. Each time God would intervene with a miracle an insure that the newborns were "all" speckled or stripped as per Laban's most recent change in the labor contract.
  31. Laban's son had asserted that Jacob had "taken away" that which belonged to their father.
  32. Jacob using colorful language says in v. 9 that God has "rescued" Laban's flock and given it to him (vb is used of rescue from danger as in Exo. 3:8; 5:23; 6:6).
  33. The point made here is that the animals have a much better existence that if they were in the hands of Laban!
  34. At this point in the story Jacob is fully cognizant of the fact that it was God would pulled the genetic strings that led to his prospering and not his gimmickry.
  35. In vv. 10-13 Jacob provides his concluding argument to his wives for their unwavering loyalty to him and his God.
  36. The vision he refers to in these verses is simply the fuller version that what we have already noted in v. 2: "Return to the land of your fathers and your clan and I will be with you."
  37. In this rendition of the vision he uses the same language (vb. alah 'to ascend' with the prep. al 'upon, with the def.art., with the noun 'flock') as what he saw in this vision.
  38. During the mating season for the goats Jacob had a vision in which he observed stripped, speckled and mottled male goats mating (v. 10).
  39. According to the vision what Jacob saw was quite the opposite as to his experience with the goats.
  40. Jacob had been initially been left with nothing but solid black male goats (30:35).
  41. But in the vision he sees nothing but off-colored male goats mating with the flock.
  42. No explanation of the vision is given.
  43. It must be surmised.
  44. The vision which came at the very end of Jacob's time in Haran and during the mating seasons for goats was intended in part to tell Jacob that the genetics of the animals were the product of an unseen hand and had nothing to do with his stripped rods.
  45. God gets the credit for Jacob's prosperity and not Jacob's gimmickry.
  46. Jacob reports to his wives that "the angel of God" spoke to him.
  47. This exact expression is used here and in 21:17, 28:12; 32:2.
  48. More often the expression is "angel of Yahweh."
  49. The mating goats part of the vision is not explained to Jacob but proves the point of what Jacob said in v. 9, namely that it was God who rescued these animals and made them his.
  50. In v. 12 the angel simply repeats what Jacob saw without explanation.
  51. No explanation was needed as Jacob came to fully realize that it was God who made the improbable and impossible reality.
  52. The words of the angel "for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you" seems out of place.
  53. Yet, the fact is that God sees those of His own who are oppressed and intervenes on their behalf (cf. 16:13-14; 29:32; 31:42; Ex. 2:25; 3:7, 9, 16).
  54. It was God that made Jacob's selective breeding technique a success.
  55. In v. 13 is where God tells Jacob that it is time to finally return to the land of his nativity and family.
  56. The angel further introduces Himself as "the God of Bethel" where Jacob anointed a pillar and made a vow."
  57. The provided Jacob with further reassurance that his present vision was from the same source.
  58. It doesn't validate Jacob's actions on that occasion.
  59. God had been good to his word to be with him while away from the land of the covenant and now He promises to make good on His promise to bring Jacob safely back to his homeland.
  60. Thus Jacob concludes his speech to his wives with this powerful incentive—e.g., God told me to return

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:4–13

immediately.

61. Jacob like Abraham and his son Joseph after him was prospered in a foreign land.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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**A Review of Genesis 31:1–13:** Jacob is a fascinating historical figure to study. When studying Abraham, Moses or David, most of the time, their actions represent the right thing to do. They are good examples to us. They are amazing people. However, with Jacob, he has his good points; but he also has many character flaws as well. It is men like Jacob who personally give me hope.

So far, we have studied the first 13 verses of Genesis 31:

**Genesis 31:1** Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth."

The *sons of Laban* are new players in all of this. They will naturally take the side of their father and, also among their concerns, is their inheritance. So, every time Jacob keeps a sheep or goat, they see this as being removed from their own wealth (even though Jacob legitimately must be paid).

**Genesis 31:2** And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before.

There is a change with Laban as well. Before, Laban did not have to pay him. Now that Laban is paying Jacob, Laban is not quite as happy as he was before.

**Genesis 31:3** Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you."

On top of this, God tells Jacob to return to the Land of Promise. We do not know the method by which God spoke to Jacob; previously, it had been by dream. The means by which God spoke to Jacob will be revealed.

**Genesis 31:4–10** So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was and said to them, "I see that your father does not regard me with favor as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not permit him to harm me. If he said, 'The spotted shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore spotted; and if he said, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock bore striped. Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me. In the breeding season of the flock I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped, spotted, and mottled.

Jacob and Laban had worked out a deal, where Jacob could keep so many of the sheep as his pay; and you may recall that Jacob had a goofy idea on how to get the sheep to mate. However, despite Jacob's goofy ideas, God will was faithful and allowed Jacob to be blessed with many sheep.

**Genesis 31:11** Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am!'

The Angel of God (= God) speaks to Jacob in a dream; and Jack responds that he is there, listening.

**Genesis 31:12–13** And he said, 'Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped, spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.'

Jacob is in a peculiar situation. He feels like he is being treated unfairly by Laban, his father-in-law, because he is not receiving reasonable payment for what he has been doing (in his mind). However, during this time, God has been blessing him. In fact, God has blessed Jacob so much that his brothers-in-law are upset that he is being remunerated too much. "That should be our inheritance."

This has been the pattern of his relationship to Laban. Jacob sees things one way; Laban sees them another. In the past, Jacob had been quite a manipulator; but he finds out that his father-in-law is even more of a manipulator. He believes that he comes to an agreement with his father-in-law; only to find that Laban later changes the agreement.

It is almost as if, Jacob is wrestling with himself. He appears to agree on this or that with Laban; and then Laban changes things. Jacob thought he was marrying Rachel, but he wakes up the morning after his wedding, and Leah is in bed with him. He thinks he comes to an agreement with Laban on his wages, but Laban suddenly changes these wages—again and again.

As a result, Jacob tries to fight back, but his own human works schemes (like putting variously shaved and carved almond tree branches in front of Laban's flock) are not effective; yet God, overseeing all of this, still blesses Jacob. In fact, God has blessed Jacob so much that, his brothers-in-law are upset and concerned, because they see Jacob's increase as legitimately belonging to their father (and, eventually, to themselves).

However, now, Jacob has a clear direction—God has said to him, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you."

God's plan has continued to move forward in Jacob's life, despite Jacob.

### What God Achieved in Jacob's Life

1. God placed Jacob with a man who was very much like himself. Laban was manipulative and Laban continually tried to work everything to his own advantage.
2. Despite all of Laban's manipulation, deception and dishonesty, God still blessed Jacob. We are told at the end of the previous chapter just how much God has blessed Jacob, but when we see his gift to his own brother (whom he crossed), it will be clear that Jacob has been greatly blessed, despite Laban's actions.
3. Jacob will return to the Land of Promise with two wives, two mistresses, and a whole lot of children, all of whom will be the basis for the Jewish race.
4. Despite the way that Laban treated Jacob, God still blessed Jacob. There was nothing that Laban could do which could overrule God's blessing.
5. Furthermore, there was nothing that Jacob could do in the power of the flesh to increase his blessings from God. He developed this little breeding scheme, and it did nothing. His scheme was just like human good; it may have seemed like a great idea, but ultimately, it was worthless.
6. Jacob will return to the Land of Promise greatly blessed of God. God poured out blessings upon Abraham; and then these blessings were poured out upon Isaac; Jacob was greatly blessed despite the interference of Laban.
7. He was blessed with two wives, 12 children (at least), livestock, camels and servants.
8. While Jacob was outside of the land, God also blessed Esau, so that Esau would have no reason to still bear a grudge against Jacob.
9. In the end, there will be two peoples who grow up side-by-side: the Edomites and the Jews. Esau's sons will appear to have the strongest beginnings. However, it is the spiritual heritage of Jacob that will win

## What God Achieved in Jacob's Life

out in the end. This is why you do not know any Edomites today, but you know Jewish people. The reason for this is, there is a spiritual destiny for the sons of Jacob; but there would be no spiritual destiny for the sons of Edom because he was willing to give up his inheritance for a *mess of pottage*.

We do not know how much Jacob understood at this time. He approaches his wives to present a united front; and later in this chapter, he will not betray Leah by complaining that Laban cheated him by making Leah his wife. So, he understands, to some degree, the importance of his family and keeping his family together. Does he fully appreciate that they will all become the great nation that God promised his father and grandfather? I think he understood that to a limited degree.

Jacob, while being far from perfect, has said things which indicate he knows that God has been blessing him, despite all the Laban has done.

God has a wonderful life for Jacob mapped out—a most adventurous life, in fact—and Jacob seems to be fighting God the whole time.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Jacob made many mistakes in his life; and he was clearly swindled by his father-in-law, Laban. But he assumed complete responsibility for his wife Leah and their subsequent children (I would not be surprised if Leah was impregnated on their wedding night). From the beginning—despite being deceived—Leah became Jacob's responsibility. Now, there may have been times that he resented her and did not treat her as well as he should; however, the testimony of the two wives here reveals that Jacob accepted the full responsibilities of his marriage to both women.

As an aside—and I mention this because some commentators treat Jacob's polygamy as the worst sin on earth<sup>232</sup>—it would have been wrong for Jacob to abandon Leah at any time, even if the end result would have been a one man and one woman marriage.

**Application:** Let's say that there is a gay marriage and one or both participants recognize that what they are doing is wrong. Would it be best for them to stay together? Absolutely not! They are not married, regardless of what the law says. There is no such thing as a permanent union between two males, apart from friendship.

**Application:** Let's say you were raised in a Mormon offshoot, and you married two wives; and you come to a point where you realize that you should not have done that. Here, the situation is more delicate. If a separation of one person out of this marriage occurs, it is still up to the husband to support his wife, as he promised to do in his marriage vows. Whether or not they ought to separate depends a great deal upon the culture. If the rejected wife is thrown out, and she has no means of support, then separating her out from the marriage is the wrong thing to do.

So God has told Jacob to return to the land of promise; he tells his wives about the dream, the details of his dream (including God's command to return to Canaan), and here is how they respond.

<sup>232</sup> I am being hyperbolic here.

And so answers Rachel and Leah; and so they say to him, “What [is] still to us? A portion and an inheritance in a house of our father. Are we not considered foreigners to him, for he sold us? And so is eaten also an eating our money, for all the riches which snatched away Elohim from our father to us—this and our sons. And now all that has said Elohim unto you, do.”

Genesis  
31:14–16

Rachel and Leah responded, [by] saying to him, “What [remains] still to us? [Do we have] a portion or an inheritance in our father’s estate? Are we not considered foreigners to him, for he sold us? Therefore, our money has been eaten away, and Elohim has snatched away the property which [was] from our father to us—[we have] this [your livestock] and our sons. So now, all that Elohim has said to you, [that] do.”

Rachel and Leah responded to him, saying, “What now remains to us? Do we even have a portion or an inheritance from our father’s estate? Does he not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up and God has snatched away the property which should have come from our father to us. So we have the livestock which is yours and our sons and nothing else. So, whatever God told you to do, do that.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so answers Rachel and Leah; and so they say to him, “What [is] still to us? A portion and an inheritance in a house of our father. Are we not considered foreigners to him, for he sold us? And so is eaten also an eating our money, for all the riches which snatched away Elohim from our father to us—this and our sons. And now all that has said Elohim unto you, do.”  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Rahel and Leah answered and said to him, Have we yet a portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we not accounted as strangers by him? for he hath sold us, and hath devoured our money also. Therefore, all the wealth that the Lord hath separated from our father is ours and our children's: and now all that the Lord hath said to thee, do.   |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Rahel answered with <u>the consent of</u> Leah, and said to him, Can there now be yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house; are we not considered by him as strangers For he hath sold us, and eating he hath eaten our money. Therefore all the wealth that the Lord hath taken from our father is ours and our children's. And now, all that the Lord hath said to thee, do. [JERUSALEM. Are we not considered strangers to him? for he hath sold us and, behold he is not willing to give us our dowry. ] |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And Rachel and Lia answered: Have we anything left among the goods and inheritance of our father's house? has he not counted us as strangers and sold us, and eaten up the price of us? But God has taken our father's riches, and delivered them to us, and to our children: wherefore do all that God has commanded you.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not accounted by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also quite devoured our money. For all the riches which God has taken away from our father, that is ours and our children's. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do."   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, We have no portion or inheritance in our fathers house. Behold, we are counted by him as strangers, for he has sold us, and has squandered also our money. For all the riches which God has selected from our father belong to us and our children; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Rachel and Lea answered and said to him, Have we yet a part or inheritance in the house of our father? Are we not considered strangers by him? for he has   |

sold us, and quite devoured our money. All the wealth and the glory which God has taken from our father, it shall be our's and our children's; now then do whatsoever God has said to you.

Significant differences: The Pseudo-Jonathan targum adds additional text; the Latin appears to leave out, *and so said to him*. The phrase *what is still to us* appears to be missing from the other ancient texts. This could be rendered *what still belongs to us; what is still ours?* It appears that most of the translations worked that phrase in with the phrase that follows (which is not necessarily wrong).

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English      | Then Rachel and Leah said to him in answer, What part or heritage is there for us in our father's house? Are we not as people from a strange country to him? for he took a price for us and now it is all used up. For the wealth which God has taken from him is ours and our children's; so now, whatever God has said to you, do.   |
| Easy English                | Then Rachel and Leah replied, 'We no longer have any part of our father's inheritance. He thinks of us as foreign people. He sold us ['He sold us' means that Laban gave Leah and Rachel to Jacob in return for Jacob's work.]. Then he used what he received for us on himself.' They said, 'Everything that God took from our father belongs to us, and to our children. So you must do what God tells you.' |
| Easy-to-Read Version        | Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, "Our father has nothing to give us when he dies. He treated us like strangers. He sold us to you, and then he spent all the money that should have been ours. God took all this wealth from our father, and now it belongs to us and our children. So you should do whatever God told you to do."  |
| Good News Bible (TEV)       | Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, "There is nothing left for us to inherit from our father. He treats us like foreigners. He sold us, and now he has spent all the money he was paid for us. All this wealth which God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children. Do whatever God has told you."   |
| International Children's B. | Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, "Our father has nothing to give us when he dies. He has treated us like strangers. He sold us to you, and then he spent all of the money you paid for us. God took all this wealth from our father, and now it belongs to us and our children. So you do whatever God told you to do."   |
| <i>The Message</i>          | Rachel and Leah said, "Has he treated us any better? Aren't we treated worse than outsiders? All he wanted was the money he got from selling us, and he's spent all that. Any wealth that God has seen fit to return to us from our father is justly ours and our children's. Go ahead. Do what God told you."   |
| Names of God Bible          | Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there anything left in our father's household for us to inherit? Doesn't he think of us as foreigners? Not only did he sell us, but he has used up the money that was paid for us. Certainly, all the wealth that <b>Elohim</b> took away from our father belongs to us and our children. Now do whatever <b>Elohim</b> has told you."                                       |
| NIRV                        | Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share of our father's property? Doesn't our father think of us as outsiders? First he sold us. Now he has used up what he was paid for us. All the wealth God took away from our father really belongs to us and our children. So do what God has told you to do."  |
| New Simplified Bible        | Rachel and Leah asked: »Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? »Are we not accounted as foreigners by him? He sold us and also utterly consumed the price paid for us. »For all the riches that God took away from our father belong to us and to our children. Do what God told you to do.«   |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Common English Bible    | Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there any share or inheritance left for us in our father's household? Doesn't he think of us as foreigners since he sold us and has even used up the payment he received for us? All of the wealth God took from our father belongs to us and our children. Now, do everything God told you to do."  |
| Contemporary English V. | Rachel and Leah said to Jacob: There's nothing left for us to inherit from our father. He treats us like foreigners and has even cheated us out of the bride price that should have been ours. Now do whatever God tells you to do. Even the property God took from our father and gave to you really belongs to us and our children.  |
| The Living Bible        | Rachel and Leah replied, "That's fine with us! There's nothing for us here—none of our father's wealth will come to us anyway! He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women; he sold us, and what he received for us has disappeared. The riches God has given you from our father were legally ours and our children's to begin with! So go ahead and do whatever God has told you to."                            |
| New Berkeley Version    | Rachel and Leah answered him: "What share or legacy is there left us in our father's house? Does he not consider us outsiders? For he sold us and has enjoyed the profits of our dowry as well [In as much as Jacob's service was the dowry he paid, by which Laban had done so well.]. For all the wealth God has taken away from father belongs to us and to our children. Now, then, you do whatever God has told you." |
| New Century Version     | Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, "Our father has nothing to give us when he dies. He has treated us like strangers. He sold us to you, and then he spent all of the money you paid for us. God took all this wealth from our father, and now it belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you to do."   |
| New Life Version        | Rachel and Leah answered him, "Do we still have any part or share in our father's house? Does he not think of us as strangers? For he has sold us. And he has used all the money that was paid for us. All the riches that God has taken away from our father belong to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you to do."   |
| New Living Translation  | Rachel and Leah responded, "That's fine with us! We won't inherit any of our father's wealth anyway. He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. And after he sold us, he wasted the money you paid him for us. All the wealth God has given you from our father legally belongs to us and our children. So go ahead and do whatever God has told you."   |

#### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | Then RachEl and LeAh asked, 'So, what about our inheritance in the house of our father? Does he now consider us strangers? Why, he sold us and then spent our money! Therefore, all the wealth and glory that God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children. So, do whatever God has told you to do!'   |
| International Standard V    | <b><i>Rachel and Leah Consent to Leave</i></b><br>Then Rachel and Leah asked him, "Do we have anything left of inheritance remaining in our father's house? He's treating us like foreigners. He sold us and spent all of the moneyj that rightfully belonged to us. Furthermore, all of the wealth that God has stripped away from our father belongs to us now and to our children. So do everything that God tells you to do." |
| Revised Knox Bible          | Why, answered Rachel and Lia, we have no reversion left to us in all our father's wealth and possessions. He has treated us as if we were no kindred of his, putting us up for sale, and keeping the price for himself. And now, it seems, God has taken away our father's wealth from him, and given it to us and to our children. Why then, do as the Lord has bidden you.  |
| Translation for Translators | Rachel and Leah replied to him, "Our father will not give us anything more when he dies [RHQ]. He treats us as though we were foreigners [RHQ]! Your working for him all these years was like a payment that you gave him as a price for us, but we will not inherit any of that money that he got as a price for us. He has spent it all!  |

Surely all of the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do whatever God has told you to do!"

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | Rachel and Leah were to answer, and were to say: Is there portion to inherit in our father's house? - We are to have been esteemed as unfamiliar by him, for he is to have sold us, and was to devour a devouring of the silver! The wealth, he of mighty he of mighty ones, is to have snatched away from our father, is for our sons; even that he of mighty ones is to have said, be doing!  |
| Conservapedia           | Rachel and Leah then said in answer, "Do we even have any portion or allotment left to us in our father's house? Aren't we reckoned to him no differently from foreigners? After all, he has good as sold us, and moreover he has eaten out our money [Literally, "our silver," the more common of the two precious metals used for money.]. All the riches that God has taken from our father, belongs to us and to our sons. So now whatever God told you to do, you do!" |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible      | Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him ; " What portion or inheritance is there to us in the house of our father? Are we not like strangers and outcasts to him? for he sold us, and has eaten up our money. For all the wealth which God has stripped from our father that is ours, and our children's, so do all that God has said to you."  |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Then answered Rahel and Lea, and said unto him: we have no part nor inheritance in our fathers house: he counts us even as strangers, for he has sold us, and has even eaten up the price of us. Moreover all the riches which God has taken from our father, that is ours and our childrens. Now therefore whatsoever God has said unto you, that do.  |
| H. C. Leupold           | And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him: Have we still any share or inheritance in our father's house? Have we not been accounted as foreigners by him? for he hath sold us and hath entirely used up the money that should have been ours. For all riches which God hath taken away from our father really belong to us and to our children. And now as for all that God bade thee, do it.  |
| Tree of Life Version    | Then Rachel answered along with Leah and they said to him, "Is there still a portion and inheritance for us in our father's house? Aren't we considered foreigners to him? For he has sold us and has also completely used up our bridal price. For all the riches that God has taken away from our father is for us and for our children. So now, everything God said to you, do it!"  |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not treated by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and has also completely devoured our money.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, is there any share or inheritance left for us in our dad's house? Are we regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and then gone on to devour our silver.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Rachel and Leah answered, and they said to him: "Is there for us any part in our father's inheritance?" Because we counted as strangers to him, because he sold us, and he has eaten up the sum of our cost.  |

### Catholic Bibles:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Christian Community (1988) | Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Have we still any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? Haven't we been regarded by him as foreigners since he has sold us, and well and truly used up our money? Surely all the fortune that God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children. So do then all that God has told you." |
|----------------------------|---|

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| The Heritage Bible        | And Rachel and Leah answered, and said to him, <i>Is there</i> yet any allotment and inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not calculated by him as strangers? Because he has sold us, and has quite devoured also our silver. Because all the riches which God has snatched from our father, that is ours and our children's; and now, what God has said to you, do.  |
| New American Bible (2002) | Rachel and Leah answered him: "Have we still an heir's portion in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as outsiders [Outsiders: literally "foreign women"; they lacked the favored legal status of native women. Used up: literally "eaten, consumed"; the bridal price that a man received for giving his daughter in marriage was legally reserved as her inalienable dowry.]? He not only sold us; he has even used up the money that he got for us! All the wealth that God reclaimed from our father really belongs to us and our children. Therefore, do just as God has told you." |
| New American Bible (2011) | Rachel and Leah answered him: "Do we still have an heir's portion in our father's house? Are we not regarded by him as outsiders?*" He not only sold us; he has even used up the money that he got for us! All the wealth that God took away from our father really belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."   |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | In answer Rachel and Leah said to him, 'Are we still likely to inherit anything from our father's estate? Does he not think of us as outsiders now? For not only has he sold us, but he has completely swallowed up the money he got for us. All the wealth that God has reclaimed from our father belonged to us and our children in any case. So do whatever God has told you.'   |
| New English Bible         | Rachel and Leah answered him, 'We no longer have any part or lot in our father's house. Does he not look on us as foreigners, now that he has sold us and spent on himself the whole of the money paid for us?'   |
| Revised English Bible     | Rachel and Leah answered him, "We no longer have any share in our father's house. Does he not look on us as strangers, now that he has sold us and used the money paid for us? All the wealth which God has saved from our father's clutches is surely ours and our children's. Now do whatever God has told you to do."  |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible | Rachel and Le'ah answered him, "We no longer have any inheritance from our father's possessions; and he considers us foreigners, since he has sold us; moreover, he has consumed everything he received in exchange for us. Nevertheless, the wealth which God has taken away from our father has become ours and our children's anyway; so whatever God has told you to do, do." |
| The Complete Tanach   | And Rachel and Leah replied and said to him, "Do we still have a share or an inheritance in our father's house?"  |

**Do we still have:** Why should we stop you from returning? Do we still hope to inherit anything of our father's property among the males?

Are we not considered by him as strangers, for he sold us and also consumed our money?

**Are we not considered by him as strangers:** Even at a time when people usually give a dowry to their daughters, viz. at the time of marriage, he behaved toward us as [one behaves toward] strangers, for he sold us to you (for you served him fourteen years for us, and he gave us to you only) as wages for labor.

**our money:** For he kept the wages for your labor.

But all the wealth that God separated from our father is ours and our children's. So now, all that God said to you, do."

**But all the wealth:** Heb. כִּי. This כִּי here means “but.” That is, we have nothing of our father’s, but what the Holy One, blessed be He, separated from our father is ours.

**separated:** Heb. לִיצָה, a term meaning that he separated, and so every expression of הִלָּצָה in Scripture means separation, that one separates another from harm or from the enemy.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| exeGeses companion Bible | And Rachel and Leah answer and say to him,<br>Have we yet any allotment or inheritance for us<br>in the house of our father?<br>Are we not fabricated by him as strangers?<br>For he sold us;<br>and in consuming, he also consumed our silver:<br>for all the riches Elohim stripped from our father,<br>are ours and our sons:<br>now then, whatever Elohim says to you, work. |
| Hebraic Roots Bible      | And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, Is there yet to us a portion and an inheritance in the house of our father? Are we not counted strangers by him. For he has sold us, and selling he has sold us for silver. For all the wealth which Elohim has taken from our father, it is for us and for our sons. And now all that which Elohim has said to you, do.           |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)        | Then Rachel and Leah answered him, saying, “Have we still a share in the inheritance of our father’s house? Surely, he regards us as outsiders, now that he has sold us and has used up our purchase price. Truly, all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, do just as God has told you.”                             |
| Kaplan Translation       | Rachel and Leah both spoke up. 'Do we then still have a portion and an inheritance in our father's estate?' they exclaimed. 'Why, he treats us like strangers! He has sold us and spent the money! All the wealth that God has taken from our father actually belongs to us and our children. Now, whatever God has said to you, do it!'   |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible    | And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any chelek or nachalah for us in bais avinu?<br>Are we not regarded by him nokhriyyot (foreigners, strangers)? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our kesef.<br>For all the oisher Elohim hath taken from avinu, that belongs to us and baneinu; so then, whatsoever Elohim hath said unto thee, do. |
| The Scriptures 1998      | And Raḥēl and Lē’ah answered and said to him, “Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father’s house?<br>“Are we not reckoned by him as strangers? For he has sold us, and also entirely consumed our silver.<br>“For all the wealth which Elohim has taken from our father are ours and our children’s. Now then, do whatever Elohim has told you.”                 |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| The Amplified Bible | Rachel and Leah answered him, “Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house? Are we not counted by him as foreigners? For he sold us [to you in marriage], and has also entirely used up our purchase price. Surely all the riches which God has taken from our father are ours and our children’s. Now then, whatever God has told you to do, do it.” |
| The Expanded Bible  | Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, “·Our father has nothing to give us when he dies [‘Is there any lot/portion or inheritance still in our father’s house?]. He has ·treated [considered] us like ·strangers [or foreigners]. He sold us to you, and ·then he spent all of the money you paid for us [‘devoured the money]. God took all this wealth                                |

from our father, and now it belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you to do.”

Kretzmann's Commentary

And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Laban's treatment of his daughters made it appear that he was glad to get rid of them. Are we not counted of him strangers? For he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. Laban's conduct toward his daughters made it seem that he considered them sold to Jacob for the fourteen years' service. And not only that, but the very price, the very money that their services were worth to him, he retained for himself; he devoured their very substance, wherein they received no share. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours and our children's; now, then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do. Laban is an example of a covetous, hard-hearted, and tyrannical man, who has only his own advantage in mind and considers no one else's rights. It is from people of this stamp that pious, faithful men are obliged to endure much suffering. But God watches over His children and will permit no harm to strike them without His permission.

NET Bible®

Then Rachel and Leah replied to him, “Do we still have any portion or inheritance<sup>24</sup> in our father’s house? Hasn’t he treated us like foreigners? He not only sold us, but completely wasted [*Heb* “and he devoured, even devouring.”] the money paid for us [*Heb* “our money.”]! Surely all the wealth that God snatched away from our father belongs to us and to our children. So now do everything God has told you.”

The Pulpit Commentary

And Rachel and Leah (vide on Genesis 31:4) answered and said unto him (Kalisch overdoes his attempt to blacken Jacob's character and whitewash Laban's when he says that Rachel and Leah were so entirely under their husband's influence that they spoke about their father "with severity and boldness bordering on disrespect." It rather seems to speak badly for Laban that his daughters eventually rose in protest against his heartless cruelty and insatiable greed), Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? The interrogative particle indicates a spirited inquiry, to which a negative response is anticipated. Kalisch obviously regards it as preposterous that Rachel and Leah should have expected anything, since "married daughters in the East never had any such claim where there were sons." But Laban had not treated Jacob's wives even as daughters. Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us (however much they loved Jacob they could not but resent the mercenary meanness of Laban, by which they, the free-born daughters of a chieftain, had been sold as common serfs), and hath quits devoured also our money—literally, and hath eaten up, yes, even eating up, our money, the inf. abs; אִלֵּף, after the finite verb, expressing the continuance (Keil) and intensity (Kalisch) of the action. For—וְ is by some interpreters rendered but (Jarchi), so that (Keil), indeed (Kalisch), though there is no sufficient reason for departing from the usual meaning "for" (Rosenmüller)—all the riches which God hath taken from our father,—thus Rachel and Leah also recognize the hand of God (Elohim) in Jacob's unusual prosperity—that is ours, and our children's (Rachel and Leah mean to say that what Jacob had acquired by his six years of service with their father was no more than would have naturally belonged to him had they obtained their portions at the first): now then, Whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do. It is clear that, equally with himself, they were prepared for breaking off connection with their father Laban.

The Voice

**Rachel and Leah:** Is there any inheritance at all left for us from our father's house? He regards us as foreigners *now that we've married you*. He sold us *in exchange for your years of labor*, and he has been using up all of the money *that should have been ours*. All of the property God has taken from our father *and given to you actually belongs to us and to our children anyway!* So do whatever God said to do.

Sometimes the Voice adds additional text which is unhelpful; but most of the time, their additional text helps to explain the existing text. Consider this translation to be an updated Kretzmann’s Commentary.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Benner’s Mechanical Trans. | ...and Rahhel <sup>[Ewe]</sup> answered, and Le’ah <sup>[Weary]</sup> , and they said to him, is there also for us a portion and inheritance in the house of our father, were we not thought of as foreigners to him given that he sold us and he also greatly ate our silver, given that all the riches which Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> delivered from our father, to us is he and to our sons and now all which Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> said to you, do,... |
| Concordant Literal Version | And answering are Rachel and Leah, and saying are they to him, "Is there further for us a portion and allotment in the household of our father? Are not we reckoned as foreigners by him? For he sold us, and devouring is he, even devouring our money. For all the riches and the glory which the Elohim rescues from our father, ours is it and our sons'. And now, all that the Elohim says to you, do.   |
| Modern English Version     | Rachel and Leah answered him, "Is there any portion or inheritance left for us in our father’s house? Are we not seen by him as foreigners? For he has sold us and has completely spent our money also. For all the riches which God has taken from our father are ours and our children’s. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do it."   |
| NASB                       | Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father’s house? Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."  |
| New European Version       | Rachel and Leah answered him, Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house? Aren’t we accounted by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also quite devoured our money. For all the riches which God has taken away from our father, that is ours and our children’s. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.  |
| Young’s Updated LT         | And Rachel answers—Leah also—and says to him, "Have we yet a portion and inheritance in the house of our father? Have we not been reckoned strangers to him? for he has sold us, and he also utterly consumes our money; for all the wealth which God has taken away from our father, it is ours, and our children’s; and now, all that God has said unto you—do."  |

**The gist of this passage:** Leah and Rachel both agree with Jacob and recognize openly that their father has kept them from gaining a normal inheritance. "If God told you to leave," they answer, "Then we will leave."

| <b>Genesis 31:14a</b>               |   |   |                            |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong’s #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]     | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #253  |
| ‘ânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced ġaw-NAWH] | <i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #6030<br>BDB #772 |

## Genesis 31:14a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology              | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Râchêl (רָחֵל)<br>[pronounced raw-KHALE]                           | ewe and is transliterated <i>Rachel</i>                               | feminine proper noun          | Strong's #7354<br>BDB #932 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו)<br>[pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction        | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| Lê'âh (לֵאָה) [pronounced lay-AW]                                  | <i>weary; transliterated Leah</i>                                     | feminine singular proper noun | Strong's #3812<br>BDB #521 |

**Translation:** *Rachel and Leah responded,...* You may recall that, in previous years, Leah and Rachel have been at odds with one another over Jacob's affection and the children thing. However, here they respond to what Jacob says together. Often, we have a singular verb in a situation like this. It suggests that Rachel spoke first, but Leah spoke up as well. Based upon what follows, they are in agreement with one another about this. God the Holy Spirit does not differentiate between the two wives. That is, we do not know what Rachel said, and stopped; and then what Leah said.

Jacob has been with them on Laban's ranch for 20 years, and it is time to make a change. They have all been married for 13 years (and I believe that Jacob married Rachel right after Leah, based on credit).

The way that this is phrased—Rachel and Leah responding to Jacob—indicates that they have given themselves over, in their souls, to Jacob.

When Ruth pledged herself to the people of God, this happened: *Then all the people who were at the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman, who is coming into your house, like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel."* (Ruth 4:11a; ESV) Although we previously treated Leah and Rachel as two wives being at odds with one another (and they were), they are now united with Jacob, as his wives. We now have team Jacob, which includes both Leah and Rachel. It is no longer a marriage between Jacob and Rachel; and they are stuck with Leah.

We may reasonably assume like most conversations in Scripture, we get the highlights, but not the entire discussion.

H. C. Leupold: *The two wives are of one mind and agree entirely with their husband. The construction indicates that Rachel took the lead and spoke first—watta'an, singular, though a double subject follows; yet that alone is a common enough construction and used as an alternate for the plural verb.. Yet Rachel is placed first, indicating that the initiation lay with her. The wives recognize that they no longer share the interests and the objectives of their paternal home.*<sup>233</sup>

## Genesis 31:14b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's #        |
|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (וּ)<br>[pronounced wah] | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |

<sup>233</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

| Genesis 31:14b   |   |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                  |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]   | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine plural, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55            |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510           |
| hă (ה) [pronounced heh]  | interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied. This can be used in an indirect interrogation and translated <i>whether</i> . |  | Strong's #none<br>BDB #209          |
| 'ôwd (וְעוֹד) [pronounced gôhd]  | <i>still, yet, again, again and again, repeatedly, in addition to; continue, continually; more, farther, besides; as yet, even yet</i>  | adverb   | Strong's #5750<br>BDB #728          |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix             | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510           |
| chêleq (חֵלֶק) [pronounced KHAY-lek]   | <i>portion, tract, territory, share, allotment; smoothness</i>  | masculine singular noun  | Strong's #2506 (and #2511) BDB #324 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced weh]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251           |
| nachălâh (נַחְלָה) [pronounced nah-khuh-LAW]   | <i>inheritance, possession, property, heritage</i>  | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #5159<br>BDB #635          |
| The NET Bible: <i>The two nouns may form a hendiadys, meaning "a share in the inheritance" or "a portion to inherit."</i> <sup>234</sup> |   |  |                                     |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]   | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>   | a preposition of proximity   | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88           |
| bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced BAH-yith]  | <i>house, residence; household, habitation as well as inward</i>  | masculine singular construct   | Strong's #1004<br>BDB #108          |
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]   | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i>   | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix                        | Strong's #1 BDB #3                  |

<sup>234</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

**Translation:** ...[by] saying to him, “What [remains] still to us? [Do we have] a portion or an inheritance in our father’s estate? These two women are saying a variety of related things. One will say something and the other sister will chime in, finishing the other’s thought or sentence. Either they discussed this, or this stuff has been on their mind for several years now.

They are saying, “We have been here on this compound for all of our lives and what do we have? Do we have any portion in our father’s estate? When he dies, will any part of it be given to us?” Although it is not clear in this part of v. 14, the expected answer is, *no*.

Their own father has no feeling for them; and has made no provision for them. His treatment of them push both wives closer to Jacob. Their marriage, as imperfect as it was, still provided stability and provision for the women and their children.

Chuck Smith: *In other words, our father has gone ahead and used up our dowry. He's not given us anything. We've got nothing there.*<sup>235</sup>

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

Rachel and Leah feel as if their father has frozen them out as well. Laban has not put anything aside for them. They have no inheritance from him. This is very likely because Laban has sons now; so it is clear that he favors his own sons. His daughters belong to Jacob; and so, he sees no reason to enrich them.

Leah and Rachel reason this out. There is no inheritance from their father that they can depend upon. Even though Laban may have, at one time, made such promises to them; this inheritance is no longer available to them.

What Leah and Rachel say is made in 3 points in v. 15:

| Genesis 31:15a   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| hă (ה) [pronounced <i>heh</i> ]  | interrogative particle which acts almost like a piece of punctuation, like the upside-down question mark which begins a Spanish sentence. The verb <i>to be</i> may be implied. This can be used in an indirect interrogation and translated <i>whether</i> . |  | Strong's #none<br>BDB #209 |
| lô' (לא or לוּל) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]  | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| Hă lô' together expect an affirmative answer and can be translated <i>is not?</i> Let me suggest, this might be understood to mean, <i>is it not true that?</i> Or, <i>isn't this the case that?</i> Or, <i>is it not obvious that?</i> These two words together present a question with an obvious, self-evident answer. This combination is found in Genesis 4:7 20:5 Job 1:10 Num. 23:26 1Kings 1:11. |   |  |                            |
| nōk <sup>e</sup> rîy (נְכַרִּי) [pronounced <i>nawck<sup>e</sup>-REE</i> or <i>nohk-REE</i> ]  | <i>foreign, alien, stranger; strange; foreign woman, a harlot; of another family; metaphorically, unknown, unfamiliar; new, unheard of</i>  | feminine plural adjective                                      | Strong's #5237<br>BDB #648 |

<sup>235</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14.

## Genesis 31:15a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                 | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| châshab (חָשַׁב)<br>[pronounced <i>khaw-SHAHB</i> '] | <i>to think, to regard, to be accounted, to count, to determine, to calculate, to be imputed, to be reckoned; to be taken for, to be like</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural Niphal perfect   | Strong's #2803<br>BDB #362 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]                    | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** *Are we not considered foreigners to him,...* Then one of them says, "Look, as far as Laban is concerned, we are foreigners. We are not his flesh and blood." The idea is, *of course there will be no inheritance for us!* Putting aside an inheritance for his daughters does not appear to be on his mind.

The Voice is quite good in throwing in some additional text which often explains the subtext; I will give their translation/commentary<sup>236</sup> throughout this passage. They fill in a lot of blanks. The Voice: *Is there any inheritance at all left for us from our father's house? He regards us as foreigners now that we've married you.*

Genesis 31:15 "Does he [Laban] not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up."

### "Are we not counted as strangers to him?" (Various commentators)

Chuck Smith: *He spent the dowry. He sold them. He spent the dowry. We're just like a stranger to him.*<sup>237</sup>

Clarke: *Rachel and Leah, who well knew the disposition of their father, gave him here his true character. He has treated us as strangers - as slaves whom he had a right to dispose of as he pleased; in consequence, he hath sold us - disposed of us on the mere principle of gaining by the sale.*<sup>238</sup>

Thomas: *The true character of Laban is clearly seen from the fact that his daughters entirely sided with Jacob against their own father .... They too had experienced their father's selfishness and greed, and were ready to approve of their husband's project and to go with him.*<sup>239</sup>

Gill: *He had not treated them as children, nor even as freeborn persons; but as if they were foreigners that he had taken in war, or bought of others; or at least, that they were born bondmaids in his house, and so had a right to sell them as he had.*<sup>240</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *"Are we not treated by him as foreigners?" (V. 15a—ESV) Laban has demonstrated by his actions that, like Jacob, they are now 'foreigners' living among the tribe with no permanent rights. This bring out a rather unpleasant side to Laban's character and behaviour, possibly resulting from the slow increase of his dissatisfaction with Jacob.*<sup>241</sup>

<sup>236</sup> When you add in text that was not already there, you are, in essence, writing commentary. There is nothing wrong with this and *the Voice* indicates what has been added by using italics.

<sup>237</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15.

<sup>238</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15.

<sup>239</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>240</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15.

<sup>241</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:14–15 (slightly edited).

### “Are we not counted as strangers to him?” (Various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Are we not confuted of him strangers? as if we had no more right to his estate than strangers? Instead of a good part of his estate, which by the law of God and nature belongs to us, 2Corinthians 12:14, wherewith he should have endowed us upon our marriage, he hath made sale of us for this fourteen years' hard service, seeking only his own, not our advantage.*<sup>242</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The rhetorical question of the two women, “Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners?” expresses the fact that they were exploited in the same way as Jacob who was a foreigner from Canaan rather than being treated as his own flesh and blood.*<sup>243</sup>

L. M. Grant: *Rachel and Leah were fully prepared to move immediately. They realized that there was nothing to tie them to their father. One thing they remembered, that their father had sold his daughters, enriching himself through their sale, so that they became virtually strangers to their own father.*<sup>244</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *[T]he father has treated his own children not as though they were his own flesh and blood but as though they were of as little concern to him as... “foreigners,” i. e., those of an unsympathetic foreign group.*<sup>245</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Rachel and Leah revealed in their words here that they had long resented the way their father had essentially “sold” them to Jacob. He had treated them as “strangers” or “foreigners,” rather than as his own daughters.*<sup>246</sup>

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Now they back up this assertion:

#### Genesis 31:15b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                       | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]                | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>                   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition   | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| mâkar (מָכַר)<br>[pronounced maw-<br>KAHR] | <i>to sell, to sell [betroth] [a daughter]; to sell [deliver over] [a people]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix | Strong's #4376<br>BDB #569 |

**Translation: ...for he sold us?** Did not their father Laban bargain for them? Did he not sell Leah first, under false pretenses, and then Rachel? Did he not get 14 years of work from Jacob for them? So they are not his daughters; they are like slaves which he sold.

On top of this, none of Laban's gain appears to go to his daughters. It is as if Laban had two slaves and he sold them. He does not appear to have any interest in them after the sale.

The Voice: *He sold us in exchange for your years of labor,...*

<sup>242</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15.

<sup>243</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 490); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>244</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>245</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>246</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 481.

We now get a better feel for Rachel and Leah's feelings toward their father. They have both been married for about 13 years to Jacob<sup>247</sup> and they recognize that Laban sold them for Jacob's labor (we might even think, his slavery). He was not at all interested in their well-being; or helping them to find a good husband. He first pawned off Leah on Jacob, even though that was not who he wanted, so that he could get seven more years of service out of Jacob.

The daughters feel that their father Laban treats them as he would treat foreigners; he is a user and he will use anyone, but he will tend to exploit those who are not related to him even more than his own relatives. This has been his attitude toward his daughters. They were used to obtain personal, financial gain. The fact that Jacob knew Yahweh and was prospered by God is something which was not an issue to Laban and not a part of the equation. They are expressing frustration with the way that they have been treated as well. Jacob is concerned that he may be taking them from their family and that they might be resistant for that reason. This is not the case; they have no bonds to this family because of the shabby way their father has used them.

None of this is related to the very common practice of providing a dowry for the family of the woman getting married. That was a normal custom and Jacob working in order to earn one of Laban's daughters was also legitimate. The problem was, Laban's motivation. He treated his own daughters as chattel and treated them as such. Even though Jacob clearly desired to marry one daughter, Laban engineered events so that both daughters eventually married Jacob (although Leah had to be cooperative to a point; this does not mean that she knew completely what was going on). In hindsight and based upon the present relationship that Laban had with his daughters, it became obvious to them that they were nothing more than being traded off, as one might do for some cattle.

None of this disparages the concept of the dowry or indicates that there is anything fundamentally wrong with a suitor paying if fiancée's family money prior to the marriage; it simply means that Laban, in this instance, saw his own daughters as nothing more than cattle he had raised up to sell.

Genesis 31:15 "Does he [Laban] not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up."

### **"He has sold us" (various commentators)**

Gill: *for he has sold us; he had sold them to Jacob for fourteen years' service, as if they had been his slaves, instead of giving dowries with them as his children.*<sup>248</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *"He has sold us and quite devoured our marriage portion." The marriage portion was for the wife's benefit but Laban has purloined it. Thus he has in effect received a price for them and treated them as having been 'sold'. They feel very bitter at having been so treated as chattels. Their complaint can be paralleled in other texts from the Old Babylonian period, Nuzu, and Elephantine, where on occasion a father would withhold from his daughter a part of the bride payment which was normally handed on as a dowry.*<sup>249</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Their statement "For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price" refers to the fact that by cheating Jacob out of his wages for fourteen years, Laban in effect had consumed the bride-price since Jacob's fourteen years of service was payment to marry both Rachel and Leah.*<sup>250</sup>

<sup>247</sup> After Laban deceived Jacob into marrying the wrong daughter, I think that he gave Rachel to him on credit. That is, he married Rachel soon after, but had to work an additional 7 years for her.

<sup>248</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15 (slightly edited).

<sup>249</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:14–15.

<sup>250</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 490); accessed October 16, 2017.

### “He has sold us” (various commentators)

H. C. Leupold: *[W]hereas a less greedy father would have used the gift from his prospective son-in-law to provide a dowry for his daughters, Laban "entirely used it up" (Hebrew, "eaten up" — 'akhal with absolute infinite "entirely") most likely by investing it directly in his flocks and herds so that it was completely absorbed.*<sup>251</sup>

Arthur S. Peake: *They sided with Jacob, embittered by Laban's meanness in giving them no part of the bride-price.*<sup>252</sup>

George M. Lamsa: *Since Jacob married in Laban's house, Laban gave his daughters no presents. The whole dowry of Jacob's fourteen years of hard labor went to Laban.*<sup>253</sup>

Their own father sold them as if they were cattle or slaves. So many people think that the Bible presents a time when men treated women just like property or as if they were slaves. This has been true throughout human history. There are men who respect women and those who do not. Despite Laban's actions, we are studying how Jacob has called his wives out to speak to him because he respects their opinion and their volition.

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### Genesis 31:15c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                       | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]    | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                        | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced <i>aw-KAHL</i> ] | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy; to enjoy; to taste; to diminish, to lessen, to take from</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #398<br>BDB #37   |
| gam (גַּם) [pronounced <i>gahm</i> ]       | <i>also, furthermore, in addition to, as well; even, moreover</i>  | adverb   | Strong's #1571<br>BDB #168 |
| 'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced <i>aw-KAHL</i> ] | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy; to enjoy; to taste; to diminish, to lessen, to take from</i> | Qal infinitive absolute                                  | Strong's #398<br>BDB #37   |

When a verb is doubled, this is the Hebrew mode of expressing intensity, repetition, or emphasis.

The NET Bible: *The infinitive absolute (following the finite verb here) is used for emphasis.*<sup>254</sup>

|  |  |   |                            |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]         | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                       | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object         | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| keçeph (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced <i>KEH-sef</i> ] | <i>silver, money; silver [as a metal, ornament, color]; shekels, talents</i> | masculine singular noun with a 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix | Strong's #3701<br>BDB #494 |

<sup>251</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>252</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional reference here.

<sup>253</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional reference here.

<sup>254</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

## Genesis 31:15c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation | Common English Meanings | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's # |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|

The NET Bible: *The word “money” is used figuratively here; it means the price paid for Leah and Rachel. A literal translation (“our money”) makes it sound as if Laban wasted money that belonged to Rachel and Leah, rather than the money paid for them.*<sup>255</sup>

**Translation:** *Therefore, our money has been eaten away,...* At some point in time, these women had some wealth; they had some coinage. But, Laban has worked things out so that they are no longer being paid for anything—and they do work. Or, in the alternative, it appeared at one time that Laban had wealth set aside for them for their inheritance, but that is no longer the case.

In this chapter, and the previous, they have been having children. Laban does not appear to be providing them with any help (recall, for 14 years, Jacob worked simply for their hands in marriage). They had some savings and Jacob makes a little, but Laban has done everything possible to cheat Jacob. So, with all these mouths to feed, and Laban trying to work against Jacob, these women either lack personal savings or their father is no longer seeing to their inheritance.

Laban has set no money aside for his daughters. They are like foreigners to him. He has not considered putting aside valuables for them to inherit.

Some interpret this to mean, *Laban ate what he received in payment for us.* The idea is, Laban was paid for his daughters, and that money is long gone in the eating of steak and shrimp that he has enjoyed.

Genesis 31:15 “Does he [Laban] not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up.”

### “He has devoured our money” (various commentators)

Gill: *[A]nd he has quite devoured also our money; that which he got by the servitude of Jacob, instead of giving it to them as their portion; he spent it on himself and his sons, and there was nothing left for them.*<sup>256</sup>

Clarke: *And he has quite devoured also our money - Has applied to his own use the profits of the sale, and has allowed us neither portion nor inheritance.*<sup>257</sup>

Gill: *[I]t was plain [to all that] Laban never intended to give them anything; but kept all he had to himself, or designed it for his sons, and therefore it was in vain for them to hope for anything.*<sup>258</sup>

Matthew Poole: *He has not only withheld from us, but spent upon himself, that money which he got by your care and industry, whereof a considerable part was due in equity to us and to our children.*<sup>259</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The “bride-price” refers to the compensation paid to the family of the bride for the loss of the bride’s presence and services and her potential offspring and would demonstrate proof to Laban’s family that Rachel and Leah would be well cared for by Jacob.*

<sup>255</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

<sup>256</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15 (slightly edited).

<sup>257</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15.

<sup>258</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14 (slightly edited).

<sup>259</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:15 (slightly edited).

### “He has devoured our money” (various commentators)

Wenstrom continues: *The fourteen years’ service that Jacob performed for Laban in order to marry both Rachel and Leah was to be in lieu of the usual “bride-price” and so by cheating Jacob out of his wages, Laban was cheating his daughters and grandchildren!*<sup>260</sup>

Bruce K. Waltke: *Legally, the consummating sum given in marriage was to be transferred at least in part to the daughters. Some of Jacob’s wages during the fourteen years he worked for them should also have belonged to them. Further, by cheating Jacob during the last six years, Laban has continued to cheat them.*<sup>261</sup>

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Genesis 31:14–16 Rachel and Leah responded to him, saying, “What now remains to us? Do we even have a portion or an inheritance from our father’s estate? Does he not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up and God has snatched away the property which should have come from our father to us. So we have the livestock which is yours and our sons and nothing else. So, whatever God told you to do, do that.”

### Laban’s daughters complain about his treatment of them (many commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *Here the two daughters of Laban accuse their father of not acting faithfully with them in light of the cultural expectations of that day (Hurrian culture). In the Hurrian documents the “Mohar” or “wife’s dowry” was saved, at least in part, for the daughter. However, Laban had taken Jacob’s wages and totally consumed them. Genesis 31:15 shows us the daughters recognized this greediness and neglect by Laban their brother.*<sup>262</sup>

The NET Bible: *He sold us and...wasted our money. The precise nature of Rachel’s and Leah’s complaint is not entirely clear. Since Jacob had to work to pay for them, they probably mean that their father has cheated Jacob and therefore cheated them as well. See M. Burrows, “The Complaint of Laban’s Daughters,” JAOS 57 (1937): 250-76.*<sup>263</sup>

Benson: *They both agree in acknowledging that his behavior had been extremely ungenerous and sordid, even to them, his own children.*<sup>264</sup>

Matthew Poole: *We can expect no further benefit from him, but deceit, and oppression, and injury, and therefore are willing to leave him. This was the fruit of his unnatural and unworthy carriage to them, that it did eat out their natural affection to him.*<sup>265</sup>

Bruce K. Waltke commenting on Rachel and Leah’s response recorded in Genesis 31:14-16, writes, *Their grievances pertain to the past, present and future. In the past, Laban sold them and used up what was paid for them; in the present, he counts them as foreigners; their future and that of their children depends on the wealth they now have and that rightly belongs to them but which they fear Laban will steal.*<sup>266</sup>

<sup>260</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 490); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>261</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 490); accessed October 16, 2017. Wenstrom cites Genesis, A Commentary, page 426, Zondervan.

<sup>262</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:15.

<sup>263</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

<sup>264</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14–15.

<sup>265</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14.

<sup>266</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 490); accessed October 16, 2017. Wenstrom cites Genesis, A Commentary, page 426, Zondervan.

The Voice: *Is there any inheritance at all left for us from our father's house? He regards us as foreigners now that we've married you. He sold us in exchange for your years of labor, and he has been using up all of the money that should have been ours.*

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

This love of money is clearly a problem that Laban has. A normal father would be thinking of his daughters, and he would be putting money aside for them, either as an inheritance or as a large present later on in his life. But, by the testimony of his daughters, he has not done this. His daughters clearly find this hurtful.

**Application:** This is a problem for many believers. They have a windfall, or they begin to make money, and they are unable to properly handle it. They try to use money to make them happy; they place their trust in money. They let their earnings overshadow everything else. Maybe they don't make enough money and they want more; maybe they make a lot of money, but they still want more; or maybe they make a lot of money, but it infects them. Whatever the case, some Christians can handle a variety of problems but they cannot handle money. And this goes to all levels of believers—this can happen to a board of deacons or to the pastor of a church.

**Application:** However, before you get the wrong idea, I am not saying that a church cannot have a large income and I am not saying that a pastor-teacher cannot have a large income. Some believers are blessed with money; and this can even extend to the pastor-teacher. However, if you know a pastor-teacher who has a very nice car and a very nice house, it is not up to you to decide how much he should make or how much he ought to have—unless, of course, you are on his board of deacons. There are a several handfuls of pastor-teachers throughout the United States who make a great deal of money. It is none of your business how much they make; and you should not be posting snarky things about rich pastor-teachers or rich Christians. That is between the pastor-teacher, the board of deacons and God. You are *not* a part of this equation; and if you start posting negative memes of Pastor Charley Brown, then you can expect some divine discipline, because the amount of money that Charley Brown makes is none of your business.

**Application:** Let's say that Charley Brown teaches false doctrine. How about that? Then, if you need to discuss the false doctrine, then deal with it on the basis of the doctrine and the Bible. You do not need to bring Charley Brown's name into your discussion or your posting or whatever. Again—a pastor-teacher is responsible to God and he is responsible to his board of deacons, but he is not responsible to you (and if you are a member of his congregation and you object to his teaching, then you quietly leave and find another church). Furthermore, it is quite obvious that most people who post snarky memes about pastors who are rich are simply envious. Don't post snarky memes, don't write him long letters saying you think he is too materialistic, and do not discuss him with friends at a party or in church or anywhere else.

**Application:** Let me make this as clear as I can—personal attacks on pastor-teachers are wrong, sinful, and you will end up under divine discipline for doing so. Charley Brown might be a rich and famous pastor-teacher; he might drive a really nice vehicle, he may fly on private jets or in first class; and he may have a house that makes you green with envy. That is none of your business and it will never be any of your business. Keep your personal opinions about Charley Brown to yourself; and most of the time, if you have negative thoughts about him, then you need to rebound that sin (name it to God; 1John 1:9).

**Application:** There are believers in this world who are poor as can be; they are believers who barely scrape by; and there are believers who do alright; and there are believers who make a lot of money. This is never any of your business. God knows what He is doing.

**Genesis 31:15** *Are we not counted strangers by him? For he has sold us, and has also entirely devoured our silver.*

As far as Laban is concerned, his daughters are strangers to him. He has sold them (to Jacob) and devoured their silver. Apparently there was a specific inheritance which was silver. Maybe it was customary; maybe Laban had originally put it aside for them. Remember that Laban is a successful businessman, and therefore had the

wherewithal to bless his daughters, married or not. But whatever there was set aside for them, it is not there any more. Let me suggest that, in the ancient world, there were fewer places to hide assets. So, on the one hand, a person today can be very rich, and yet able to hide his money in a variety of places; but then, no so much. My guess is, his daughters knew how much money he had and where he spent or invested it.

Essentially, Laban sold his daughters to Jacob. At this point, Laban does not appear to see his daughters as his own. Whatever promises he made to them in the past, no longer stand.

### Genesis 31:16a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]                                       | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>                                       | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition  | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| kôl (כָּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]                                    | <i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>                           | masculine singular construct followed by a definite article   | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| ʿôsher (עוֹשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>GOH-sheer</i> ]                         | <i>riches; wealth; property</i>   | masculine singular noun with the definite article   | Strong's #6239<br>BDB #799 |
| ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                            | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied  | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| nâtsal (נָצַל) [pronounced <i>naw-TSAHL</i> ]                           | <i>to snatch away, to deliver, to rescue, to snatch out of danger, to preserve, to recover</i>        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect   | Strong's #5337<br>BDB #664 |
| ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]                      | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural noun   | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]                                      | <i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>              | preposition of separation   | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]                          | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix                                     | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]                            | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix                          | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| hûwʾ (הוּוֹ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]                                   | <i>he, it; himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>                             | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied | Strong's #1931<br>BDB #214 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                                 | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |

## Genesis 31:16a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                          | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| bānîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ] | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i> | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |

**Translation:** ...and Elohim has snatched away the property which [was] from our father to us—[we have] this [your livestock] and our sons. They seem to both acknowledge God and blame him here. If there was to be any property given from their father to them, that has been taken away by God. So they have *this* and their sons. *This* is their lack of wealth and their lack of inheritance. All of this is gone.

In other words, they don't see things turning around or getting better if they remain there on Laban's ranch. So they are backing their husband Jacob 100%.

What has come to Jacob through God's overseeing the breeding, to make certain that Jacob is properly remunerated for his work—this is the inheritance that they are justly entitled to. So, they are fine with this.

The Voice has a nice rendering of this verse: *All of the property God has taken from our father and given to you actually belongs to us and to our children anyway!*

The wives are aware of what is happening. Jacob only receives a specific kind of animal when his flocks breed; and it is as if God is taking that which logically should go to Laban, but it goes to Jacob. Furthermore, this makes up for Laban never looking out for them. To him, they are nothing more than slaves. So they are fine with his money flowing to their husband, as that will be the only inheritance that they will receive.

Genesis 31:14–16 Rachel and Leah responded to him, saying, “What now remains to us? Do we even have a portion or an inheritance from our father's estate? Does he not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up and God has snatched away the property which should have come from our father to us. So we have the livestock which is yours and our sons and nothing else. So, whatever God told you to do, do that.”

**“The wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our sons.”**

Gill: *For all the riches which God has taken from our father,.... And given to Jacob for his labour: that is ours, and our children's; it belonged to us by the law of nature, before it came into thine hands; and our right unto it is still more manifest, and is confirmed by the service you hast done for it, by which means it came into thy possession; and therefore it is no point of conscience with us, nor need it be any with you especially, to go off with it.*<sup>267</sup>

Matthew Poole: *That is ours; not only by God's special gift, but by the natural right which children have to a share in his estate, and upon the account of thy faithful and laborious service.*<sup>268</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The fact that Jacob worked hard for seven years in order to marry both Rachel and Leah made both women love Jacob all the more and resent their father. Rather than treating the bride-price like a dowry, to provide a financial base for his daughters and grandchildren's future well-being and security, as should have been done, Laban had used it up for himself and gave them nothing.*

<sup>267</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:16 (slightly edited).

<sup>268</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:16.

## “The wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our sons.”

Wenstrom continues: *Both Rachel and Leah felt that since their husband had been responsible for the great prosperity of their father, and since this was in effect what Jacob had given in order to marry them, these possessions by all rights should have come to them and their children. Instead, Laban made it clear that he would give neither woman anything and as a result they felt justified in interpreting God's dealings with Laban, in causing his flocks to gradually become those of Jacob, as simply taking what had rightly belonged to them and their children and restoring it to them.*<sup>269</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *From one point of view the wives are correct when they assert that all the present wealth of their father belongs to them and to their children, because he apparently had not been wealthy before Jacob came who by his assiduous and skilful management increased his father-in-law's "riches" enormously. By all canons of right Jacob's family ought to have been adjudged as deserving of a good share of these riches. But the wives saw that their father was not minded to give them or their husband anything at all. Apparently, the long pent-up grievances find expression in these words.*<sup>270</sup>

The only reason that there is some wealth to speak of is because of Jacob's overseeing Laban's flocks.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Genesis 31:16b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]         | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| ‘attâh (אתָּ) [pronounced <i>‘gaht-TAWH</i> ]                                   | <i>now, at this time, already</i>   | adverb of time   | Strong's #6258<br>BDB #773 |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>   | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| ’ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]                                     | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun   | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| Literally translated <i>all that</i> .  |   |  |                            |
| ’âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]                                      | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                     | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| ’Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]                              | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>                                   | masculine plural noun  | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |

<sup>269</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (Pp. 490–491); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>270</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## Genesis 31:16b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                 | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| 'el (אֵל) [pronounced eh]            | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i> | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |
| 'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH] | <i>do, make, construct, fashion, form, prepare, manufacture</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative   | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |

**Translation:** *So now, all that Elohim has said to you, [that] do.* “So, if God has told you to do something, then go ahead and do that.” They know that they cannot remain there under the circumstances that they are in.

If I were to speculate, it would be that Jacob had no idea which way his wives would lean on the idea of moving from Haran; but their complaints about their father make it clear that, leaving this place is good for them as well.

God's timing is impeccable; perhaps a few years ago, these women would not have traveled with Jacob, not wanting to break the family ties. However, they have grown up enough and have seen clearly enough to recognize that they have been used by their father. Notice that they speak as a unit. It is not Rachel speaking and Leah will go along with whatever; or vice versa. They speak with one voice. Up until this time, it is possible that Jacob was not ready. He still has to face Esau, whom he himself cheated 20 years ago. They are all ready to follow what God would want them to do. They recognize that Jacob has not swindled their father in any way but has worked honestly for that which he has gotten. The women see the justness of Jacob's view of things, despite this being against their father.

The NIRV gives us a good understanding of this passage: *Rachel and Leah replied, “Do we still have any share of our father's property? Doesn't our father think of us as outsiders? First he sold us. Now he has used up what he was paid for us. All the wealth God took away from our father really belongs to us and our children. So do what God has told you to do.”* Even the Good News Bible provides us with an excellent translation/interpretation: *Rachel and Leah answered Jacob, “There is nothing left for us to inherit from our father. He treats us like foreigners. He sold us, and now he has spent all the money he was paid for us. All this wealth which God has taken from our father belongs to us and to our children. Do whatever God has told you.”* The Voice also gives us a good sense of what Jacob's wives are saying: **Rachel and Leah:** *Is there any inheritance at all left for us from our father's house? He regards us as foreigners now that we've married you. He sold us in exchange for your years of labor, and he has been using up all of the money that should have been ours. All of the property God has taken from our father and given to you actually belongs to us and to our children anyway! So do whatever God said to do.*

It should be clear that, while the women both acknowledge God, there are other things influencing their decisions. Vv. 14–16 is a list of their reasons for being willing to forsake their father and go with Jacob. “So, if your God is telling you to go to Canaan, then we are onboard with that as your wives,” is the essence of this final statement.

You will note how everything points in the direction of Jacob and his family pulling up stakes and moving to Canaan, a land where none of them had ever been before, apart from Jacob and Rebekah's personal maid (whom I believe accompanied Jacob to Paddan-aram).

**Jacob Tells Rachel and Leah that he wishes to Leave Laban's Service** (a painting by Andrea Vicentino) (Vicenza c. 1542 - Venice c. 1617); from [Master Art](#); accessed October 26, 2017.



**Genesis 31:16** All the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children. Now then, whatever God has said to you, do.” (ESV)

Leah and Rachel both recognize that God has been blessing Jacob specifically. They know that his wealth has increased because of God. They also recognize the duplicity of their father. Therefore, whatever God has told Jacob to do, they are onboard with it.

What appears to be the case is, Laban had promised them an inheritance of silver, but he appears to have spent this silver (or done something else with it). So, the sisters believe that God has blessed Jacob, in part, because of this; to make up for what Laban their father had promised them, but had changed his mind about.

Essentially, whatever Laban has done to these daughters (which appears to be neglect and disinterest), they are in agreement with Jacob to go with him to the Land of Promise.

Their reasoning is, their father Laban no longer has an inheritance to give them; and remaining in Aram until he dies will not change that. So, there is nothing in Paddan-aram for them; there is nothing to hold them there. Their father has no inheritance for them.

Their true inheritance is with Jacob. When they are associated with Jacob, they are associated with the plan of God. When they are associated with Laban, there is no accompanying blessing. There is no spiritual blessing to be had in the line of Laban. His sons, living in Paddan-aram, will lose the blessing by association that they had with Jacob being near. They rejected Jacob, which suggests that they have rejected his God as well.

I do not believe that Jacob knew how his wives were going to respond to him. He gets them out in the field, so that they can give their completely honest opinion, and Jacob can determine what to do next.

Now, we have spent a lot of time criticizing Jacob. However, we must admit that his wives love him and they will stick with him. Furthermore, it appears that he was an excellent and responsible employee. A lot of marriages after 5 or 6 years would not be so onboard (particularly marriages with two wives and two mistresses<sup>271</sup>).

<sup>271</sup> Actually, surrogates.

Genesis 31:14–16 Rachel and Leah responded to him, saying, “What now remains to us? Do we even have a portion or an inheritance from our father’s estate? Does he not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up and God has snatched away the property which should have come from our father to us. So we have the livestock which is yours and our sons and nothing else. So, whatever God told you to do, do that.”

### The Response of Jacob’s Wives (Various Commentators)

Barnes: *His wives entirely accord with his view of their father’s selfishness in dealing with his son-in-law, and approve of his intended departure.*<sup>272</sup>

Guzik: *Their support was significant. This is a huge undertaking, moving such a massive family so far. If not for the support of his wives, Jacob perhaps would not have done what the LORD had told him to do.*

Guzik also points out the interesting fact that: *This may be the first time in quite a while when the sisters Leah and Rachel agreed on anything. They can agree in uniting against a common foe - their father Laban.*<sup>273</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Had Jacob gone back to their permanent home at the time of shearing there would have been much comment and many questions, which is why he calls his wives to come to him. Ostensibly they are coming out to see what is happening, and to ‘pleasure’ Jacob. But they then return to their homes and secretly prepare for their journey. This is evidenced by the fact that Rachel steals her father’s gods.*<sup>274</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Jacob is very conscious that his wives are part of their tribe and that they may elect to remain with them. That is where their portion is and their inheritance. But he need not have worried. It is clear that they feel that Laban has demonstrated by his actions that he sees them as no longer having a part in the tribe. Laban had behaved badly and it would now rebound on him. They felt that they owed him no loyalty.*<sup>275</sup>

Gill: *[Jacob] should leave their father's house, and go into the land of Canaan, as God had directed him; and they signified that they were willing: to go along with him.*<sup>276</sup>

Poole: *We can expect no further benefit from him, but deceit, and oppression, and injury, and therefore are willing to leave him. This was the fruit of his unnatural and unworthy carriage to them, that it did eat out their natural affection to him.*<sup>277</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Rachel and Leah’s statement “do whatever God has said to you” indicates that they acknowledge God’s blessing upon Jacob and that it is God’s will for them to leave their father and go with Jacob and expresses their faith in the Lord and their willingness to risk a journey to the Promised Land.*<sup>278</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Ultimately, then, the wives arrive at the conclusion that the best thing Jacob can do is to obey God’s command and depart. Their mode of arriving at this conclusion is not the most desirable: they finally conclude to consent to what God commands because their best material interests are not being served by the present arrangement.*<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14–19.

<sup>273</sup> *David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:14–16.

<sup>274</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:4–9.

<sup>275</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:14–15 (slightly edited).

<sup>276</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:16.

<sup>277</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14.

<sup>278</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 491); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>279</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

Genesis 31:14–16 Rachel and Leah responded to him, saying, “What now remains to us? Do we even have a portion or an inheritance from our father’s estate? Does he not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you? Therefore, our money has been eaten up and God has snatched away the property which should have come from our father to us. So we have the livestock which is yours and our sons and nothing else. So, whatever God told you to do, do that.”

### The wives accept their husband over their father (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *The two wives naturally agreed with their husband, and declared that they had no longer any part or inheritance in their father's house. For he had not treated them as daughters, but sold them like strangers, i.e., servants. “And he has even constantly eaten our money,” i.e., consumed the property brought to him by our service.*<sup>280</sup>

Trapp: *Thus they prefer a husband to a father. So did Michal, though there was no great store of religion in her. And so nature had taught that "daughter of women" to do, Dan\_11:17. Antiochus the Great gave Cleopatra, his daughter, to Ptolemy Epiphanes, thinking to use her as an instrument to destroy him. But she, contrary to his expectation, clave to her husband.*<sup>281</sup>

Pett: *Because of his behaviour towards them Laban has lost the loyalty and love of his daughters. They are quite content to feel that God has reimbursed them in another way and that all is therefore theirs by right to take away as they wish. Long years of mistreatment had broken down their sense of belonging permanently to the tribe [of their father].*<sup>282</sup>

Thomas: *The true character of Laban is clearly seen from the fact that his daughters entirely sided with Jacob against their own father . . . . They too had experienced their father's selfishness and greed, and were ready to approve of their husband's project and to go with him.*<sup>283</sup>

Whedon: *Rachel and Leah both readily sympathize with their husband as against their father, and look upon Laban's dealings as narrow, unfatherly, and unworthy of him. The last twenty years had largely alienated them from their father's house.*<sup>284</sup>

On the one hand, Jacob is talking to his wives and getting their input to the idea of moving to Canaan. On the other hand, their father, Laban, has treated them as if they are slaves to be bought and sold.

Critics of the Bible and of ancient times often argue that women were treated like slaves, bought and sold without emotion. This chapter of the Bible tells us (1) this was not Jacob’s attitude, who solicited the opinion of his wives regarding their leaving Paddan-aram; but (2) this appeared to be the attitude of their father. With regards to #2, I suspect that, when they had gone, Laban began to appreciate his daughters more, whom he previously had taken for granted. There is a long-time **quote**, *you don't appreciate someone (or something) until they're (it's) gone*. I think that may be applicable here.



**You truly don't appreciate what you have until it's gone** (a graphic); from **Like Success**; accessed October 21, 2017.

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<sup>280</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:14–16.

<sup>281</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:16.

<sup>282</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:16.

<sup>283</sup> Dr. John Constable *The Expository Notes of Dr. Constable*; ©2012; from e-sword, Genesis 31:1–16.

<sup>284</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:15.

Benson: *Whereas Jacob looked upon the wealth which God had transferred from Laban to him as his wages, they look upon it as their portions; so that, both ways, God forced Laban to pay his debts, both to his servant and to his daughters.*<sup>285</sup>

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:14–16 **And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. Surely all the wealth which god has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."**

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:14–16

1. These verses contain the response of Jacob's wife Rachel and her sister Leah.
2. Rachel took the lead and spoke first, although Leah fully concurred with what she said.
3. This is likely one of the few times these two have agreed in the last 20 years.
4. These women are bitter, having been sold into marriage by their father who was concerned only with money.
5. They rightly observe that they have no present portion in the household of Laban, neither do they have any chance of future inheritance.
6. Since they are married, Laban's estate would be divided among his sons.
7. Laban's treatment of his daughters over the years has not escaped their notice, and they are determined to have a measure of revenge.
8. Laban sold his daughters, treating them as nothing more than foreign slaves in order to prosper himself.
9. Beyond that, he provided them with nothing in the way of a dowry, either from his own resources, or what he made off of their sale over the years.
10. He used them to satisfy his monetary lust, and lived high on the hog, while they lived in relative poverty.
11. Laban was not wealthy before Jacob's arrival, but he prospered over the years basically because of the sale of his daughters.
12. By conducting himself in this fashion, Laban turned his daughters against him, and they have come to despise their greedy father.
13. They and their families have suffered physically and emotionally due to his greed.
14. They are correct when they assert that the wealth of their father, at least some of it, belongs to them and their family, since Jacob increased Laban's prosperity significantly.
15. They agree that the hand of God has been involved in taking the wealth of Laban and transferring it to Jacob.
16. They arrive at the conclusion that the best thing Jacob can do is what God has told him.
17. They consent primarily because their best material interests are not being served by the present state of affairs.
18. This is a great example of how God providentially arranges circumstances to further His plan.
19. The hostility of Laban and his sons, coupled with the bitterness of Rachel and Leah serve to push Jacob in the direction of Canaan.
20. Laban is a believer who uses people and loves money, when the believer ought to use money and love people.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:14–16 **Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."**

<sup>285</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14–15.

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:14–16

### Their Response (vv. 14-16)

1. Jacob's wives respond with unity and vim and vigor.
2. Actually they needed little persuading considering how their father had treated them over the years starting from their marriage to Jacob.
3. They are prepared to support Jacob based strictly on what Laban has done to them.
4. The Hebrew "they answered and said" (tautology) is used before a significant statement (18:27; 23:5,10,14; 24:50; 27:37, 39; 40:18).
5. In v.14 they are referring to any possibility of a future inheritance.
6. "Portion and inheritance" are one and the same.
7. Staying behind with their father would be a disaster for them.
8. They would be reduced to even further degradation from this cheapskate.
9. They received no dowry what was expected from a father.
10. They were sold like slaves at the time of their marriage (v. 15).
11. Hence, regarded as no better than "foreigners."
12. But what do they mean in v. 15b?
13. They appear to be referencing Laban's recent turn for the worse financially.
14. Laban's greed and stupidity resulted in his blessing by association being taken away from him.
15. So for the daughters they too see the hand of God in transferring their father's short-lived fortune into Jacob (and their) hand.
16. To their credit they fully see the hand of God that punished Laban where it really hurt and blessed the underdog Jacob (v. 16).
17. They use the very same verb translated "has taken away" which literally is to rescue someone or something from danger.
18. This verb is the buzz term of this scene.
19. The Hebrew verb found in vv. 9 and here in v. 16 is natsal.
20. Laban's forfeited wealth in all its forms are better off with Jacob.
21. By using this verb for the transference of riches Rachel and Leah are indicating that they are in full agreement with Jacob's statement back in v. 9.
22. In conclusion, they exhort their husband to do "whatever God has said to you."

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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## Jacob Surreptitiously Flees Paddan-aram with His Family

These first two verses give us a summary of what Jacob does, with some additional details provided in vv. 19–21.

**And so arises Jacob and so he lifts up his sons and his wives upon camels. And so he leads away all his cattle and all his livestock that he has acquired—cattle of his possession which he has acquired in Padan-aram—to go to Isaac his father a land-ward of Canaan.**

Genesis  
31:17–18

**So Jacob rose up and he lifted up his sons and his wives onto camels, and he led away all his cattle and all his livestock which he had acquired—the cattle of his possession which he acquired in Paddan-aram—[and then he] went to his father Isaac toward the land of Canaan.**

**Jacob rose up and got his wives and sons onto camels, and he led them and his cattle and his livestock that he acquired in Paddan-aram, away toward the land of Canaan, returning home to Isaac his father.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so arises Jacob and so he lifts up his sons and his wives upon camels. And so he leads away all his cattle and all his livestock that he has acquired—cattle of his possession which he has acquired in Padan-aram—to go to Isaac his father a land-ward of Canaan.  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Jakob arose, and lifted up his sons and his wives upon camels; and led all his herds and all his <u>substance</u> which he had obtained, <u>his herds</u> and <u>his substance</u> which he had obtained in Padan Aram, to go unto Izhak his father in the land of Kenaan.   |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Jakob arose, and set his children and his wives upon camels. And he led all his herds and his <u>substance</u> which he had obtained in Padan Aram to go unto Izhak his father in the land of Kenaan. [JERUSALEM. His treasure.]   |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | Then Jacob rose up, and having set his children and wives upon camels, went his way. And he took all his <u>substance</u> , and flocks, and <u>whatsoever</u> he had gotten in Mesopotamia, and went forward to Isaac his father to the land of Chanaan.   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Then Ya'aqub rose up, and set his sons and his wives on the camels, and he took away all his livestock, and all his <u>possessions</u> that he had gathered, including the livestock that he had gained in Paddan Aram, to go to Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan.  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and his wives on camels; And he carried away all his cattle and all his <u>wealth</u> which he had gained in Padan-aram, to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Jacob arose and took his wives and his children up on the camels; and he took away all his <u>possessions</u> and all his <u>store</u> , which he had gotten in Mesopotamia, and all that belonged to him, to depart to Isaac his father in the land of Chanaan.   |
| Significant differences: | The word I translated <i>livestock</i> , could be rendered <i>possessions</i> , <i>substance</i> . One targum translates two different phrases as if they are the same; another leaves out that second phrase altogether. The Latin translates that phrase <i>whatsoever</i> . The two from Aramaic translations also seem to differ. <i>Cattle of his possession</i> is simply <i>livestock</i> in one version; and the phrase is gone in the second one. That phrase appears to be missing from the Greek (however, there seems to be another phrase added onto it). |

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English | Then Jacob put his wives and his sons on camels; And sending on before him all his cattle and his property which he had got together in Paddan-aram, he made ready to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.  |
| Easy English           | So Jacob put his children and wives on camels. He took all his animals, and everything that he had got in Paddan Aram. He left to go to his father Isaac. He left to go to the land of Canaan.   |
| Easy-to-Read Version   | So Jacob prepared for the trip. He put his children and his wives on camels. Then they began traveling back to the land of Canaan, where his father lived. All the flocks of animals that Jacob owned walked ahead of them. He carried everything with him that he had gotten while he lived in Paddan Aram. |

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Good News Bible (TEV)       | So Jacob got ready to go back to his father in the land of Canaan. He put his children and his wives on the camels, and drove all his flocks ahead of him, with everything that he had gotten in Mesopotamia.   |
| International Children's B. | So Jacob put his children and his wives on camels. Then they began their journey back to Isaac, his father. He lived in the land of Canaan. All the flocks of animals that Jacob owned walked ahead of them. He carried everything with him that he had gotten while he lived in Northwest Mesopotamia. |
| Names of God Bible          | <b>Laban and Jacob Make Peace</b><br>Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels. He drove all his livestock ahead of him and took all the possessions that he had accumulated. He took his own livestock that he had accumulated in Paddan Aram and went back to his father Isaac in Canaan.   |

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Contemporary English V. | Then Jacob, his wives, and his children got on camels and left for the home of his father Isaac in Canaan. Jacob took all of the flocks, herds, and other property that he had gotten in northern Syria.  |
| New Berkeley Version    | Jacob then got ready. He mounted his children and his wives on camels and brought away all his cattle, all the movable property he had acquired and the herds of his possession, which he had accumulated in Padan Aram, to travel to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.                 |
| New Century Version     | So Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, and they began their journey back to Isaac, his father, in the land of Canaan. All the flocks of animals that Jacob owned walked ahead of them. He carried everything with him that he had gotten while he lived in Northwest Mesopotamia. |
| New Living Translation  | So Jacob put his wives and children on camels, and he drove all his livestock in front of him. He packed all the belongings he had acquired in Paddan-aram and set out for the land of Canaan, where his father, Isaac, lived.  |

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | Then Jacob got up and mounted his women and children on their camels, along with all the possessions and provisions he had obtained in MesoPotamia and all [the servants and animals] that belonged to him, so he could return to his father (IsaAc) in the land of CanaAn.  |
| International Standard V    | So Jacob got up, seated his children and wives on camels, and drove all his livestock ahead of him, with everything that belonged to him, including the livestock that he had bought and accumulated in Paddan-aram [Paddan-aram was located in northwest Mesopotamia], intending to deliver them to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | Upon this, Jacob waited no longer; he mounted his children and wives on the camels, and set out on his journey; taking with him all his possessions, his cattle and all the wealth he had gained in Mesopotamia; he would return to his father Isaac, and the land of Chanaan.   |
| Translation for Translators | Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels. He made all his livestock go ahead of him. Besides the livestock, he took along all the other things that he had acquired while living in Paddan-Aram. And they prepared to return to his father Isaac, in Canaan land.   |

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible | Jacob was to rise up, and was to bear up his sons and his wives onto camels. He was to drive his livestock with his possessions, even he is to have gathered his |
|--------------------|--|

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
|                         | livestock, that he is to have collected in Padan-aram, for to go to his father Isaac on the solid grounds of Canaan.  |
| Conservapedia           | Then Jacob rose up, and lifted his sons and his wives onto camels. And he drove forth all his cattle, and carried away all his goods that he had obtained, the cattle that he had acquired in Padan-aram, in order to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.                     |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible      | Therefore Jacob arose, and mounted his children and wives on camels, and collected the whole of his herds, and the whole of the property which he had acquired by trading ; property he had acquired in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canan.                     |
| HCSB                    | Then Jacob got up and put his children and wives on the camels. He took all the livestock and possessions he had acquired in Paddan-aram, and he drove his herds to go to the land of his father Isaac in Canaan.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | So Jacob proceeded to set his children and his wives upon camels, and he drove away all his cattle and all his substance which he had acquired, the cattle constituting his property which he had acquired in Paddan Aram, in order to go to Isaac, his father, to the land of Canaan.  |
| Tree of Life Version    | Then Jacob got up and put his children and wives on camels. He drove away all his livestock and all his possessions that he had acquired—the livestock in his possession that he acquired in Paddan-aram—to go to his father Isaac, to the land of Canaan.                              |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Then Jacob arose and placed his sons and his wives upon the camels. He drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all his property, including the livestock he had acquired in Paddan Aram. Then he set out to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.                      |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then Jacob got up, and lifted up his sons and his women putting them on camels. And he drove on all his livestock, and taking all his possessions that he had amassed, his acquired cattle (which he had collected in Padanaram), and departed for Isaac his dad in the land of Canaan. |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Jacob arose, and carried his sons and his wives onto the camels. And he drove all his cattle, and all his property which he had bought--- the cattle he bought, which he purchased in Padan Aram: to go to Isaac his father, toward the land of Canaan.                             |

**Catholic Bibles:**

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| The Heritage Bible        | And Jacob rose up, and lifted his sons and his wives upon camels; And he carried away all his livestock and all his property which he had laid up, the livestock of his production which he had laid up in Padan Aram, to go to Isaac, his father, in the land of Canaan. |
| New American Bible (2011) | Jacob proceeded to put his children and wives on camels, and he drove off all his livestock and all the property he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.   |
| New English Bible         | Jacob at once set his sons and his wives on camels, and drove off all the herds and livestock which he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in Canaan.  |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | Forthwith, Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, and drove off all his livestock -- with all the possessions he had acquired, the livestock belonging to him which he had acquired in Paddan-Aram -- to go to his father Isaac in Canaan.                       |

**Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Complete Jewish Bible | <b>(vi)</b> Then Ya'akov got up, put his sons and wives on the camels, and carried off all his livestock, along with all the riches he had accumulated, the livestock in his |
|-----------------------|--|

possession which he had acquired in Paddan-Aram, to go to Yitz'chak his father in the land of Kena'an.

The Complete Tanach

So Jacob rose, and he lifted up his sons and his wives upon the camels.

**his sons and his wives:** He put the males before the females, but Esau put the females before the males, as it is said (below, 36:6): "And Esau took his wives and his sons, etc." - [from Gen. Rabbah 74:5].

And he led all his livestock and all his possessions that he had acquired, the purchase of his acquisition, which he had acquired in Padan aram, to come to Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan.

**the purchase of his acquisition:** What he had purchased from [the sale of] his animals, viz. manservants, maidservants, camels, and donkeys. — [from Gen. Rabbah 74:5]

exeGeses companion Bible

Then Yaaqov rises  
and lifts his sons and his women on camels;  
and he drives all his chattel  
and all the acquisitions he acquired  
- the chattel he chatted  
which he acquired in Paddan Aram,  
to go to Yischaq his father in the land of Kenaan.

Israeli Authorized Version

Then Yaakov rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Yitzchak his father in the land of Kenaan.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

Thereupon Jacob put his children and wives on camels; and he drove off all his livestock and all the wealth that he had amassed, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

Kaplan Translation

Jacob began the journey, placing his children and wives on the camels. He led away all his livestock, and took all the goods he had acquired, including everything that he had bought in Padan Aram. He was heading to see his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

Then Ya'akov rose up, and set his banim and his nashim upon the gemalim; And he drove all his mikneh, and all his goods which he had gotten, the mikneh of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan Aram, for to go to Yitzchak aviv in Eretz Kena'an.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible*

Then Jacob stood [and took action] and put his children and his wives on camels; and he drove away all his livestock and [took along] all his property which he had acquired, the livestock he had obtained and accumulated in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

The Expanded Bible

So Jacob [rose up and] put his children and his wives on camels, and they began their journey back to Isaac, his father, in the land of Canaan. All the flocks of animals that Jacob owned walked ahead of them. He carried everything [all the property] with him that he had gotten while he lived in northwestern Mesopotamia [Paddan-aram].

Kretzmann's Commentary

#### **Verses 17-24**

Jacob Flees and is Pursued by Laban

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; and he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram, for to go to Isaac, his father, in the land of Canaan. Jacob's plans had evidently been laid and all arrangements made with

great care even before he summoned his wives for the conference which decided in favor of immediate flight. The text repeatedly emphasizes the fact that all the wealth in cattle and goods which Jacob had collected and took along with him on his flight was such as he had honestly gotten.

NET Bible®

So Jacob immediately put his children and his wives on the camels [*Heb* “and Jacob arose and he lifted up his sons and his wives on to the camels.”]. He took [*Heb* “drove,” but this is subject to misunderstanding in contemporary English.] away all the livestock he had acquired in Paddan Aram and all his moveable property that he had accumulated. Then he set out toward the land of Canaan to return to his father Isaac [*Heb* “and he led away all his cattle and all his moveable property which he acquired, the cattle he obtained, which he acquired in Paddan Aram to go to Isaac his father to the land of Canaan.”].

The Pulpit Commentary

Then (literally, and) Jacob rose up (expressive of the vigor and alacrity with which, having obtained the concurrence of his wives, Jacob set about fulfilling the Divine instructions), and set his sons—his children, as in Genesis 31:1; Genesis 32:12, including Dinah, if by this time she had been born (vide Genesis 30:21)—and his wives upon camels. Since neither were able to undertake a journey to Canaan on foot, his oldest son being not more than thirteen years of age and his youngest not more than six. One camel, vide Genesis 12:16. And he carried away—the verb נָקַח, to pant, which is specially used of those who are exhausted by running (Gesenius, sub voce), may perhaps indicate the haste with which Jacob acted—all his cattle,—Mikneh, literally, possession, from kanah, to procure, always used of cattle, the chief wealth of a nomad (cf. Genesis 13:2; Genesis 26:14)—and all his goods which he had gotten,—Recush, literally, acquisition, hence substance, wealth in general, from racash, to acquire (vide Genesis 14:11, Genesis 14:16, Genesis 14:21; Genesis 15:14), which, however, is more specifically described as—the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten (both of the above verbs, kanah and racash, being now employed) in (i.e. during his stay in) Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

The Voice

So Jacob got up, and he put his children and his wives on camels for the journey. He rounded up all of his livestock and all of the property he had gained, including the livestock he had acquired in Paddan-aram, and he began to drive them to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Ya'aqov [*He restrains*] rose and he lifted up his sons and his women upon the camels, and he drove all his livestock and all his goods which he accumulated, the livestock of his possession which he accumulated in Padan-Aram [*Field palace*], to come to Yits'hhaq [*He laughs*] his father, unto the land of Kena'an [*Lowered*],...

Concordant Literal Version

And rising is Jacob, and lifting his wives and his sons on camels, and leading away all his cattle, and all his goods which he got, the cattle he acquired, which he got in Padan, Syria, to come to Isaac, his father, to the land of Canaan.

*Emphasized Bible*

And Laban rose up early in the morning, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban went his way and returned to his place.

Modern English Version

Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and his wives on camels. Then he carried away all his livestock and all his goods which he had obtained, his acquired livestock which he had gotten in Paddan Aram, in order to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

NASB

Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels; and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

New European Version Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives on the camels, and he took away all his livestock, and all his possessions which he had gathered, including the livestock which he had gained in Paddan Aram, to go to Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan.

Young's Updated LT And Jacob rises, and lifts up his sons and his wives on the camels, and leads all his cattle, and all his substance which he has acquired, the cattle of his getting, which he has acquired in Padan-Aram, to go unto Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan.

**The gist of this passage:** Jacob gathered up his family, put them on camels, got all of his stuff together, and they all left for Canaan.

17-18

### Genesis 31:17a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                          | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| qûwm (קום) [pronounced <i>koom</i> ]                             | <i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #6965<br>BDB #877 |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ăguh-KOH<sup>B</sup>V</i> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |

**Translation:** So Jacob rose up... This verb *to rise up* indicates that Jacob has a set of plans which he is going to put into motion. The rising up simply means he is going to get it all started. *The Amplified Bible* conveys this understanding: Then Jacob stood [and took action]... The New American Bible (2011) gives a similar approach: Jacob proceeded to put his children and wives on camels,

### Genesis 31:17b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                              | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâsâ' (נָסָא) [pronounced <i>naw-SAW</i> ]                           | <i>to lift up, to bear, to carry</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                        | Strong's #5375<br>BDB #669 |
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                                 | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                              | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                     | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                       | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>                  | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>               | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |

## Genesis 31:17b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                        | Common English Meanings                               | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| nāshîym (נָשִׁים)<br>[pronounced naw-SHEEM] | women, wives  | feminine plural noun;<br>irregular plural of<br>Strong's #802; with the<br>3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine<br>singular suffix | Strong's #802<br>BDB #61   |
| ʿal (עַל) [pronounced<br>gah]               | upon, beyond, on, against,<br>above, over, by, beside | preposition of relative<br>proximity   | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752 |
| gâmâl (גָּמָל) [pronounced<br>gaw-MAWL]     | camel (this is obviously a<br>transliteration)        | masculine plural noun<br>with the definite article   | Strong's #1581<br>BDB #168 |

**Translation:** ...and he lifted up his sons and his wives onto camels,... Jacob has gathered up all that he has acquired while living in Padan-aram, including his wives and children. They are put onto camels.

It sounds as if, right after this discussion, they go. However, it is not unlikely that Jacob said, “At 0-500 hours tomorrow, we leave, as a family.” No doubt, there was some discussion about when they would leave; and my guess is, it was either immediately or within a few days.

One of the reasons that we reasonably assume that vv. 17–18 overlap with vv. 19–21 is, Rachel is reported as stealing from her father in the second passage while up on her camel here in v. 17 and ready to go.

*Gill: and set his sons and his wives upon camels; which were his own, see Genesis 30:43; creatures fit for travelling; on these he set his wives, Rachel and Leah, and his concubine wives, Bilhah and Zilpah; for these went with him, as appears from Genesis 33:6; and "his sons", or rather "his children": for they were not all sons, there was one daughter, and they were all young; his eldest son Reuben could not be much more than twelve years of age, and his youngest son Joseph about six.*<sup>286</sup>

In this passage, we have the mention of camels, which appear to be related to wealth (Genesis 24:35 30:43). We might think of them as being the ancient world vehicle. We do not really have anything about Jacob's acquisition of same, apart from: **Thus the man [Jacob] increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.** (Genesis 30:43; ESV) Nothing is said about him actually breeding the camels himself; and I would suggest that these things named here were gotten in trade for his flocks and/or their wool. In fact, let's imagine that, one day, Laban changes Jacob's cut, so that, no longer are the newborn striped sheep his (as a for instance). Jacob may have a dozen of those; so, in order to keep things from being too confusing, he sells them in exchange for servants, camels and donkeys. This is purely speculation; but it would explain how Jacob built up, in such a short time, acquisitions of property outside of his own livestock breeding program.

*Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: Jacob put his wives and children on camels, which we have noted in our previous studies in the book of Genesis, were a prime measure of wealth back in the days of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob since camels were rare back then.*<sup>287</sup>

The wives would have included his two concubines. Wenstrom writes: *In the days of the patriarchs, a concubine was considered as a "second-class wife," acquired without payment of bride-money and possessing fewer legal rights. In the Old Testament period, a concubine was a legal wife but one of secondary rank and she could be sent away with a small gift. Therefore, the children of a concubine*

<sup>286</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17.

<sup>287</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 491); accessed October 16, 2017.

*did not have the same legal rights as the wife and so the inheritance would go to the child of the wife rather than the concubine.*<sup>288</sup>

I would suggest to you that, even though these other two women are referred to as concubines or as mistresses or as secondary wives, they were more like surrogates than anything else, bearing children on behalf of their mistresses (Rachel and Leah). Unlike a secondary wife, it does not appear that Jacob continued to have relations with Bilhah or Zilpah. The Bible *always* presents them as the mothers of their children; at no time are their children counted as Leah or Rachel's, despite the original plan for them to be surrogate mothers for their mistresses.

I should note here that I am using this term *mistresses* in two different ways. On the one hand, in relationship to Jacob, Bilhah and Zilpah are counted by some as his *mistresses* (they really aren't, but that is beside the point). However, Bilhah's mistress is Rachel and Zilpah's mistress is Leah.

**Genesis 31:17** Then Jacob rose up and set his sons and wives upon camels.

This does not mean that Jacob, 2 minutes later, started getting everyone ready to leave. There would have been a time interval here; or Jacob already has his exit timed and planned out.

*Whedon: [H]is secret departure showed how he yet leaned more to his own devices than upon the providence of God.*<sup>289</sup>

Jacob could not simply leave at some random point in time, and his father-in-law discover this that night, because his father-in-law would easily catch up to him. So, there had to be a right time, when Jacob being gone with his family would not be known for awhile.

Don't misunderstand me—that is not necessarily the right thing for Jacob to do. That is how he reasoned through this in his own mind. He obviously has to leave. However, Jacob will plan his exit as an escape.

Jacob, Laban and Laban's sons all had their own routines, and they would be in separate areas for various periods of time. This both exercised and fed the flocks that they were responsible for. As we will see, Jacob's getaway will give him a 3-day head start.

You may recall that, when they were coming to an agreement on Jacob's wages, Laban took many of Jacob's sheep and placed them with his own sons, and then had his own sons stay their distance from Jacob. He did not want the chance that Jacob might steal some of these sheep for breeding purposes. The striped and blotched sheep that originally were Laban's were taken to his sons, a 3-day's ride away.

Let me suggest that Jacob's consideration of Laban's livestock is what allowed Jacob to have only a 3-day head-start. The one complaint that Laban will not air will be, *what about my livestock?* We may assume that Jacob took great pains to make certain that they were cared for. Now, how exactly he did this, is unknown to us. Did he have some of Laban's slaves working for him, and did he put them in charge of the animals when he left? Did he bring in some ally of Laban's to watch Laban's sheep and goats while Jacob and company left? We don't know; but we can be reasonably sure that Jacob did not take any of them; and that Jacob saw to their care after he left. Therefore, at that point, someone beholden to Laban knew that Jacob was leaving; and that person would have contacted Laban immediately (at the same time, taking care of Laban's livestock). This is all behind the scenes stuff; information which was not recorded in the Bible. However, we can certainly make the assumption that Jacob saw to the care of Laban's livestock after he left.

One of the things which Jacob collected over time was camels. Today, this would have been a collection of several vehicles. Today, he might have one car per wife and mistress; then, he bought a camel for each person; and probably another camel or three upon which stuff could be carried.

<sup>288</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 491); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>289</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:17.

Jacob came to Paddan-aram, insofar as we know, with almost nothing (he appears to have traveled with his mother's personal maid—which suggests that he may not have been completely empty handed<sup>290</sup>). In any case, he will leave with a great flock, 2 wives, 2 mistresses, around 12 children (I probably need to go back and count them<sup>291</sup>), and a pair of camels for each person. Besides this, Jacob would have had servants as well.

This is a huge amount of stuff (and they have young children); and they will not be moving as quickly as Laban will move when he finds that they are gone.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown have some interesting things to say about this nomadic life: *Little time is spent by pastoral people in removing. The striking down the tents and poles and stowing them among their other baggage; the putting their wives and children in houdas like cradles, on the backs of camels, or in panniers on asses; and the ranging of the various parts of the flock under the respective shepherds; all this is a short process. A plain that is covered in the morning with a long array of tents and with browsing flocks, may, in a few hours, appear so desolate that not a vestige of the encampment remains, except the holes in which the tent poles had been fixed.*<sup>292</sup>

### Genesis 31:18a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                                 | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâhag (נָהַג) [pronounced naw-HAHG]   | <i>to bring, to lead, to urge on a course, to drive [animals] along, to drive away, to lead away [as a captive]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #5090<br>BDB #624 |
| Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: "Drove away" is the verb nahagh (נָהַג), which in this context refers to flocks of sheep and herds of cattle being "led" or "driven." <sup>293</sup> |   |   |                            |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                                     | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]   | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>   | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article                      | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| mîq <sup>e</sup> neh (מִקְנֵה) [pronounced mik-NEH]   | <i>cattle, livestock (specifically sheep, cows and goats); herds, flocks</i>  | masculine singular (collective) noun; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #4735<br>BDB #889 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וַ) [pronounced weh]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |

<sup>290</sup> Many disagree about this.

<sup>291</sup> Not all of his daughters are named.

<sup>292</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:17.

<sup>293</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 491); accessed October 16, 2017.

## Genesis 31:18a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| kôl (לֹכ) [pronounced koh/]; also kôl (לֹכ) [pronounced koh/] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>   | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article         | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| r <sup>e</sup> kûwsh (שֹׁכֵר) [pronounced reh-<br>OOSH]       | <i>that which is acquired; substance, wealth; [moveable, transportable] property, goods; possessions; livestock</i> | masculine singular noun; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #7399<br>BDB #940 |
| 'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced ash-ER]                           | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun   | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| râkash (שָׂכַר) [pronounced raw-<br>KAHSH]                    | <i>to acquire, to gain; to collect [gather, get], to gather property</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                             | Strong's #7408<br>BDB #940 |

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: “Gathered” is the verb *rakhash* (שָׂכַר) (*raw-kash*), which means, “to acquire” and in context refers to all the property and livestock that Jacob had “acquired” during his last six years of service to Laban.<sup>294</sup>

**Translation:** ...and he led away all his cattle and all his livestock which he had acquired... Over the past 6 years, Jacob has acquired a lot of cattle and livestock through his agreements with Laban—which agreements had angered Laban and his sons. It should be pointed out that these subsequent *agreements* were unilateral. Laban said, “Okay, this is how we are going to figure your salary from hereon out.”

It is Jewish tradition that Jacob had 5500 head of cattle.<sup>295</sup> That seems quite excessive to me, given the amount of his flock which Jacob will give to his brother Esau.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob would have put all the material goods on donkeys and would have ordered his servants to drive his flocks ahead of him...Jacob’s livestock would have included “striped, speckled, spotted and mottled (blotched)” sheep and goats as well as dark colored sheep.*<sup>296</sup>

Jacob took that which he earned and no more: *[Jacob] did not indemnify himself for his many losses by carrying off any thing of Laban’s, but was content with what Providence had given him.*<sup>297</sup>

Although nothing is said about provision made for those of Laban’s flock, we may rest assured, Jacob did not just leave them to fend for themselves. He was a serious man who took his responsibilities seriously. Therefore, we may assume that he took the necessary steps to secure that which belonged to Laban. One reason we know this is, Laban spends no time worrying about, going after, counting his own flock; he only goes after that which he believes is taken from him—his ewe lambs (that is, his two daughters) and his idols.

When he catches up to Jacob, Laban will not accuse him of abandoning his flock or mistreating them or not making provisions for them, further suggesting that Jacob did Laban no intentional harm.

<sup>294</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 491); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>295</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:18. He cites Pirke Eliezer, c. 37. fol. 41.

<sup>296</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 491); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>297</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:18.

## Genesis 31:18b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| mîq <sup>e</sup> neh (מִקְנֵה)<br>[pronounced mik-NEH]  | <i>cattle, livestock</i> (specifically <i>sheep, cows and goats</i> ); <i>herds, flocks</i>                  | masculine singular (collective) noun; construct form                              | Strong's #4735<br>BDB #889 |
| qin <sup>e</sup> yân (קִינְיָן)<br>[pronounced kin <sup>e</sup> -YAWN]  | <i>acquisition, possession; getting, substance, purchase, riches, goods</i>                                  | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #7075<br>BDB #889 |
| Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: "Acquired livestock" is composed of the noun <i>miqneh</i> (מִקְנֵה), "livestock" in the form of sheep and goats and the noun <i>qinyan</i> (קִינְיָן) ( <i>kin-yawn</i> ), "acquired," which denotes that which is acquired by purchase. <sup>298</sup> |  |   |                            |
| 'āsher (אֲשֶׁר)<br>[pronounced ash-ER]  | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>   | relative pronoun  | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| rākash (רָכַשׁ)<br>[pronounced raw-KAHSH]   | <i>to acquire, to gain; to collect [gather, get], to gather property</i>                                     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                            | Strong's #7408<br>BDB #940 |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>          | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| Paddân (פַּדָּן)<br>[pronounced pahd-DAWN]  | <i>to extend, a plateau; garden, field; transliterated Paddan, Padan</i>                                     | proper singular noun/location   | Strong's #6307<br>BDB #804 |
| 'Ārām (אַרָּם) [pronounced uh-RAWM]   | <i>the highland, high region; exalted; and is transliterated Aram; sometimes rendered Syria, Mesopotamia</i> | singular proper noun  | Strong's #758<br>BDB #74   |

Together, these words refer to the table land of Aram; Paddan or Paddan-Aram, a region of Syria. If there is a directional *hê* added to Paddan, then this means *to [toward] Paddan-aram*.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: "Paddan Aram" (פַּדָּן אַרָּם) is another name for "Aram Naharaim," which means, "Aram of the Two Rivers." Therefore, the word is synonymous with the name "Mesopotamia," which appears in Genesis 24:10 since the word "Mesopotamia" is composed of the pronoun noun Aram (אַרָּם), "Aram" and the plural form of the noun *nahar* (נְהַרִּים), "two rivers."

Wenstrom continues: *These two rivers were in the western part of Mesopotamia and the two rivers were the Balikh and the Khabor, tributaries of the Euphrates River. The city of Haran was on the Balikh River about a seven hundred mile journey north-northeast of Beersheba and nearby was the city of Nahor, which was founded by Abraham's brother, Nahor.*

Wenstrom concludes: *The name "Paddan" means "field, plain" therefore, the expression "Paddan Aram" means, "plain of Aram." The name "Aram" (אַרָּם) (Hebrew: 'aram pronounced arawm) means, "exalted" and is frequently translated "Syrian" or "Syria" and is used to speak specifically of the Aramean people who were a leading branch of Semitic people living in Mesopotamia and northern Syria (2 Sam. 8:5-6; 1 Kgs. 20:20-21).*<sup>299</sup>

<sup>298</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 492); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>299</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 492); accessed October 16, 2017.

**Translation:** ...—the cattle of his possession which he acquired in Paddan-aram—... Jacob lived in Padan-aram working for his Uncle Laban for 20 years. The first 14 years were spent earning the hand of his wives. The last 6 were spent acquiring his own cattle and livestock. As we have seen, Jacob’s wealth increased dramatically in those 6 years.

The livestock which Jacob acquired would have either been the off-colored sheep and goats or they would have been sold and traded for other types of livestock (which apparently included camels). Although we are never given an actual number of animals which Jacob owned (we will be told how many he chooses to give to Esau in the upcoming chapter), it appears that Jacob acquired quite a bit of wealth (measured in livestock) over the time that he was in Paddan-aram. He converted some of this wealth to servants and camels (Genesis 30:43).

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Remember, after fourteen years of service to Laban, Jacob still had no property or livestock of his own (See Genesis 30:30). Therefore, everything that Jacob is taking with him he acquired during the last six years of his service to Laban in Paddan Aram.*<sup>300</sup>

There are very close ties between the Jewish people and at least some of the people of Aram. Recall that God called Abram to move to Canaan, and he got about halfway there, stopping in Aram, with his family. When his brother died, Abram finally followed God’s orders and went all of the way to Canaan. However, his family remained there in Paddan-aram, which includes Laban and company.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Isaac and Jacob both took Aramean wives (Gen. 25:20; 28:5) and in fact, Jacob is called the “wandering Aramean” in Deuteronomy 26:5. Therefore, “Paddan Aram” refers to the city of Nahor where Abraham’s brother founded a city and named it after himself and was the place in which Laban and his family resided.*<sup>301</sup>

They have been apart long enough for their languages to advance in different directions. We may reasonably assume that Laban and Jacob had grandparents who spoke the same language; but Laban’s interaction with the people of Aram have affected his speech (he might be speaking the Aramaic of the land now); and Jacob’s language would have been infused with some Canaanite words and sayings. Insofar as we know, this accounts, in part, for the two different languages (obviously, there are more people involved in this language schism than just Laban and Jacob).

| Genesis 31:18c   |   |   |                                    |
|--|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong’s #                 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]                 | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #510          |
| bôw’ (בו) [pronounced boh]                             | <i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>                          | Qal infinitive construct  | Strong’s #935<br>BDB #97           |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]                 | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #510          |
| Yis <sup>e</sup> châq (ישׁחק) [pronounced yihse-KHAWK] | <i>he laughs; laughing; transliterated Isaac</i>  | masculine singular proper noun  | Strong’s #3327 & #3446<br>BDB #850 |
| ’âb (אב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]                | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong’s #1<br>BDB #3              |

<sup>300</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 492); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>301</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 492); accessed October 16, 2017.

## Genesis 31:18c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| 'erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]   | <i>earthward (all or a portion thereof), on [toward, upon] the earth [ground]; on [upon, toward] the land [territory, country, continent; ground, soil]</i> | feminine singular noun with the directional hê; construct form | Strong's #776<br>BDB #75   |
| K <sup>e</sup> na'an (כְּנָעַן) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> NAH- <i>gahn</i> ] | which possibly means <i>merchant</i> and is transliterated <i>Canaan</i>  | masculine proper noun; territory                               | Strong's #3667<br>BDB #488 |

**Translation:** ...[and then he] went to his father Isaac toward the land of Canaan. Everyone is gathered up to go back to Jacob's former home in Canaan. What appears to be the case—and this is rather sketchy—Jacob never seems to quite go back to his father Isaac, although he does return to the land of Canaan. Jacob and Isaac will only be mentioned in the same breath at Isaac's funeral (Genesis 35:27–29).

This is a fascinating aspect to this story which is not detailed in Scripture. Does Jacob ever return to his father prior to his death? Do they ever reunite? On the one hand, this seems to be a part of Jacob's plan, but, on the other, he never follows through.

Genesis 31:17–18 *Jacob rose up and got his wives and sons onto camels, and he led them and his cattle and his livestock that he acquired in Paddan-aram, away toward the land of Canaan, returning home to Isaac his father.*

### Canaan and the Palestinian Covenant (from William Wenstrom)

"Canaan" is the more ancient name of Palestine, apparently derived from Hurrian, meaning, "belonging to the land of red purple," the dye the early Canaanites or Phoenician traders peddled far and wide.

The natural boundaries of Canaan as expressed in the Bible extend from the Negev in the South to the northern reaches of the Lebanon Range in Syria and the land west of the range and of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea.

The Lord promised Abraham and his descendants the land of Canaan as a permanent possession (See Genesis 12:7; 13:14-17; 17:8) as well as Isaac (See Genesis 26:3-5) and Jacob (See Genesis 28:13).

The possession of the land refers to the "Palestinian" Covenant, which was a confirmation and enlargement of the original "Abrahamic" covenant and amplified the land features of the "Abrahamic" covenant (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18). The "Palestinian" covenant was reiterated to Moses (Ex. 6:2-8) who described the geographical boundaries of the land in Numbers 34:1-12 and who prophesied the fulfillment of this covenant during the millennium in Deuteronomy 30:1-9.

The "Palestinian" Covenant stipulated that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who exercise faith alone in Christ alone would not only come into permanent possession of the land of Canaan but also most of the land in Turkey, East Africa, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman and Red Sea, Syria, Iraq, Jordan.

The boundaries of this land grant are on the Mediterranean, Aegean Sea, Euphrates River and the Nile River (See Genesis 15:18). The Lord promises that this land would be given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's descendants and this promise was fulfilled to a certain extent by Israel under Joshua (Josh. 21:43-45; cf. 13:1-7) and David and Solomon (1 Kgs. 4:20-25; Neh. 9:8).

## Canaan and the Palestinian Covenant (from William Wenstrom)

The “Palestinian” covenant will have its literal and ultimate fulfillment during the millennial reign of Christ (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 31-37; Ezek. 34:11-16; Hos. 1:10-11; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 8:4-8).

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 492–493); accessed October 16, 2017.

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There is a right way of doing this and there is Jacob's way. God has told him to go to Canaan and his wives are completely behind him in this regard. What Jacob needs to do is the end his relationship with Laban honorably. There are certainly things to tie up after 20 years of service, livestock to be divided, responsibilities to be delegated in Jacob's absence. And because Jacob is following God's orders, he does not have to fear Laban. Furthermore, Jacob's line is promised to be as the sand of the sea, the dust of the earth and the stars in the heavens—so Jacob does not have to worry. He can be honorable toward Laban and he is going to do fine. However, he sneaks out like a thief, as though he has done something wrong.

Matthew Henry, on the other hand, saw Jacob's sudden removal of his family justified: *It is certain that it was lawful for Jacob to leave his service suddenly, without giving a quarter's warning. It was not only justified by the particular instructions God gave him, but warranted by the fundamental law of self-preservation, which directs us, when we are in danger, to shift for our own safety, as far as we can do it without wronging our consciences. It was his prudence to steal away unawares to Laban, lest, if Laban had known, he should have hindered him or plundered him. It was honestly done to take no more than his own with him, the cattle of his getting, Genesis 31:18. He took what Providence gave him, and was content with that, and would not take the repair of his damages into his own hands.*<sup>302</sup>

Obviously, we were not there; and I do not believe that there is enough text proving to us the Laban would have not allowed Jacob to go (or have made it difficult or impossible for him to safely leave Haran). Was this how Jacob saw things? Was this a reasonable appraisal of the situation? Based upon the text, I do not believe that to be the case.

Although the text speaks of his father here, we do not have a reunion of Jacob and his father (or of Jacob, Esau and his father) in the pages of Scripture. Jacob and Esau do, at some point, become allied in the Land of Promise; and then Esau leaves that area. I would suggest that their father died; they both attended the funeral (and sponsored it—Genesis 35:29); and they spent time together after that. That there was no actual reunion is conjecture based upon no mention of them meeting up again when alive; and Jacob and Esau living together in the land sometime in the future (Genesis 36:6).

**Genesis 31:18** And he drove away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his property, which he had gotten in Paddan-aram, in order to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

The ESV translates the first verb *drove away*. This is the verb *nâhag* (נָהַג) [pronounced *naw-HAHG*], and it means, *to bring, to lead, to urge on a course, to drive [animals] along, to drive away, to lead away [as a captive]*. Strong's #5090 BDB #624. So, Jacob gathers up and leads away all the animals which are his.

As mentioned previously, Isaac will be mentioned from time to time, but we will no longer follow him in the narrative. The historical narrative always follows a particular patriarch, who is the actual author of the section which is about him. We first spent our time with Abraham; then with Isaac (who appears to have only written two chapters of Genesis); and now we are with Jacob, who is a more prolific author than his father.

<sup>302</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17–24.

Dr. Peter Pett on Jacob leaving suddenly and in secret: *It is difficult for us to appreciate this step that Jacob was taking. He knew that while he could justify it to himself he would be seen by others as breaking the confederation and decimating the tribe, which was why he left in secret. Such behaviour would not be tolerated, for the wholeness of the tribe was a crucial element of men's lives. On the other hand he probably did not feel bound by the tribal treaty, for he had seen himself always as there with Laban on a 'temporary' basis and felt he had fully earned for himself what he possessed. But it was a far cry from when he had merely obtained wives and a comparatively few animals by his working contract. What was leaving was a substantial family sub-tribe.*<sup>303</sup>

Genesis 31:17–18 **Jacob rose up and got his wives and sons onto camels, and he led them and his cattle and his livestock that he acquired in Paddan-aram, away toward the land of Canaan, returning home to Isaac his father.**

### Jacob's Departure for Canaan (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

- I. It was hastened by persecution. Laban's sons began to envy the prosperity of Jacob. They are sure that his riches have come out of their father's estate, and suggest that he has employed unfair means. (Genesis 31:1.) Such is that spirit of envy which cannot bear to see another thrive. Laban was also of the same mind as his sons, and his conduct towards Jacob had become quite altered. (Genesis 31:2.) Jacob foresaw the coming storm of persecution, and made up his mind to avoid it by flight.
- II. It was prompted by a sense of offended justice. Jacob consults with his wives upon the situation of his affairs, complains of their father's unjust treatment and of his changed manner towards himself. He had served their father faithfully for many years, and yet he had often been deceived and defrauded in the matter of wages. (Genesis 31:17.) Laban had agreed to a bargain, and now is displeased at the result. Jacob ascribes his prosperity, not to himself alone, but to God. (Genesis 31:9.) His wives agree that Jacob's cause is just. They confess that their father had treated them shamefully. They were little better than slaves. (Genesis 31:14–16.) These continued acts of injustice could be tolerated no longer. Jacob's righteous soul must rise up against this unjust oppression and shake it off.
- III. It was at the command of God. There were prudential reasons why Jacob should suddenly quit the service of his uncle, but he justifies his conduct by alleging that he was acting by the express command of God. (Genesis 31:13.) The Lord was making good his old promise "to be with Jacob, and keep him in all places where he went." The time arrives when the word of God becomes to us more than a general promise or command, when it summons us to some special duty. Jacob's way was now plain, as he had clear divine direction. By this command of God it was intended to make Jacob feel that he was but a stranger and pilgrim here, and that this world was not his rest. Trials are sent to us so that we may not make this world our home. They are to us the voice of God telling us that here "we have no continuing city."
- IV. It illustrates the imperfections as well as the virtues of Jacob's character. It was right in Jacob to avoid persecution by flight, to feel keenly the injustice done to him, and above all to obey the command of God that he should return to his kindred. But in carrying out these high principles of duty, Jacob reveals the inherent faults of his character. He "stole away unawares." (Genesis 31:20.) He practises his wily arts, as of old, pretending all the while as if he would remain, when he knew that he had arranged for sudden flight. The assertion of his own rights was, regarded in itself, noble, and yet it is marred by deceit. God's commandment is good, but man's obedience is marked by many flaws.

At first, I scoffed at the list of reasons here, thinking that there was but one reason, *God told Jacob to go*; but then I thought about this and recognized, had Jacob only heard God's command, but everything else was hunky dory, would he have responded to that command? I think not.

*The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Main Homiletics of the Paragraph.—Genesis 31:1–21.

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<sup>303</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:17–18.

Genesis 31:17–18 Jacob rose up and got his wives and sons onto camels, and he led them and his cattle and his livestock that he acquired in Paddan-aram, away toward the land of Canaan, returning home to Isaac his father.

### Jacob moves from Paddan-Aram back to Canaan (commentators/discussion)

Dr. Robert Dean, Jr. sees Jacob's leaving without giving notice as justified: *[Jacob] makes a wise decision regarding the timing and the way in which he is leaving. He shows wisdom, discernment, planning and foresight. That is all part of it. To leave the way he left demanded that he plan it all out. He has to move all his possessions 400 miles in as rapid a fashion as he can in order to put as much distance between him and what he expects will be the pursuit of Laban. He knows perfectly well what Laban's character is. He knows that he is dealing with somebody who can't be trusted and who will use every trick in the book that he can come up with in order to try to get the upper hand on Jacob. In the process of the departure we see another principle, and that is the way in which the command of God is applied. There is nothing wrong with Jacob's leadership in this situation in the way in which he leaves.*<sup>304</sup>

I believe that Jacob was worried that Laban might take back some of his sheep and goats; I don't think that he was worried that his wives or children would be taken back (this will be discussed in greater detail when we come to it).

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob's departure from Paddan Aram or Mesopotamia is in marked contrast with his arrival at this place. If you recall, Jacob left his father Isaac and his mother Rebekah empty handed when he departed twenty years prior to go to Paddan Aram and see his uncle Laban. But now, we see Jacob leaving his uncle Laban and Paddan Aram with quite a caravan and very wealthy according to a comparison with Genesis 30:43.*<sup>305</sup>

Henry M. Morris commenting on Genesis 31:17-18: *The momentous nature of this event is indicated by the formal statement of verse 18, Jacob was now leaving Paddan Aram or Mesopotamia, to go back to Canaan and to Isaac his father. The time had come for him to take over the patriarchal responsibility associated with God's promises. He possessed both the birthright and the blessing; and they entailed great responsibilities, as well as privileges, which it was now time to fulfill.*<sup>306</sup>

This is, at once, a not-too-uncommon event as well as one of the most important events in human history. This is a family, headed by a shepherd, moving from point A to point B. It was not an everyday occurrence, but it was not so uncommon as to stand out. At this same time, there are countries with one dynasty rising and another falling; there are wars going on; there are expansions of kingdoms. But, more people today know of this small family caravan traveling a few hundred miles to settle in another land.

This divine view of history cannot be overemphasized. If we were there at the time, we might be interested in palace intrigues, in one nation taking over another, in the expansion of one nation and the contraction of another—but God points to this small family caravan, of a modestly successful shepherd, and says, “Watch this. This is what is important.”

If we picked up a newspaper<sup>307</sup> on this date, there would be what seem to be great historic world events. This or that marauding army moving west or south; the peoples of that land coming out to meet them, to defend their land and family. A king of one nation might be turning old and his younger, impatient son can wait no longer, and he kills him. Some great discovering in Egypt suddenly moves their building projects forward. What would not be found in that newspaper? *Jacob moves his family from Aram to Canaan.* Just not newsworthy; and yet, this is the defining event of this point in time.

<sup>304</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>305</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 493); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>306</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 493); accessed October 16, 2017. Wenstrom cites *The Genesis Record*, page 482, Baker Book House.

<sup>307</sup> I think most “news” traveled by means of trading caravans, mostly by word of mouth.

## Jacob moves from Paddan-Aram back to Canaan (commentators/discussion)

These steps being taken by Jacob and his family are momentous. God has given the land of Canaan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and now Jacob is taking his family into Canaan to live. Bear in mind, Jacob's sons and daughters are *all* Hebrews. The entire Hebrew nation is right here in this small caravan. God calls to His angels and tells them, "Watch these people. These are My people."

Apart from Cecil B. DeMille, few people seem to get just how theatric God is. Remember, there are billions of angels watching the earth, learning from God's hand in human history. And God often begins very subtly, with this family of Jacob; and He tells His angels, "Watch this family. See how small and puny they seem. Watch My hand in their lives." And beginning with Abraham and moving toward the great exodus, God brings forth an amazing, gripping, true drama. But right now—it is a shepherd, his wives, his many sons, and his modest wealth.

The rightness and wrongness of Jacob slipping away will be discussed further in [Genesis 31:20](#).

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Jacob originally lived in the Land of Promise, and would have been heir in the line of promise, despite Esau. However, Jacob dealt dishonestly with his father, and was forced to leave the land in order to keep from being killed.

This foreshadows several events.

### Jacob Leaving the Land of Promise and Then Returning

1. Jacob is in the land of promise, but then he leaves; and, at this point, he is making preparations to return to that land. This parallels several future situations.
2. Jacob's family will become reasonably large, but most of his sons will be quite jealous of Joseph and sell him into slavery. Joseph will rise to a position of great authority in Egypt, and be able to provide food for his family during a famine. As a result, all of Jacob's family will move out of the Land of Promise into Egypt. They will return 400 years later, under Moses.
3. The southern kingdom (Judah) will be removed from the land of Canaan for their sins (under the principle of the 5<sup>th</sup> Stage of National Discipline). They will be kept out of their land for 70 years, and then be allowed to return.
4. The Jews again are removed from the Land of Promise in A.D. 70, when many of them are slaughtered by the Romans. They have remained outside of the land since then, with a small number of exceptions (I believe about 6 millions Jews live within the Land of Promise today—which is modern Israel). However, the Jews are scattered throughout the world, as God said that they would be. They will be the evangelists at the beginning of the Tribulation; and God will regather them again to the Land of Promise at the end of the Tribulation.

In this way, Jacob's life has foreshadowed 3 important events in the history of Israel.

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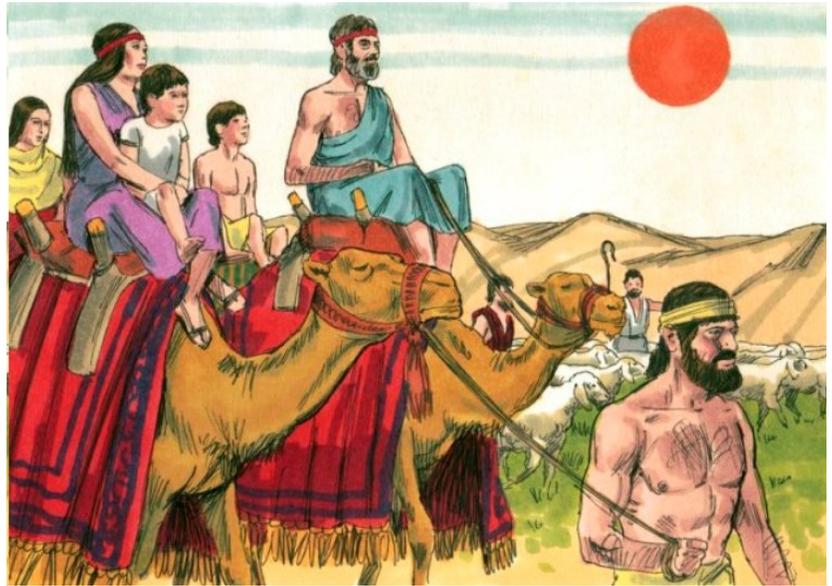
At this point in our narrative, Jacob is living in Paddan-aram working for his uncle/father-in-law Laban, but he is ready to separate himself from Laban.

**Jacob Leaves Paddan-Aram** (a graphic by Jim Padgett); from [Wikimedia](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

Gen. 31:17–18 So Jacob arose and set his sons and his wives on camels. He drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. (ESV)

There were very few commentaries which complained of Jacob's materialism (the NEV is the only one that I can recall).

NEV commentary: *An example of following the negative spiritual traits of our forbears is seen in Jacob's penchant for materialism. This was a weakness of the whole Abraham family.*<sup>308</sup>

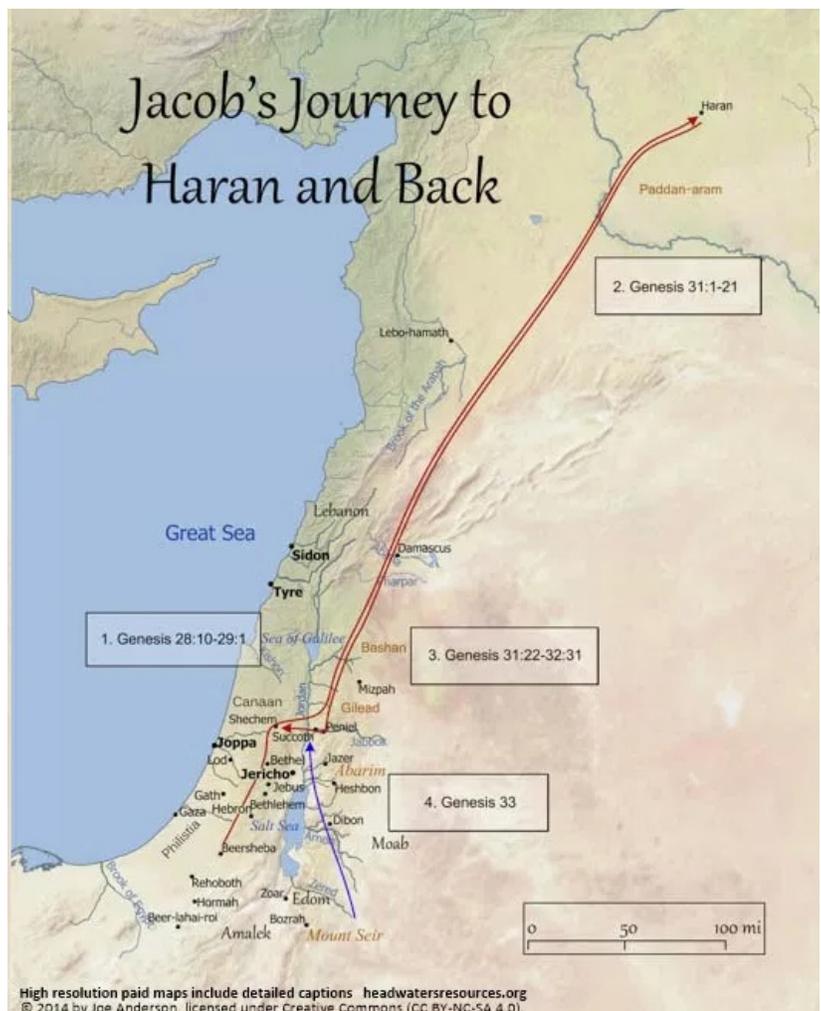


Having material things is not the same as suffering from materialism lust. Rich, poor and everyone in between can suffer from materialism lust. Jacob had a right to the material things which he had worked for; he was under no obligation to leave them behind or to distribute them to the poor.

I had an experience as a landlord, when I went over to a house to do some repairs required by section 8 housing. The tenants were on section 8, and they were healthy, about half my age, and at 3:00 in the afternoon, they were all sitting on the couch watching television, looking at me curiously out of the side of the eyes, apparently not having seen many people work before. In quite a number of instances where section 8 said a light fixture was out, it turns out that the tenants simply did not feel like paying for and then changing out the light bulbs. Under circumstances like that, I do not have a reason to think that my earnings ought to be transferred to people who were simply lazy. Holding onto my own possessions rather than giving them to them was just a normal response to their laziness.

**Jacob's Journey to Haran and Back** (a map); from [Headwaters Christian Resources](#); accessed July 12, 2017.

Gen 31:18 He [Jacob] drove away all his livestock, all his property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. (ESV) Jacob has



<sup>308</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017. See Genesis 31:18.

decided to leave Paddan-aram, where he lives, as God has told him to return to the Land of Promise. Laban, his father-in-law, gave him the wrong daughter to marry 13 years ago, so Jacob ended up working for Laban for 14 years total in order to marry both of his daughters. For the past 6 years, he has worked for Laban, but Laban has changed his wages 10 times. Jacob now has a dozen or more children, he is stuck in a dead-end job working for his father-in-law, and both his father-in-law and brothers-in-law are displeased with him, because the sheep he is given in exchange for his work tend to multiply exponentially.

The game changer has been God. God came to Jacob and told him that it was time for him to move away from Laban. God also seems to have worked behind the scenes, so that Jacob and his wives had reasons to leave. So, Jacob has gone to his wives, has bounced the idea of them leaving Paddan-aram and moving to Canaan, and they are completely on-board. They realize that their father is no longer going to give them an inheritance; that what he promised them was gone (this is a summary of Genesis 31:1–18).

Robert Dean: *The emphasis here is that no matter how many flaws and failures there are, and Jacob certainly made a lot of mistakes and failed in a lot of ways, God is always true to His promise. That is one of the key themes throughout this whole section of Genesis. We see all the failures, the flaws, the sin nature trends of all the patriarchs. These are not always wonderful people. Yet we see that God is faithful to His promise and He uses fallen, flawed sinners to accomplish His plans and purposes in history.*

Dean continues: *So this is tremendous encouragement for all of us. Ultimately the emphasis is on God's faithfulness, that no matter what transpires, no matter what failures there might be in the circumstances, He is still faithful to His Word. He has been faithful to Jacob. Jacob has left the land as a result of God's direction and while he is out of the land God has promised to prosper and bless him, and that is indeed what happened while he was out of the land. In Genesis 30:43.<sup>309</sup>*

However, rather than man-up, go to Laban, and say, "We're moving;" Jacob sneaks away. He will have about a 3-day head start while Laban is off shearing sheep.

Barnes: *Jacob had now been twenty years in Laban's service, and was therefore, ninety-six years of age. It has now become manifest that he cannot obtain leave of Laban to return home. He must, therefore, either come off by the high hand, or by secret flight. Jacob has many reasons for preferring the latter course.<sup>310</sup>*

vv. 17–18 give us the overall view. There are a couple of overlapping details to be found in vv. 19–21:

**And Laban had gone to shear his sheep and so steals Rachel the teraphim which [are] to her father. And so steals Jacob a heart of Laban the Aramæan, on without he made known to him that fleeing he. And so he flees, he and all that [is] to him. And so he rises up and so he crosses over the river. And so he sets his faces a hill of the Gilead.**

Genesis  
31:19–21

**While Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which [belonged] to her father. So, Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramæan, [and] he did not make know to him that he was fleeing. So he fled—he and all that he had. He rose up and crossed over the river. Then he set his face [toward] the hill country of Gilead.**

**While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban the Aramæan, and he did not inform him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed over the river. Then he went toward the hill country of Gilead.**

<sup>309</sup> From <http://phrasearch.com/Trans/DBM/setup/Genesis/Gen130.htm> accessed July 13, 2015.

<sup>310</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1–55.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And Laban had gone to shear his sheep and so steals Rachel the teraphim which [are] to her father. And so steals Jacob a heart of Laban the Aramæan, on without he made known to him that fleeing he. And so he flees, he and all that [is] to him. And so he rises up and so he crosses over the river. And so he sets his faces a hill of the Gilead.   |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Laban had gone to shear his flock: and Rahel took the images [Tsilmanaia. The word in the Hebrew text (teraphim) is probably from the Aramaic teraph, "to inquire."] that were her father's. And Jakob concealed from Laban the Aramite, and showed him not that he went. And he went, he and all that were his; and he arose and passed the <u>Phrat</u> , and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.   |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Laban had gone to shear his flock; and Rahel stole the images. <u>For they had slain a man, a firstborn, and had cut off his head; they salted it with salt and balsams, and wrote incantations on a plate of gold, and put it under his tongue, and set it up in the wall, and it spake with them; and unto such their father bowed himself.</u> And Jakob stole the knowledge of Laban the Aramite, in that he did not show him when he went. And he went, he with all that he had. And he arose and crossed the <u>Pherat</u> , and set his face to ascend toward the mountain of Gilead; <u>because he saw by the Holy Spirit that from thence would be deliverance for his sons, in the days of Jephtach, who was of Gilead.</u> |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | At that time Laban was gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole away her father's idols. And Jacob would not confess to his father in law that he was flying away. And when he was gone, together with all that belonged to him, and having passed the river, was going on towards mount Galaad, It was told Laban on the third day that Jacob fled. V. 22 is included for context.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's. Ya'aqub deceived Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he was running away. So he fled with all that he had. He rose up, passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | Now Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel stole the images that belonged to her father. And Jacob deceived Laban, the Aramean, in that he did not tell him that he was going. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and crossed the river, and set his face toward mount Gilead.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel stole her father's images. And Jacob hid the matter from Laban the Syrian, so as not to tell him that he ran away. And he departed himself and all that belonged to him, and passed over the river, and went into the mountain Galaad.  |
| Significant differences: | Some translations shorten up the second phrase. The Pseudo-Jonathan targum adds all kinds of additional text. Several translate <i>steal the heart of Laban as deceived Laban</i> . The targums identify the river which is crossed over.   |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English | Now Laban had gone to see to the cutting of the wool of his sheep; so Rachel secretly took the images of the gods of her father's house. And Jacob went away secretly, without giving news of his flight to Laban the Aramaean. So he went away with all he had, and went across the River in the direction of the hill-country of Gilead. |
| Easy English           | Before they left, Laban went to cut wool [Wool grows on the back of a sheep. It is the coat from the animal.] from his sheep. While he was gone, Rachel took his   |

household gods [The *household gods* are small gods that someone made out of wood or metal. Laban worshipped these gods.].

Jacob did not tell Laban the Aramean that he was going away. So Jacob ran away. He took everything that he had. He went across the river. He went towards the hill country of Gilead.

Easy-to-Read Version

While Laban was gone to cut the wool from his sheep, Rachel went into his house and stole the false gods that belonged to her father.

Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean. He did not tell Laban he was leaving. Jacob took his family and everything he owned and left quickly. They crossed the Euphrates River and traveled toward the hill country of Gilead.

Good News Bible (TEV)

Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and during his absence Rachel stole the household gods that belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban by not letting him know that he was leaving. He took everything he owned and left in a hurry. He crossed the Euphrates River and started for the hill country of Gilead.

International Children's B.

Laban was gone to cut the wool from his sheep. While he was gone, Rachel stole the idols of false gods that belonged to him. And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean. He did not tell Laban he was leaving. Jacob and his family left quickly. They crossed the Euphrates River and traveled toward the mountains of Gilead.

*The Message*

Laban was off shearing sheep. Rachel stole her father's household gods. And Jacob had concealed his plans so well that Laban the Aramean had no idea what was going on—he was totally in the dark. Jacob got away with everything he had and was soon across the Euphrates headed for the hill country of Gilead.

NIRV

Laban had gone to clip the wool from his sheep. While he was gone, Rachel stole the statues of the family gods that belonged to her father. And that's not all. Jacob tricked Laban, the Aramean. He didn't tell him he was running away. So Jacob ran off with everything he had. He crossed the Euphrates River. And he headed for the hill country of Gilead.

New Simplified Bible

When Laban went to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household idols. Jacob also tricked Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was leaving. He left in a hurry with all that belonged to him. He crossed the Euphrates River and went toward the mountains of Gilead.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible

Now, while Laban was out shearing his sheep, Rachel stole the household's divine images that belonged to her father. Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not sending word to him that he was leaving. So Jacob and his entire household left. He got up, crossed the river, and set out directly for the mountains of Gilead.

Contemporary English V.

Before Rachel left, she stole the household idols while Laban was out shearing his sheep. Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean by not saying that he intended to leave. When Jacob crossed the Euphrates River and headed for the hill country of Gilead, he took with him everything he owned.

The Living Bible

So one day while Laban was out shearing sheep, Jacob set his wives and sons on camels, and fled without telling Laban his intentions. He drove the flocks before him—Jacob's flocks he had gotten there at Paddan-aram—and took everything he owned and started out to return to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. So he fled with all of his possessions (and Rachel stole her father's household gods and took them with her) and crossed the Euphrates River and headed for the territory of Gilead. Vv. 17–18 are included for context.

New Berkeley Version

Laban had gone to shear his sheep; Rachel stole her father's household gods, and Jacob got the best of Laban, the Aramæan, by not telling him of his flight. So he fled with all his belongings.

Starting out, he crossed the river [Euphrates, sometimes called the great River.] and turned toward the Gilead mountain range.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| New Century Version    | While Laban was gone to cut the wool from his sheep, Rachel stole the idols that belonged to him. And Jacob tricked Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was leaving. Jacob and his family left quickly, crossed the Euphrates River, and traveled toward the mountains of Gilead.   |
| New Life Version       | Laban had gone to cut the wool from his flock. And Rachel stole the gods of her father's house. Jacob fooled Laban the Syrian by not telling him that he was going. So he left with all he had. He went and crossed the Euphrates River, and turned toward the hill country of Gilead.  |
| New Living Translation | At the time they left, Laban was some distance away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole her father's household idols and took them with her. Jacob outwitted Laban the Aramean, for they set out secretly and never told Laban they were leaving. So Jacob took all his possessions with him and crossed the Euphrates River, heading for the hill country of Gilead. |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | Meanwhile, as Laban was off shearing his sheep, Rachel stole her father's idols. Jacob didn't let Laban the Syrian know that he was running away... he and all who were his just left, crossing the river and traveling on to Mount Gilead.   |
| International Standard V    | <b>Laban Pursues Jacob</b><br>Meanwhile, Laban had been out shearing his sheep. While he was away, Rachel stole her father's personal idols [Lit. <i>father's teraphim</i> ; i.e. personal idols typically stored inside a small household shrine]. Moreover, Jacob had deceived [Lit. <i>had stolen away the heart of</i> ] Laban the Aramæan [In later centuries this region would be called Syria], because he had never told him that he was intending to leave. Jacob fled, taking everything that he owned. He got up, crossed the river, and headed to the hill country of Gilead. |
| Translation for Translators | Before they left, while Laban was shearing his sheep, Rachel stole the small wooden idols that were in her father's tent. Furthermore, Jacob deceived Laban, who belonged to the Aram people-group, by not telling him that they were planning to leave. So Jacob and his family fled with all their possessions, and they crossed the Euphrates River, and then started traveling south toward the hilly area of Gilead region.  |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

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|--------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible | Laban is to have gone to shear his small cattle, and Rachel was to steal the teraphim, of her father. Jacob was to steal away from the midst of Laban, the Syrian, over that, without to have announced it, he is hastening away. He was to flee away, even was he to rise up and was to cross over the river, and was to set his face to Mount Gilead.   |
| Conservapedia      | Jacob stole away, and Laban the Syrian [Literally, "Laban the Aramean." "Aram" is another name for Syria.] knew nothing about it, because Jacob did not tell him that he was running away. So he ran away with everything he had, and rose up, and crossed the stream [The stream is probably the Euphrates River, though this is never specified.], and set out for Mount Gilead. Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had run away. |
| Ferar-Fenton Bible | Laban, however, had gone to shear his sheep, so Rachel stole the Teraphim which were her father's. Thus Jacob stole away secretly from Laban the Arami, without informing him, for he fled from him. So he fled, he and all he possessed, and they went up and crossed over the river, and he set his face to Mount Gilad. But on the third day it was reported to Laban that Jacob had fled. V. 22 is included for context.                |

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|-------------------------|--|
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Laban was gone to shear his sheep, and Rahel had stolen her fathers images. And Jacob stole away the heart of Laban the Sirian, and told him not that he fled. So fled he and all that he had, and made himself ready, and passed over the rivers, and set his face straight toward the mount Gilead.  |
| Lexham English Bible    | Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole the idols that belonged to her father. And Jacob {tricked} Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he [intended to] flee. Then he fled with all that he had, and arose and crossed the Euphrates and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | But Laban had gone to shear his sheep; and Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father. And Jacob tricked Laban, the Aramaean, by not telling him that he was fleeing. So he and all that were his fled. He proceeded, namely, and crossed the River and set his face in the direction of Mount Gilead.   |
| Tree of Life Version    | But while Laban went to shear his flocks, Rachel stole the idols that belonged to her father, while Jacob stole the heart from Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. He himself fled with everything that belonged to him, and he got up and crossed the River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead. The TLV is one of the few translations who attempted to include the play on language found here. |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. Jacob also deceived Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had and quickly passed over the River, and headed toward the hill country of Gilead.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | And Laban went to shear his sheep, but Rachel had stolen the teraphim that belonged to her dad. And Jacob secretly left Laban the Syrian, not telling him of his escape. So he ran away with all that he had, getting up and crossing over the river, then set his sights toward Mount Gilead.   |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Laban had gone, to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole all the household god statues which her father owned. And Jacob had outwitted Laban the Aramite--- by not telling him that he was fleeing. And he fled, with everything he owned, and he rose up and passed the river, and pointed his feet toward the mountain Gil'ad (Gilead).  |

### Catholic Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Christian Community (1988) | Rachel then took advantage of Laban. While he was shearing his sheep she stole her father's family gods. So Jacob tricked Laban in not letting him know he was running away. He fled with all he had, and after crossing the river Euphrates he made for the hill country of Gilead.   |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Laban walked to shear his flock, and Rachel stole the family healing images [family healing images, teraphim. They were family images, and some peoples used them not only as family images but as deeds to the family rights and possessions. Gen 31:19 is their first mention. The fact that Rachel stole her father's family images shows that she considered them important to her right to her inheritance as well as having religious importance. When Laban rebuked Jacob over this, he accused Jacob of stealing his gods or God, Gen 31:30,32. [See Gen 31:34-35] In the next mention of teraphim in Judges 17:5;18:14,17,18,20, the teraphim are mentioned along with an ephod, the vesture of God's priest, a true religious item, along with a graven and a molten image, which is forbidden in God's Law, Ex 20:4. Teraphim are called by God's prophet idolatry in 1 Sam 15:23. In 1 Sam 19:13,16 it simply is an image placed in a bed by Michal to make Saul think that David is in the bed asleep. In 2 Kings 23:24 teraphim are listed along with idols, those who tread seeking the dead, wizards, and the abominations of the land. In Ezek 21:21 the king of Babylon is said to have inquired of teraphim, along with other occult practices. Hosea predicts, 3:4, that Israel for many days will dwell without |

king, without tribal heads, without sacrifice, and without ephod and teraphim, where ephod and seraphim are coupled together. Zech 10:2 declares that the teraphim have spoken nothingness. These are all the references to teraphim in the Bible. Strong says that teraphim, which is plural, comes from rapha, which means to heal or mend by stitching. That is why we have translated teraphim family healing images. Our conclusion is that they were family images kept for good health and good fortune, and associated with false religious practices. The teraphim were probably among the foreign gods that Jacob buried under the oak at Shechem, Gen 35:4.] that were her father's. And Jacob stole away from the heart of Laban, the Syrian, in that he failed to cause to stand out boldly to him that he fled. And he fled with all that was his; and he rose up, and crossed over the river, and put his face toward Mount Gilead.

New American Bible (2002) Now Laban had gone away to shear his sheep, and Rachel had meanwhile appropriated her father's household idols [Household idols: in Hebrew, teraphim, figurines used in divination (⇒ Ezekiel 21:26; ⇒ Zechariah 10:2). Laban calls them his "gods" (⇒ Genesis 31:30).] Jacob had hoodwinked [Hoodwinked: literally "stolen the heart of," i.e., lulled the mind of. Aramean: The earliest extra-biblical references to the Arameans date from several centuries after the time of Jacob; to call Laban an Aramean and to have him speak Aramaic (⇒ Genesis 31:47) would seem to be an anachronism.] Laban the Aramean by not telling him of his intended flight. Thus he made his escape with all that he had. Once he was across the Euphrates, he headed for the highlands of Gilead.

New American Bible (2011) Now Laban was away shearing his sheep, and Rachel had stolen her father's household images [**Household images:** in Hebrew, teraphim, figurines used in divination (Ez 21:26; Zec 10:2). Laban calls them his "gods" (v. 30). The traditional translation "idols" is avoided because it suggests false gods, whereas Genesis seems to accept the fact that the ancestors did not always live according to later biblical religious standards and laws.] [Gn 31:34; 1 Sm 19:13]. Jacob had hoodwinked [**Hoodwinked:** lit., "stolen the heart of," i.e., lulled the mind of. ] Laban the Aramæan [**Aramean:** the earliest extra-biblical references to the Arameans date later than the time of Jacob, if Jacob is dated to the mid-second millennium; to call Laban an Aramean and to have him speak Aramaic (Jegar-sahadutha, v. 47) is an apparent anachronism. The word may have been chosen to underscore the growing estrangement between the two men and the fact that their descendants will be two different peoples.] by not telling him that he was going to flee. Thus he fled with all that he had. Once he was across the Euphrates, he headed for the hill country of Gilead.

New English Bible When Laban the Aramaean had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods, and Jacob deceived Laban, keeping his departure secret. So Jacob ran away with all that he had, crossed the River and made for the hill-country of Gilead.

New Jerusalem Bible Laban was away, shearing his sheep; Rachel in the meanwhile had appropriated the household idols belonging to her father, and Jacob had outwitted Laban the Aramaean so that he would not be forewarned of his flight. Thus he got away with all he had. He was soon across the River and heading for Mount Gilead.

Revised English Bible When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole the household gods belonging to her father. Jacob hoodwinked Laban the Aramaean and kept his departure secret; he fled with all that he possessed, and soon was over the Euphrates and on the way to the hill-country of Gilead.

#### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible Now Lavan had gone to shear his sheep, so Rachel stole the household idols that belonged to her father, and Ya'akov outwitted Lavan the Arami by not telling him of

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|---------------------------|--|
| The Complete Tanach       | <p>his intended flight. So he fled with everything he had: he departed, crossed the [Euphrates] River and set out for the hill-country of Gil'ad. Not until the third day was Lavan told that Ya'akov had fled.</p> <p>Now Lavan had gone to shear his sheep, and [meanwhile] Rachel stole her father's teraphim.</p>  |
| exeGesese companion Bible | <p><b>to shear his sheep:</b> that he had given into the hands of his sons, a journey of three days between him and Jacob.</p> <p><b>and [meanwhile] Rachel stole her father's teraphim:</b> She intended to separate her father from idolatry. — [from Gen. Rabbah 74: 5]</p> <p>And Jacob concealed from Lavan the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. So he and all that were his fled, and he arose and crossed the river, and he directed his face toward Mount Gilead.</p> <p>And Lavan goes to shear his flock:<br/>and Rachel steals the teraphim of her father;<br/>and Yaaqov steals the heart of Lavan the Aramiy<br/>in not telling him that he flees.<br/>So he flees with all he has;<br/>and he rises and passes over the river<br/>and sets his face toward the mount Gilad.</p>   |
| Hebraic Roots Bible       | <p>And Lavan went to shear his sheep. And Rachel stole the terafeen (household) idols which were her father's. And Jacob deceived the heart of Lavan the Syrian, for he did not tell him that he was about to flee. And he and all that was to him fled. And he rose up and crossed the River and set his face to Mount Gilead.</p>  |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)         | <p>Meanwhile Lavan had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father's household idols. Jacob kept Lavan the Aramean in the dark, not telling him that he was fleeing, and fled with all that he had. Soon he was across the Euphrates and heading toward the hill country of Gilead.</p>   |
| Kaplan Translation        | <p>Meanwhile, Lavan was away, shearing his sheep. Rachel stole [Some say that it was to prevent her father from worshipping them (Bereshith Rabbah 74; Rashi). Others maintain that it was to prevent him from using them in divination to find Jacob (Tanchuma 12; Rashbam; Ibn Ezra; cf. Genesis 30:27; Hosea 3:4, Zechariah 10:2). Still others maintain that Rachel took them to gain her father's pardon (Josephus 1:19:9).] <b>the fetishes</b> [Teraphim in Hebrew, sexual images, from the word turpha (Tanchuma 12; Zohar 164a). These were images having human form (cf. 1 Samuel 19:13). In some cases, they were made out of the shrunken head of a first-born infant (Targum Yonathan; Tanchuma 12). They were not necessarily idols (Rambam, from 1 Samuel 19:13; Judges 17:5, 18:5), but here they were used for idolatrous purposes (Genesis 31:30; Zohar). In general, they were used as a meditative device to obtain messages (Hosea 3:4, Zechariah 10:2; Ibn Ezra; Radak; Ralbag; Rashi on Ezekiel 21:26). The teraphim would be tapped, inducing a relaxed, meditative state (Zohar 164a, from 2 Samuel 24:16; cf. Yad, Avodath Kokhavim 11:6; Chinukh 510).] <b>that belonged to her father.</b> <b>Jacob decided to go behind the back of Lavan the Aramaean, and did not tell him that he was leaving. He thus fled with all he owned. He set out and crossed the Euphrates</b> [Literally, 'river.' See Targum. At this point, the Euphrates was 70 miles south of Charan on the way to the Holy Land.], <b>heading in the direction of the Gilead Mountains</b> [These were the mountains to the east of the Jordan and north of the Jabbok River, some 300 miles south of the Euphrates. Jacob was thus heading south through Damascus. This area is identified with the land of the Rephaim (Genesis 14:5; Yov'loth 29:9). Jacob was thus taking the same route as the four invading kings in the time of Abraham.].</p> |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible     | <p>And Lavan went to shear his tzon; and Rachel had stolen the terafim that belong to her av.</p>  |

Unawares to Lavan HaArami, Ya'akov stole away, in that he told him not that he was fleeing.

So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the Nahar [i.e. the Euphrates], and set his face toward Har Gil'ad.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

#### *The Amplified Bible*

When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel [went inside the house and] stole her father's household gods. And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean (Syrian) by not telling him that he intended to leave and he slipped away secretly. So he fled with everything that he had, and got up and crossed the river [Euphrates], and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead [east of the Jordan River].

#### The Expanded Bible

While Laban was gone to cut the wool from [shear] his sheep, Rachel stole the idols [teraphim; probably his household gods] that belonged to him [her father]. And Jacob tricked [deceived; stole the heart of] Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was leaving [fleeing]. Jacob and his family [He and all that was his] left quickly [fled], crossed the Euphrates River [River; the northern Euphrates separated Mesopotamia from Syria], and traveled toward the mountains of Gilead [the northernmost part of Palestine].

#### Kretzmann's Commentary

And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. The fact that Laban, with his sons, was keeping the feast of sheep-shearing, which lasted several days, gave Jacob the opportunity which he had sought, for Laban would never have permitted him to go in peace. There is no wrong in fleeing from a tyrant and seeking a place where one may live in peace and security and tend to the works of his calling without interference. That Rachel, although a believer in the true God, stole the images, the small household gods of her father, probably because she feared that Laban might consult them as oracles, shows that she was not yet entirely free from heathen superstition. **And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban, the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.** Jacob took the opportunity to remove himself and his goods without the knowledge of Laban, 2Samuel 15:6, neither was the fact told to the older man. **So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the Mount Gilead.** He forded the Euphrates, and then turned directly southwest toward Mount Gilead, on the farther side of the Jarmuk River, southeast of the Sea of Galilee.

#### NET Bible®

While Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole the household idols [Or "household gods."] that belonged to her father. Jacob also deceived [Heb "stole the heart of," an expression which apparently means "to deceive."] Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was leaving [Heb "fleeing," which reflects Jacob's viewpoint.]. He left [Heb "and he fled."] with all he owned. He quickly crossed [Heb "he arose and crossed." The first verb emphasizes that he wasted no time in getting across.] the Euphrates River [Heb "the river"; the referent (the Euphrates) has been specified in the translation for clarity.] and headed for [Heb "he set his face."] the hill country of Gilead.

#### The Pulpit Commentary

**And Laban went**—or, Now Laban had gone, probably, to the other station, which was three days journey from Jacob's flocks (vide Genesis 30:36; and cf. Genesis 31:22)—**to shear his sheep.** In this work he would probably be detained several days, the time of shearing being commonly regarded as a festal season (cf. Genesis 38:12; 1Samuel 25:4; 2Samuel 13:23), at which friendly entertainments were given. Whether Jacob's absence from the festivities is to be explained by the dissension existing between him and Laban, which either caused him to be uninvited or led him to decline the invitation (Kurtz), or by the supposition that he had first gone and subsequently left the banquet (Lange), the fact that Laban was so engaged afforded Jacob the opportunity he desired for making his escape. **And Rachel had stolen** (or, "and Rachel stole," availing herself likewise of the opportunity

presented by he? father's absence) **the images that were her father's**. The teraphim, from an unused root, taraph, signifying to live comfortably, like the Sanscrit trip, Greek τρέφειν, Arabic tarafa (Gesenius, Furst, sub voces), appear to have been small human figures (cf. Genesis 31:34), though the image in 1Samuel 19:13 must have been nearly life-size, or at least a full-sized bust, sometimes made of silver (Judges 17:4), though commonly constructed of wood (1Samuel 19:13–16); they were worshipped as gods (εἰδωλα, LXX.; vide, Vulgate, cf. Genesis 31:30), consulted for oracles (Ezekiel 21:26; Zec. 10:2), and believed to be the custodians and promoters of human happiness (Judges 18:24). Probably derived from the Aramaeans (Furst, Kurtz), or the Chaldeans (Ezekiel 21:21, Kalisch, Wordsworth), the worship of teraphim was subsequently denounced as idolatrous (1Samuel 15:23; 2Kings 13:24). Cf. with Rachel's act that ascribed to Aeneas:—

"Effigies sacrae divum, Phrygiique Penates,  
Quos mecum a Troja, mediisque ex ignibus urbis,  
Extuleram".

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, Rosenmóller), 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 (Bazil, Gregory, Naziszen, Theodoret), to obtain children for herself through their assistance (Lengerke, Gerlach), to preserve a memorial of her ancestors, whose pictures these teraphim were (Lightfoot); but was probably due to avarice, if the images were made of precious metals (Pererius), or to a taint of superstition which still adhered to her otherwise religious nature (Chrysostom, Calvin, 'Speaker's Commentary'), causing her to look to these idols for protection (Kalisch, Murphy) or consultation (Wordsworth) on her journey.

**And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian**,—literally, stole the heart of Laban the Syrian, he deceived his mind and intelligence, like κλέπτειν νόον, Horn; 'Il.,' 14. 227 (el. Genesis 31:26, Genesis 31:27); hence—εἴκρουσε (LXX.); so Calvin, Rosenmóller, Keil, Gesenius, and others. Lange fancifully understands by the heart of Laban which Jacob stole either Laban's daughters or his favorite Rachel Gerlach contrasts Jacob's stealing with that of Rachel, in which Jacob, had no part. The exact import of Jacob's stealing is declared by the words that follow—in that he told him not (Lunge and Bush interpret רגד impersonally, as signifying in that or because it was not told; but in this among expositors they stand alone) that he fled. **So** (literally, and) **he fled with** (literally, and) **all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river**,—i.e. the Euphrates, which was called by preeminence the river (cf. 1Kings 4:21; Ezra 4:10, Ezra 4:16)—**and set his face toward the mount Gilead**. גלעד, according to Gesenius, "the hard, stony region," from an unused quadrilateral root, signifying to be hard, though, according to the historian (by a slight change in the punctuation), "The hill, or heap of witness," from the transaction recorded in Genesis 31:45–47, which name it here proleptically receives, was not the mountain-range to the south of the Jahbok, now styled Jebel Jilad (Gesenius), Jebel-as-Salt (Robinson), Jebel-osha (Tristram), since Jacob had not yet crossed the river, but that upon its northern hank, called Jebel Ajlun, and situated near Mahanaim (Delitzsch, Keil, Kalisch, Porter).

The Voice

**Meanwhile Laban had gone off to shear his sheep. While he was out, Rachel stole her father's household idols. And Jacob likewise deceived Laban the Aramean by hiding from him the fact that he was leaving. He just left quickly with everything he had. He crossed the Euphrates River and set pace south toward the hill country of Gilead.**

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans. | ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> had walked to shear his flocks and Rahhel <sup>[Ewe]</sup> stole the family idols which belonged to her father, and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> stole the heart of Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> , the one of Aram <sup>[Palace]</sup> , because it was not told to him that he was fleeing away, and he fled away and all which belonged to him and he rose and he crossed over the river and he set his face in place toward the hill of Gil'ad <sup>[Mound of witness]</sup> ,... |
| Concordant Literal Version | <b>Footnote:</b> - The word "Upon" or "To" appears to be missing from the word "hill."<br>And Laban goes to shear his flock. And stealing is Rachel the household elohim which are her father's. And stealing is Jacob the heart out of Laban, the Syrian, on failing to tell him that he is running away. And away is he running, he and all which is his. And rising is he and crossing the stream, and is setting his face toward mount Gilead.  |
| Context Group Version      | Now Laban was gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the talismans that were her father's. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he didn't tell him that he fled. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.   |
| <i>Emphasized Bible</i>    | Now, Laban, had gone, to shear his sheep,—so Rachel stole the household gods that belonged to her father, Thus Jacob stole away unawares to Laban, the Syrian,—in that he had not told him that he was about to flee. So he fled, the—and all that he had, and he arose, and passed over the River,—and set his face towards the mountain of Gilead. Rotherham is one of the few to include the play on words found in this passage.  |
| NASB                       | When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the <i>Euphrates</i> River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.  |
| New European Version       | Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's. Jacob deceived Laban the Syrian, in that he didn't tell him that he was running away. So he fled with all that he had. He rose up, passed over the River, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead.  |
| New King James Version     | Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's. And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.   |
| Third Millennium Bible     | And Laban went to shear his sheep; and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount of Gilead.  |
| Young's Updated LT         | And Laban has gone to shear his flock, and Rachel steals the teraphim which her father has. And Jacob deceives the heart of Laban the Aramaean, because he has not declared to him that he is fleeing. And he flees, he and all that he has, and rises, and passes over the River, and sets his face toward the mount of Gilead.  |

**The gist of this passage:** Rachel deceives her father and steals his household gods while he is working; Jacob deceives Laban by slipping away without telling him. They cross over the Euphrates River and go toward Gilead.

19-21

### Genesis 31:19a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong's #        |
|---|---|------------------------|---------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו)<br>[pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251 |

## Genesis 31:19a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Lâbân (לַבָּן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN]              | white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated <i>Laban</i> | masculine singular proper noun; location               | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526          |
| hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK <sup>e</sup> ] | to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance                      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect | Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | to, for, towards, in regards to                                     | directional/relational preposition                     | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510           |
| gâzaz (גָּזַז) [pronounced gaw-ZAHZ]                            | to cut [hay]; to shear [a flock]                                    | Qal infinitive construct                               | Strong's #1494<br>BDB #159          |

This is the first occurrence of this word in Scripture.

|                                 |   |   |                            |
|---------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]    | untranslated generally; occasionally to, toward | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                                 | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced tzohn] | small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks    | feminine singular collective noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |

The NET Bible: *This disjunctive clause (note the pattern conjunction + subject + verb) introduces a new scene. In the English translation it may be subordinated to the following clause.*<sup>311</sup>

**Translation:** While Laban had gone to shear his sheep,... Laban has a lot to oversee with his animals and such. He is possibly doing some of the sheering; but, more than likely, he is overseeing the sheering. He is more than likely the one who organized and worked a number of business deals around this event.

Genesis 31:19a While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep...

### Shearing the sheep (various commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:19 explains to the reader that Jacob was able to escape without Laban knowing about it since Laban was out shearing the sheep, which was a very busy time for sheep farmers such as Laban.*<sup>312</sup> Laban also saw to it that Jacob was 3 days away from the flocks of Jacob's sons.

Bruce K. Waltke writes, "Sheep shearing was carried out in the spring. It entailed large numbers of men working at great distances from their homes for an extended period of time. Consequently, Laban and his men are far away and very preoccupied, allowing Rachel to steal the gods and enabling Jacob to be gone for three days (31:22) before Laban becomes aware of it"<sup>313</sup>

<sup>311</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

<sup>312</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 493); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>313</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 493); accessed October 16, 2017. Wenstrom cites Genesis, A Commentary, page 427, Zondervan.

## Shearing the sheep (various commentators)

L. M. Grant: *Only four times in scripture do we read of sheep shearing. First, on this occasion (v.19); second in Genesis 38:13 (Judah); third in 1 Samuel 25:4 (Nabal); and fourth in 2 Samuel 13:23 (Absalom). In each case, something unpleasantly selfish is involved. Peter was not told by the Lord to "shear My sheep," but "shepherd My sheep" and "feed My sheep" (John 21:16-17).*<sup>314</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *As it just happened, the rather important task of sheepshearing was just engrossing Laban's attention. Among the ancients, at least of a later date, the event was quite a festivity (cf. 38:12; 1 Sam. 25; 2 Sam. 13:23). Since Laban was at some distance from Jacob, flocks (30:36), and since all hands were kept quite busy for a few days, no time could have been more opportune.*<sup>315</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob lost no time in preparing to depart. Laban was away shearing his sheep; so it was a good time to leave, before anyone knew what was happening.*<sup>316</sup>

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### Genesis 31:19b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                                     | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| gânab (בגנ) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAH<sup>B</sup>V</i> ]  | <i>to steal, to take away by theft; to deceive</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170  |
| Râchêl (לְרַחֵל) [pronounced <i>raw-KHALE</i> ]  | <i>ewe and is transliterated Rachel</i>   | feminine proper noun  | Strong's #7354<br>BDB #932  |
| 'êth (תָּא) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84    |
| t'râphîym (מִיִּפְרֵת) [pronounced <i>t'raw-PHEEM</i> ]  | <i>household idol, a kind of idol, an object of reverence, and a means of divination, often transliterated teraphim</i> | masculine plural noun with the definite article             | Strong's #8655<br>BDB #1076 |
| <i>The NET Bible: Some translations merely transliterate the Hebrew term מִיִּפְרֵת (t'yrafim) as "teraphim," which apparently refers to household idols. Some contend that possession of these idols guaranteed the right of inheritance, but it is more likely that they were viewed simply as protective deities. See M. Greenberg, "Another Look at Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim," JBL 81 (1962): 239-48.</i> <sup>317</sup> |   |   |                             |
| 'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]  | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun  | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81    |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition                          | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |

<sup>314</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>315</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>316</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 482.

<sup>317</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

## Genesis 31:19b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                        | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's # |
|---|---|--|--------------------|
| 'āb (אָב) [pronounced<br>aw <sup>b</sup> v] | <i>father</i> , both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; <i>founder</i> , <i>civil leader</i> , <i>military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3 |

**Translation:** ...Rachel stole the teraphim which [belonged] to her father. Rachel, his daughter, knows his schedule, and she knows that he is out of the house at this time. Therefore, she steals the teraphim which belong to her father. Her father is out sheering his sheep, and she uses this opportunity to take his teraphim.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:19 records that Rachel stole Laban's household idols while Laban was out sheering the sheep, which was a sin according to Exodus 20:15 ("You will not steal"), Leviticus 19:11 and Deuteronomy 5:19.*<sup>318</sup>

Many times, these narratives take odd turns, and here, is one of the odder ones. As I read this, I continually ask myself, *why does God the Holy Spirit include this in the narrative?* One possible answer is, Rachel continues with the theme from the previous chapter of using human viewpoint solutions (which do not work).

Laban's pursuit of Jacob was quite the costly venture. His own work and overseeing of his flocks, along with his men that he took with him (certainly enough to outnumber the men which Jacob had) would have negative financial repercussions for years. It has only been in past century (1925–31) when excavations were done in Nuzi in Northern Mesopotamia, where Laban had resided. The 4000 clay tablets which were found give us a fairly thorough picture of what life was like during those times. And unlike the excavations at Mari where tablets dealing with the royal families were discovered, here these tablets dealt with the common man. The most obvious observation is that writing was widespread during that time and records were kept by the common man. This gives credence to the idea that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob wrote their own portions of Scripture (although, I still think that the narrative structure originally occurred as the sons of Jacob continued their narrative as a family<sup>319</sup>).

The customs and traditions evident in these tablets mirror the information that we find here in Genesis. This gives us good reason to believe that Genesis was written during or soon after the event recorded and not centuries later as some liberal (and even conservative) critics have maintained. Otherwise, these peculiar customs would be absent, due to a lack of knowledge concerning them. You see, these customs and traditions were unknown to us until the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, so it would be unlikely that a book would be filled with these same customs and yet be written or compiled a millennium after the events described.

For those who wonder why some theologians would suppose that Genesis (or any other book of the Bible) would be written long after the events described, it is because they do not like prophecy. They do not want God, through His Word, to predict that something would happen and then have it come to pass years or centuries later. Therefore, late dates have been assigned to most of books of the Old Testament; it is their way of saying that God of the Bible could not tell us what would occur in the future. However, we will see time and time again that the books of the Bible will contain customs, nuances, slang, and cultural sayings peculiar to the times during which they were actually written. These same customs, nuances and slang are often lost to the people even a century later, making it highly unlikely that many passages of the Bible would be written centuries after they occurred. They are too rich in lost and later found cultural heritage. These teraphim are a case in point.

Although the stealing of the teraphim seems like an odd detail to include, this act will form one of the important plot points of this chapter. Laban's chief negative objection to Jacob's exit from Haran boils down to the stealing of his teraphim. These teraphim are, in truth, useless to Laban and they will be useless to Rachel as well.

<sup>318</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 493); accessed October 16, 2017 (slightly edited).

<sup>319</sup> As we get further into the book of Genesis, I will intertwine my theories on the writing and preservation of the book of Genesis with the actions and history of this people.

These teraphim, or household idols, were a bit of nonsense that the relatives of Abraham picked up from the Aramæans. These gods represented protection for the household and they were consulted on matters of importance. One author claimed that Rachel stole these so that Laban could not go to the household gods and find out where she and Jacob had escaped to. However, this does not make sense because not only does Laban catch up to them, but Rachel does not return the teraphim to her father even then. The more logical explanation, found in ZPEB, the Scofield Bible, and in the Nuzi tablets is that with the possession of these idols, which were taken fairly seriously, went the headship and possession of the household. This would have given Jacob rights to all that Laban had, instead of Laban's own sons. This was not right, even though Laban had exploited Jacob. Furthermore, Jacob's future was not in Haran but in the land of Canaan. And, in reference to the traditional d the original writing of this portion of Genesis, Scofield points out that this piece of information was so well-known at that time that there was no reason to expound on what was occurring. When anyone writes anything, they take a lot of their own cultural heritage and their environment for granted. Another explanation for Rachel taking these items are, they were of value to her father, her father basically has given her nothing by way of inheritance, and she simply took them for their value—perhaps she had some sort of faith in them and perhaps she did not.

For centuries, these teraphim had confused theologians.

The **Doctrine of Teraphim** is found here and in 1Samuel 19:13.

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## Summary of the Doctrine of Teraphim

1. Teraphim are religious images and that they are sometimes consulted for guidance; and that they possibly acted as household protectors. I would think that *teraphim* is strictly plural and not used like the word Elohim (which can mean *God* or *gods*).
2. These "images," teraphim (see Judges 17:5; 18:14; etc.), were usually small (v. 34) human figurines, occasionally larger, often made of wood (1 Sam. 19:13-16). Near Eastern excavations have brought them to light in profuse numbers, made of wood, clay, and precious metals. Some represent male gods, but the majority are figurines of female deities 2 to 3 in. in length. They were used as household gods or were carried on the body as protective charms. Since most of them represent nude goddesses whose sexual features are accentuated, they were probably thought to promote fertility.
3. That these images are related to fertility may explain Laban's sons (who do not appear to be on the scene when Jacob arrived in Haran). And this would explain why Rachel, of all the women, would have chosen to steal them (hoping to become as fertile as Leah).
4. We find teraphim in pretty much every time period of the history of Israel. We find them in the time of the judges, in the time of the patriarchs, during the formation of the monarchy, during the late monarchy, and in the post-exilic period. One might say that they are almost as pervasive in Israel's society as the picture of Jesus or the statues of Mary are in our society (which are also forms of idolatry).
5. As found in Scripture:
  - 1) Laban had them and his daughter Rachel stole them from him. The importance of these teraphim is that they perhaps acted almost like a last will and testament; that is, the person in possession of them is figured to be entitled to the estate of the person to whom they originally belonged. That is, Rachel did not necessarily take these to worship, but to insure her inheritance from her father Laban. It is more likely that she took the images because of their relationship with fertility. Genesis 31
    - (1) It is possible that she took the figurines to somehow insure that she will receive some kind of inheritance from her father (even though that seems illogical, as she will never see him again after this chapter).
    - (2) Rachel was perhaps angry that she had nothing of an inheritance from her father and these were the easiest items of value to snatch.
    - (3) Although it is possible that Rachel may have attached some religious significance to them, we do not have any evidence of that, apart from the statues themselves.
  - 2) In the book of Judges, a man of Ephraim named Micah builds himself a shrine and makes an ephod and teraphim. Then he goes out and hires a priest to be his personal household priest. From this passage, we know that there is a religious significance to these teraphim. An ephod, by the way, would be used to predict the future or to suggest a particular course of action. Some Danites who

decide to seek some land further north, happen across Micah's house and speak to his personal priest (they apparently recognized his voice). He gives them what they believe to be good information, so when they return to the area of Micah's home, they steal his religious artifacts and his priest. It is again clear by this passage that the teraphim have religious significance and that *household idols* (or, *household idol*) is probably a very reasonable English rendering of *teraphim*. This particular group of Danites then set up their own northern shrine to the gods.

- 3) In 1Samuel 15:23, Saul disobeyed God and had allowed at least the king of the Amalekites to live, and he saved out the best of their livestock. Samuel chewed him out, saying, "Is [it] pleasing to Y<sup>e</sup>howah with burnt offerings and sacrifices as listening [and obeying] the voice of Y<sup>e</sup>howah? Observe, listening [and obeying is] more than sacrifice; [it is more] pleasing to given attention [to His word is] more than the fat of rams. For the sin of divination [is] rebellion and iniquity and **teraphim** [is] being stubborn; since you reject the Word of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, He rejects you from [being] king." Samuel equates the sin of divination with rebellion and iniquity; he equates the use of teraphim with being stubborn. He is saying that one is no better than the other. This passage along with Zechariah 10:2 tell us that God took a very dim view of such idols (along with direct statements, e.g., Exodus 20:4–5).
  - 4) In 1Samuel 19:13, Michal uses teraphim to put into David's bed so that it appears as though he is sleeping there. This means that, in David's household, they kept teraphim, or idolatrous household idols. It suggests that the teraphim was relatively large (or, that there was more than one). The implied difference in size from what we saw in the book of Genesis is easily explained, as she is the daughter of the king. This suggests that God allowed Saul to drive David from his own home because idolatry was practiced there.
  - 5) At this point, we may have to extrapolate and speculate somewhat. Back in 1Samuel 15, Saul was beginning to become more and more negative toward God. He flat out disobeyed God's clear and direct orders and Samuel tells him that disobedience is the same as idolatry. This would suggest to me that Saul was not an idolater at the time. However, given the fact that Michal had a household idol or two, that would indicate that Saul possibly began incorporating these as part of a self-protection plan, seeing how he had been rejected by Jehovah, the God of Israel. His own use influenced his daughters and at least one of his daughters also had household idols, as we see here (it would have made less sense for her to go out and find some to use on a moment's notice).
  - 6) 300 years later, Josiah removes the mediums, spiritists, teraphim, idols and all other abominations from the land of Judah. 2Kings 23:24
  - 7) The prophets speak negatively of these teraphim. Ezekiel 21:21 Hosea 3:4 Zechariah 10:2. Hosea even suggests that Israel's idolatry would keep Israel from functioning as a national entity for a long time.
6. Our conclusions is simply that these were household figurines or idols which could have been used for protection, illness, guidance; and that they may be related to fertility and/or inheritance. The Bible clearly indicates that these were idolatrous and there are several instances where God caused various believers to separate from places and circumstances where these images were.

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Genesis 31:19 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.

### Descriptions of the teraphim (various commentators)

Kalisch: *Our knowledge concerning the shape of the Teraphim is very limited. They resembled the form of man (1Samuel 19:13), either consisting of the entire human body, or only of head and breast. They were made of various materials, and not unfrequently of silver, two hundred shekels of which were employed for one statue (Judges 17:4).*<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:17–21.

## Descriptions of the teraphim (various commentators)

Murphy: *This word occurs fifteen times in the Old Testament. It appears three times in this chapter, and nowhere else in the Pentateuch. It is always in the plural number. The teraphim were symbols or representatives of the deity. They seem to have been busts of the human form, sometimes as large as life. (1Samuel 19:13.) The employment of them in the worship of God which Laban seems to have inherited from his fathers (Joshua 24:2), is denounced as idolatry (1Samuel 15:23); and hence they are classed with the idols and other abominations put away by Josiah. (2Kings 23:24.).*<sup>321</sup>

Matthew Henry: *Some think they were only little representations of the ancestors of the family, in statues or pictures, which Rachel had a particular fondness for, and was desirous to have with her, now that she was going into another country. It should rather seem that they were images for a religious use, penates, household-gods, either worshipped or consulted as oracles.*<sup>322</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *Rachel took advantage of her father's absence to rob him of his teraphim (penates), probably small images of household gods in human form, which were worshipped as givers of earthly prosperity, and also consulted as oracles.*<sup>323</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *"Household idols" is the noun teraphim (תֵּרָפִים) (ter-aw-feme), which were small idols like figurines and were considered the family gods, which gave the family protection and were kept on a god-shelf and were outlawed in Israel (See 1 Samuel 15:23; 19:13; 2 Kings 23:24; Zechariah 10:2f.). These gods were usually small figurines (two to three inches long), sometimes carried on the body as charms, many of which archaeologists have discovered.*<sup>324</sup>

Reading Through the Bible: *The household gods that Rachel took were small (2-3 inch) figures that people had in their house or would carry with them. They were believed to be charms to bring good fortune or sometimes people would go to them for advice. They usually represented ancestors or gods. According to some tablets found during that period, the household gods were also used to indicate the legitimate heir of a family.*<sup>325</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *They were variously made of wood, precious metals, or stone, and seemed to have been of different sizes ranging from small and easily concealed objects to a figure the equivalent of a human bust. (Judges 17:4). They evidently bore some resemblance to the human figure, and some have supposed that they were carved images of the devotee's ancestors.*<sup>326</sup>

The size of these teraphim differed from age to age. These are small enough for Rachel to sit upon and hide; but the ones used by David's wife (1Samuel 19:13) were large enough to appear to be his body under the covers of his bed.

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Genesis 31:19 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.

Given that these figurines differed in size and appearance from age to age, it does seem logical they would serve different functions at different times.

<sup>321</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>322</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17–24.

<sup>323</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:17–19.

<sup>324</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 493); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>325</sup> From [a fire in my bones](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

<sup>326</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

## Teraphim (from Various Commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *Hebrew. teraphim, a kind of household gods, showing that the idolatry of Babylonia still clung to Laban's family, in spite of his protestations in Genesis 31:20; Genesis 30:27. Compare Genesis 31:30; Genesis 35:2.*<sup>327</sup>

The Geneva Bible: *Laban calls them gods, (Genesis 31:30).*<sup>328</sup>

Thomas Whitelaw: *These objects were worshipped as gods, consulted for oracles, and believed to be the custodians and promoters of human happiness.*<sup>329</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Teraphim were linked with divination and spiritist practises (Judges 17:5; Ezekiel 21:21; 2Kings 23:24). They were almost always condemned in Scripture (1Samuel 15:23; 2Kings 23:24; Judges 17:6). We do not know what form they took or what material they were made of, although they are clearly here linked with household gods (Genesis 31:30). It is probable that they took on different forms. 1Samuel 19:13 on may suggest that they were often in human form or like a human face, possibly a mummified human head but this is uncertain. The word probably links with the Hittite 'tarpis', a type of spirit sometimes seen as evil and sometimes as protective. The reason that Rachel stole the teraphim may have been in order to enjoy their protection.*

Pett continues: *There is an interesting example from Nuzu of the importance attached to these household gods. There a man called Naswi adopted Wullu, because he had no sons of his own. He thus became Naswi's heir and responsible to care for him. However it was stipulated that if a son was born to Naswi Wullu would have to share the inheritance with him and the gods which Wullu would otherwise have inherited are to belong to the real son.*

Pett concludes: *So at Nuzu right to possession of the household gods belonged to the blood relation, and it may be that they were seen as conferring special status. But if Rachel stole them for this reason it was in order to pay her father back for his ill treatment of his daughters, not in order to bestow any benefit on Jacob, for there is no suggestion that that status passed with illegal possession of the gods. The theft certainly stirred Laban to his depths. They were possibly the symbols of his authority and he felt it deeply.*<sup>330</sup>

Arthur W. Pink: *Scholars tell us that the word "teraphim" may be traced to a Syrian root which means "to inquire." This explains the reason why Rachel took with her these family "gods" when her husband stole away surreptitiously from her home- it was to prevent her father from "inquiring" of these idol "oracles" and thus discovering the direction in which they had gone. Mark that Laban calls these teraphim his "gods." (Genesis 31:30).*

Pink continues: *The next reference to the "teraphim" in Scripture confirms the idea that they were used for oracular consultation. In Judges 17:5 we read: "And the man Micah had a house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons who became his priest"; next we are told "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" and "Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah." (Verse 6, 12). Then, in the chapter that follows, we read of the tribe of Dan seeking an inheritance to dwell in, and sending out spies to search out the land; and they came to "the house of Micah (who had the teraphim) and said to his priest, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous." (Judges 18:6). That it was of the "teraphim" they wished him to enquire, and not of the Lord, is clear from what follows, for when the spies returned to their tribe and made their report (which was adopted), the tribe on going forth to secure their inheritance carefully saw to it that Micah's "priest" with his "graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim" accompanied them, so that we are told he became their "priest." (See Genesis 18:8-20).*

<sup>327</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>328</sup> Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Genesis 31:19.

<sup>329</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional reference here.

<sup>330</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21.

## Teraphim (from Various Commentators)

Pink continues: Next we read in 1 Samuel 19:13: "And Michal took a teraphim and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth." This scripture not only reveals the sad fact that Saul's daughter was an idolator and practiced necromancy, but also intimates that by this time the "teraphim" were fashioned after the human form- hence Michal's selection of one of these to appear like the figure of her sleeping husband. Ezekiel 21:21 also makes it clear that the "teraphim" were used for oracular consultation-  
 ÔÔThe king of Babylon.. consulted with teraphim."

Pink concludes: Later scriptures indicate that after Israel had apostatized from Jehovah they turned to the "teraphim" more and more "For the teraphim have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain." (Zech. 10:2). Hence it was in pronouncing sentence on recreant Israel, God said: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without a teraphim." What a terrible analogy to all this we behold in our own day! Just as in olden time Israel turned from Jehovah to the "teraphim" of the heathen, so today, now that Christendom has apostatized, men on all sides are turning away from the Holy Scriptures which are the Oracles of God, and are giving heed to seducing spirits and the deceptions of Satan.<sup>331</sup>

Barnes: *Teraphim*. This word occurs fifteen times in the Old Testament. It appears three times in this chapter, and nowhere else in the Pentateuch. It is always in the plural number. The root does not appear in Biblical Hebrew. It perhaps means "to live well," intransitively (Gesenius, Roedig.), "to nourish," transitively (Furst). The teraphim were symbols or representatives of the Deity, as Laban calls them his gods. They seem to have been busts (πρωτομαί protomai, Aquila) of the human form, sometimes as large as life 1Samuel 19:13. Those of full size were probably of wood; the smaller ones may have been of metal. In two passages Judges 17:1-13; 18; Hos. 3:4 they are six times associated with the ephod. This intimates either that they were worn on the ephod, like the Urim and Thummim, or more probably that the ephod was worn on them; in accordance with which they were employed for the purposes of divination Genesis 30:27; Zechariah 10:2. The employment of them in the worship of God, which Laban seems to have inherited from his fathers Joshua 24:2, is denounced as idolatry 1Samuel 15:23; and hence, they are classed with the idols and other abominations put away by Josiah 2Kings 23:24.<sup>332</sup>

Barnes: It is not the business of Scripture to acquaint us with the kinds and characteristics of false worship. Hence, we know little of the teraphim, except that they were employed by those who professed to worship the true God.<sup>333</sup>

M. M. Kalisch goes into great detail: Our information is more accurate respecting the use and nature of the Teraphim. But we must distinguish between the earlier and later history of the Hebrews. The origin of the Teraphim seems to have been in Mesopotamia or Chaldea, a supposition probable from our passage, and from a later allusion in which the Babylonian king is related to have consulted them (Ezekiel 21:26). Although no doubt comprised amongst the idols which Jacob is recorded to have removed in Shechem (Genesis 35:4), they long remained in favour among his descendants; and while the Hebrews were always conscious of their crime whenever they worshipped other gods, they do not seem to have regarded the adoration of the Teraphim as equally reproachful.

<sup>331</sup> From [http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings\\_Genesis/genesis\\_32.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_32.htm) accessed October 28, 2017. Additional references at that link.

<sup>332</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:1-55.

<sup>333</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14-19.

## Teraphim (from Various Commentators)

Kalisch continues: *On this point, the history of Micah is highly instructive (Judges 18:1–31.). It shows clearly, that the Teraphim were considered as tutelar deities, fully compatible with the homage solely due to the Lord; that they were used, by many, as oracles, like the Urim and Thummim, or like the Ark of the Covenant; and that they were deemed sacred and lawful, if but a descendant of Aaron performed the ministerial functions: they implied a transgression of the second, not of the first commandment. Thus we account for the fact, otherwise most strange, that the prophet Hosea enumerates the Teraphim among the boons of which the disobedient Israelites would be deprived (3:4); he threatens them with the dissolution of national and of family life; he predicts, that princes and sacrifices will disappear, and together with them their own domestic gods, the Teraphim, who, therefore, have there a political and social rather than a religious import. The prophet does not hesitate to mention them, because they were evidently in his time still considered as the mildest and most harmless form of idolatry.*

Kalisch continues: *But gradually, when the pure doctrines of Mosaism began to be enforced with greater rigour, the Teraphim were naturally included among the objects of religious aversion; even the author of the Book of Judges, who wrote in the latest times of the monarchy (Judges 18:30), inserted in his truthful narrative a remark of disapproval: “in those days there was no king in Israel, every one did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6); when king Josiah established the strict worship of monotheism, he destroyed among the other idols, the Teraphim also (2Kings 8:24); and, perhaps, exactly because they were considered as almost innocent images, the later writers were extremely severe in denouncing them: the crime of obstinacy against the Divine will is compared to the idolatry of the Teraphim (1Samuel 15:23); they are classed among the “detestations and abominations” (2Kings 13:24); their oracles are described not only as falsehood, but as wickedness; they lead astray those who consult them like sheep which have no shepherd (Zechariah 10:2); and they are attributed to the Babylonian monarch together with his other absurd modes of divination, as the auguries taken from “looking in the liver” (Ezekiel 21:26, 28).<sup>334</sup> This may require some more study.*

The Cambridge Bible: *The teraphim were the household gods, like the Latin Penates, sometimes small in size, as would appear from this verse and Genesis 31:30; Genesis 31:34; but sometimes, as is to be inferred from 1Samuel 19:13, large enough to be shaped like human figures. Their presence in the houses of Israelites was common; cf. Judges 17:4–5; Hos. 3:4. But they seem to have been a source of superstition. The narrative in Genesis 35:2, 1Samuel 15:23, 2Kings 23:24, shews that their use was opposed to the best spirit of Israelite religion. The versions here render “teraphim” by “idols,” LXX τὰ εἰδωλα, Lat. idola.*

The Cambridge Bible continues: *The mention of them here and in Gen. 35:2-4 seems to connect their use with Aramaean influences. There is no reference to them in the story of Abraham and Isaac. Rachel hopes to bring with her the good genius of her own home.<sup>335</sup>*

Clarke: *What the teraphim were is utterly unknown. In Genesis 31:30 they are termed אֱלֹהִים elohai, gods; and to some it appears very likely that they were a sort of images devoted to superstitious purposes, not considered as gods, but as representatives of certain Divine attributes, Dr. Shuckford supposes them to be a sort of tiles, on which the names or figures of their ancestors were engraven. Theodoret, in his 89th question, calls them idols; and says that Rachel, who was a type of the true Church, stole them from her father that he might be delivered from idolatry. R. S. Jarchi gives nearly the same reason.*

<sup>334</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:17–21.

<sup>335</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:18.

## Teraphim (from Various Commentators)

Clarke continues: *If the word be derived from אפר מו rapha, to heal or restore, then the teraphim may be considered as a sort of talismans, kept for the purpose of averting and curing diseases; and probably were kept by Laban for the same purpose that the Romans kept their lares and penates. It is however possible that תיפרת teraphim is the same as סיפרא seraphim, the ת tau and ש sin being changed, which is very frequent in the Syrian or Chaldee language; and we know that Laban was an Aramean or Syrian. Fire has been considered from the earliest ages as a symbol of the Deity; and as the word seraphim comes from שרף saraph, to burn, it has been conjectured that the teraphim of Laban were luminous forms, prepared of burnished brass, etc., which he might imagine a proper medium of communication between God and his worshippers. Mr. Parkhurst has observed that the teraphim were in use among believers and unbelievers. Among the former, see this chapter; for he denies that Laban was an idolater. See also Judges 17:5 18:14, 18, 20 1Samuel 19:13, 16. Among the latter, see 2Kings 23:24 Ezekiel 21:21 Zechariah 10:2. Compare 1Samuel 15:23, and Hosea 3:4. These are all the places in which the original word is found.*

Clarke concludes: *The Persian translator seems to have considered these teraphim as tables or instruments that served for purposes of judicial astrology, and hence translates the word asterlabha, astrolabes. As the astrolabe was an instrument with which they took the altitude of the pole-star, the sun, etc., it might, in the notion of the Persian translator, imply tables, etc., by which the culminating of particular stars might be determined, and the whole serve for purposes of judicial astrology. Now as many who have professed themselves to be believers in Christianity, have nevertheless addicted themselves to judicial astrology, we might suppose such a thing in this case, and still consider Laban as no idolater. If the Persian translator has not hit on the true meaning, he has formed the most likely conjecture.*<sup>336</sup>

Gill: *Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's; afterwards called gods, which he made use of in an idolatrous and superstitious manner, one way or other: they seem to be a kind of "penates", or household gods; in the Hebrew they are called "teraphim"; and which De Dieu thinks were the same with "seraphim" (z); and were images of angels, consulted on occasion, and placed in the house for the protection of it, and to increase the substance thereof: some take them to be plates of brass describing the hours of the day, a sort of sundials; or were such forms, that at certain times were made to speak, and show things to come: but they rather seem to be images of an human form, as say the Jewish writers, and as seems from 1Samuel 19:13; and which it is supposed were made under certain constellations, and were a sort of talismans, and were consulted as oracles, and in high esteem with the Chaldeans and Syrians, a people given to astrology, and by which they made their divinations.*<sup>337</sup>

Matthew Poole: *They were images made in the shape of men, 1Samuel 19:13,16, which the Gentiles worshipped as subordinate gods, Genesis 31:30,32, to which they committed the protection of their families, 1Samuel 19:13, which they used to consult about secret or future things, and from which they received answers about them, Ezekiel 21:21 Zechariah 10:2. Of these see more Jude 17:5 18:14,17, &c.; Hosea 3:4. And these idols Laban worshipped together with the true God.*<sup>338</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *These might have been images devoted to superstitious or idolatrous purposes, as they are termed gods by Laban, in Genesis 31:30. The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan render it, tzalmanaya, "images;" the LXX and Theodoret, εἰδολον [Strong's G1497], "idols;" Aquilla, μορφωματα, "figures;" and the Persian, asterlabha, "astrolabes."*<sup>339</sup>

<sup>336</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>337</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>338</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>339</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:19.

## Teraphim (from Various Commentators)

Whedon: *The images — The teraphim. This word is always used in the plural, and is of uncertain origin. It appears to denote a sort of household gods, (Penates,) common in Syria, and often consulted as domestic oracles. By these probably Laban was wont to divine, (Genesis 30:27, note,) and Rachel's object in taking them was both to prevent their being used by her father to her disadvantage, and also for her own domestic interests. Comp. Judges 17:5; Ezekiel 21:21; Zechariah 10:2; and note on Joshua 24:14. The teraphim were small images of human form, though sometimes of life size. 1Samuel 19:13. They were essentially connected with idolatrous ideas and practices, and seem to have served as a transition from Monotheism unto Polytheism. In some such transition state Laban appears to have been, and from it Rachel was not free. Other members of Jacob's household also clung to similar superstitions and carried off strange gods with them. Comp. Genesis 35:2–4.*<sup>340</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *Evidently these were her household gods. The plural may be a plural of excellence after the pattern of the name Elohim, and so only one image may have been involved. Whether these were larger, almost man-sized as 1Samuel 19:13; 1Samuel 19:16 seems to suggest, or actually were only the small figurines yielded by excavations in Palestine matters little, as both types may have been in use. Apparently they were regarded as promoting domestic prosperity, and thus were a kind of gods of the hearth like the Roman Penates, "The teraphim was a god (Genesis 31:30); its form and size were those of a man (1Samuel 19:13; 1Samuel 19:16); it was used in private houses as well as in temples (Judges 17:5; Judges 18:14 ff., Hosea 3:4), and was an implement of divination (Ezek. 2:21, Zechariah 10:2).*

College Press Bible Study continues: *The indications point to its being an emblem of ancestor-worship which survived in Israel as a private superstition, condemned by the enlightened conscience of the nation (Genesis 35:2, 1Samuel 15:23, 2Kings 23:24). It seems implied by the present narrative that the cult was borrowed from the Arameans, or perhaps rather that it had existed before the separation of Hebrews and Arameans" (ICCG, 396). These were "household gods, idols of clay or metal" (HSB, 51, n.). It will be noted that in the narrative before us, Laban calls these objects "gods"; when Jacob does the same, he is probably only quoting Laban, Genesis 31:30; Genesis 31:32).*

College Press Bible Study continues: *"The teraphim were the family or household gods represented in the form of idols. They varied in size. Those of Laban were small enough to be put in the pack-saddle of a camel upon which Rachel sat. 1Samuel 19:13 speaks of such an image in the house of David, approximately of human size and shape. In ancient Israel the use of the teraphim seems to have been common, and not at all inconsistent with the pure worship of Israel's God: Judg. ch. 17, Genesis 18:14; Genesis 18:17–18; Genesis 18:20; 1Samuel 19:13; Hosea 3:4" (Morganstern, JIBG, in loco).*

College Press Bible Study continues: *"It seems hardly fair to assume that the Israelites carelessly carried these household divinities over from the time of these early Mesopotamian contacts and continued to use them almost uninterruptedly. When Michal happens to have such a figure handy (1 Samuel 19), that is not as yet proof that from Rachel's day to Michal's Israel had quite carelessly tolerated them. We should rather say that whenever Israel lapsed into idolatry, especially in Canaan, then the backsliders would also `adapt themselves to the teraphim cult. Hosea 3:4 by no means lists them as legitimate objects of worship" (EG, 840).*<sup>341</sup>

<sup>340</sup> Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:19.

<sup>341</sup> The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Genesis 31:19 (the Teraphim).

## Teraphim (from Various Commentators)

From Mechanical Translation: *The word "teraphim" is a transliteration of the Hebrew מִפְּרָת (teraphim) in the verse above and is the plural form of the word תֵּרֶפֶת (tereph). Until recently the meaning of this word was completely unknown, and this is why the older translations of the Bible simply transliterate it as teraphim. Ancient inscriptions discovered in Babylon assisted in defining this word as household gods and newer translations such as the RSV now translate it as household gods. It is also possible that the ancient people believed these household gods provided healing since the root of this is the parent root פָּר.*<sup>342</sup>

Dr. Thomas Constable: *These gods were usually small figurines (two to three inches long), sometimes carried on the body as charms, many of which archaeologists have discovered. They may have represented departed ancestors or gods that their makers venerated. [Note: See Wenham, Genesis 16-50 , p273.] Rachel may also have hoped they would make her a fruitful mother. [Note: See M. Greenberg, "Another Look at Rachel's Theft of the Teraphim," Journal of Biblical Literature 81 (1962):247; Harry A. Hoffner Jeremiah , "The Linguistic Origins of Teraphim," Bibliotheca Sacra (July-September 1967):230-38; Gerhard Mehlman, " Genesis 31:19-39: An Interpretation," Journal of Reform Judaism 29:3 (Summer 1982):33-36; and Mathews, Genesis 11:27-50:26 , pp518-19.].*<sup>343</sup>

Over such a long period of time, and regarding so many different cultures, we should be careful not to center in upon a singular meaning or a singular use for these teraphim.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

In this chapter, this seems to be the most discussed topic of all.

Genesis 31:19 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (Many Commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Why did Rachel steal them? Partly, lest her father by consulting them should discover their flight, and the course which they took; and partly, because she seemed yet to retain a superstitious conceit of them, as may be gathered from Genesis 35:2. Others, because they were pretty and precious things, made of silver and gold, which she took as a part of what was due to her, both as his daughter, and for her husband's service. Others, that she might remove so great an occasion of her father's idolatry, and show him the vanity of such gods as might be stolen away.*<sup>344</sup>

Benson: *Some think they were only little representations of the ancestors of the family in statue or picture, which Rachel had a particular fondness for, and was desirous to have with her, now she was going into another country. It should rather seem they were images for a religious use, penates, household gods, either worshipped, or consulted as oracles; and we are willing to hope that she took them away, not out of covetousness, much less for her own use, or out of any superstitious fear, lest Laban, by consulting his teraphim, might know which way they were gone; but with a design to convince her father of the folly of his regard to those as gods which could not secure themselves.*<sup>345</sup>

Barnes: *Rachel had a lingering attachment to these objects of her family's superstitious reverence, and secretly carried them away as relics of a home she was to visit no more, and as sources of safety to herself against the perils of her flight.*<sup>346</sup>

<sup>342</sup> From [Mechanical Translation Commentary](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

<sup>343</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>344</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>345</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>346</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:14–19.

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (Many Commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *These household idols could be very large (cf. 1Samuel 19:13), or very small so as to fit in Rachel's camel saddle (cf. Genesis 31:34). We understand from the Nuzi Tablets that these household idols were a sign of inheritance rights so Rachel may have stolen them as a symbol of her understanding of Laban's illegal acts in regard to her inheritance or to later assert the right of her son to inherit Jacob's property. Some say that she stole them so that Laban could not divine their whereabouts (i.e., Rashi, cf. Genesis 30:27). These teraphim were used for divination (cf. Zechariah 10:2). They often appear in association with "the ephod" (cf. Judges 17:5; Judges 18:14–20 and Hos. 3:4). They are condemned as being idolatrous in 1Samuel 15:23.*<sup>347</sup>

Robertson: *The teraphim were used for two reasons: first for the purposes of divination and fortune telling; but secondly for the deeper reason of the inseparable tendency in human nature to worship God under a form. Wherein lay the guilt of this? Not in worshipping God under a form, for we cannot worship Him otherwise; but in this—that the form was necessarily inadequate and false, and therefore gave a false conception of God. There are but two forms in which we, as Christians, are allowed to worship God; to worship Him through the universe, and through the humanity of Jesus Christ.*<sup>348</sup>

Kalisch: *Rachel stole the Teraphim, either, as has been advanced, because she wished to prevent Laban's consulting them on the direction of their flight, or to secure their guardianship for a journey apparently fraught with difficulties and dangers. The value of the precious metal of which the idol might have been made was certainly a temptation subordinate to the superstitious motive...Rachel continued to attach a high value to dumb images, and regarded herself safe only under the guardianship of her own gods.*<sup>349</sup>

David Guzik: *Rachel took her father's household idols (teraphim). She may have wanted them because perhaps she worshipped these idols and did not want to be without them. Perhaps she did not want her father to inquire of them, using them as tools of divination to catch them (as he may have previously done, Gen. 30:27). Or perhaps it was because such idols were often used as deeds to property and she thought this she was taking her "inheritance." Perhaps Rachel stole the teraphim simply to get back at her father, whom she felt had mistreated her, her husband, and her whole family. Jewish traditions say Rachel took the teraphim because she wanted to keep her father Laban from idolatry.*<sup>350</sup>

Matthew Henry: *[W]e are willing to hope (with bishop Patrick) that she took them away not out of covetousness of the rich metal they were made of, much less for her own use, or out of any superstitious fear lest Laban, by consulting his teraphim, might know which way they had gone (Jacob, no doubt, dwelt with his wives as a man of knowledge, and they were better taught than so), but out of a design hereby to convince her father of the folly of his regard to those as gods which could not secure themselves, Isaiah 46:1–2.*<sup>351</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Rachel, before leaving, and quite unknown to Jacob, had slipped into Laban's tent and stolen his "images" (literally teraphim...)... Though she trusted Jacob's God, she was also reluctant to completely give up her previous superstitions, and she thought that taking these images along would in some way help them on the long journey and in the new home to which they were going. Her attitude was little different from that of many a new Christian today, happy to know the Lord but not yet willing to enter a life of separation from the world.*

<sup>347</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:17–21.

<sup>348</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21 (suggestive comments).

<sup>349</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:17–21.

<sup>350</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:17–21.

<sup>351</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17–24.

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (Many Commentators)

Morris continues: *It is also possible, as implied in some of the Nuzu tablets excavated around 1930, that the teraphim were associated with the inheritance and property rights of their owner. If so, Rachel may have stolen them with the thought that possessing them would somehow help validate the legitimacy of her husband's title to the flocks he had acquired while serving Laban and represent the inheritance she had a right to expect.*<sup>352</sup>

Hard Sayings of the Bible mentions how, after the Nuzi documents were discovered, that they indicated that there might be a connection between land inheritance and the ownership of these idols. But then they conclude, *The thought that possession of the household gods somehow was connected with a legal claim to the inheritance has had general acceptance previously, but now is not as firmly held as it once was.*<sup>353</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean gives the simplest explanation (and often the simplest explanation is the best): *Rachel, on the other hand, is going to do a right thing in a wrong way. She is going to leave, following the leadership of her husband, but without his permission or discussion she has decided she is going to get one last little jab in to dear old father Laban. She goes back in and steals the household idols, teraphim... These are very important to Laban. He thinks that this is where blessing comes from for him, he is devoted to these idols, and if her doesn't have his good-luck charm then he is not going to have much blessing. Rachel steals them because she is, as it were, going to steal the source of her father's blessing. She knows that as long as she has those idols and he doesn't have them any more he will be extremely distraught and unhappy. So she is just taking a little vindictive swipe at her father in order to get back at him for all the mischief and misery that he has brought into their lives over the past twenty years or more.*<sup>354</sup>

NEV commentary: *Gen 31:19 Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep: and Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's- He used them for divination (Gen. 30:27), so maybe she thought Laban would use them to divine where Jacob and his family had fled to, or would use the teraphim to curse them. Such images were also thought to be the guardians of the family property and the source of blessing, "teraphim" coming from the root taarap to be prosperous. Rachel had just lamented that she was written out of the inheritance, as it were, such as it now was. So it wasn't simply that it was her idolatry which led to her stealing them; she was angry with her father and was bitter about the issue of the inheritance (see on 31:14,15). This was used providentially by God to ensure she would wish to emigrate with Jacob to the land of promise. They were also thought to be the source of fertility; Rachel should have learnt that they actually had no power in this at all, but such power was only of God.*<sup>355</sup>

L. M. Grant: *Another sad complication takes place also. Rachel had stolen the teraphim (household images) that belonged to her father (v.19). She had not learned to walk by faith in the living God, but like her father, she needed to depend on what she could see. Though she was a beautiful woman, yet her desire for a religious atmosphere allowed her to indulge in stealing, idolatry and deceit (vs.34-35). This is common with all human religion: it is only the true knowledge of the Lord Jesus that will preserve us from such things.*<sup>356</sup>

<sup>352</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; pp. 482–483.

<sup>353</sup> *Hard Sayings of the Bible*; Walter Kaiser Jr., Peter Davids, F.F. Bruce, Manfred Brauch; InterVarsity Press; ©1996; p. 131. They cite Cyrus H. Gordon, "Biblical Customs and the Nuzi Tablets," from *Biblical Archaeologist* 3 (1940) p. 6, adding that Gordon was the strongest advocate of this position.

<sup>354</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](http://www.deanbibleministries.org/); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>355</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017 (slightly edited).

<sup>356</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (Many Commentators)

Gill: *Rachel took them away*, that her father might not consult them, and know which way Jacob fled, as Aben Ezra; but this looks as if she had an opinion of them, and that they had such a power of discovering persons and things that were attributed to them: and indeed some think she took them away from an affection and veneration for them, supposing she should not be able to meet with such in Canaan in Isaac's family; and what is observed in Genesis 35:2 seems to countenance this; but one would think she had been better instructed by Jacob during his twenty years' conversation with her; and besides, had she been tinctured with such sort of superstition and idolatry, she would never have used them so indecently, as to have sat upon them in the circumstances in which she was, Genesis 31:34; it is more to her credit and character to say with Jarchi, that she did this to take off her father from the idolatrous worship of them, and to convince him that they were no gods; since they could not inform him of the designs of Jacob, and of his flight, nor secure themselves from being carried away by her; unless it can be thought that she took them because of the metal of which they were made, gold or silver, being willing to have something of her father's goods as her portion, which she thought she had a right unto, or in recompence of her husband's service. Dr. Lightfoot (a) thinks she took them for a civil use, to preserve the memory of some of her ancestors, of which these were the pictures, and Laban had idolized; but whether pictures were so early is questionable.<sup>357</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Why did Rachel steal this teraphim? To be rejected are such conjectures as merely to play her father a prank; or to take them for their intrinsic worth, supposing that they were gold or silver figurines; or to employ a drastic or almost fanatical mode of seeking to break her father's idolatry— views current among Jewish commentators and early church fathers and to some extent to this day. More nearly correct might seem to be the opinion which suggests that she aimed to deprive her father of the blessings which might have been conferred by them. Most reasonable of all, though it does not exclude the last mentioned view, is the supposition that Rachel took them along for her own use, being herself somewhat given to superstitious or idolatrous practices. For though 30:23, 24 suggest a measure of faith and of knowledge of the true God, even as Jehovah, yet it would seem that as a true daughter of her father she had been addicted to his religion and now had a kind of divided allegiance, trusting in Jehovah and not wanting to be deprived of the good luck teraphim might confer. In any case, since she took what did not belong to her, she is guilty of theft— "she stole."*<sup>358</sup>

Kitchen: *The supposed role of the teraphim . . . as constituting the title-deeds to inheritances ... seems also to be fallacious; .... Rachel simply took them for her own protection and blessing.*<sup>359</sup>

I believe that Guzik covered pretty much every possibility. We should bear in mind that Rachel's act may have been one of desperation and anger and emotion (meaning, a lack of thought). Or, this may have been her way of exacting revenge on her father for how he had treated her.

There is certainly the possibility that, as several have observed, that these figurines are somehow tied to the ownership of Laban's land or to his wealth upon his death. This would certainly have explained Rachel's desire to steal them, as both women spoke of their father doing away with their inheritance. She may have felt justified in doing this.

The NEV commentary speaks of their disposal: *It was not until Gen. 35:2 that Jacob ordered these images to be discarded and buried beneath a tree; they were likely valuable, as such teraphim were typically covered in gold and precious stones. He sacrificed family wealth to ensure that idolatry was ended amongst his children and wives, and that they recognized that blessing was solely from Yahweh; a principle which remains relevant to this day.*<sup>360</sup>

<sup>357</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

<sup>358</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>359</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. He cites Kitchen, *The Bible . . .*, p70. Cf. Barker, p135

<sup>360</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017 (slightly edited).

This is likely when they were gotten rid of. There is no intervening narrative of Jacob (or someone else) discovering the idols and what was said or done at that time. If I were to make an educated guess, these status were discovered and then almost immediately disposed of in Genesis 35:2.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

I have too many commentators on this topic; Wenstrom tends to have excellent commentary, so I am listing him at the top of the individual commentaries.

Genesis 31:19 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.

### Why Rachel stole the teraphim (William Wenstrom)

There are many reasons offered by Bible scholars and commentators as to the reason why Rachel stole her father's household idols. The obvious reason is that by taking away her father's household idols, she was taking away his protection from his perspective, which the idols were thought to give.

Another explanation supported by the text and archaeology relates her theft to a practice during the days of the patriarchs that is mentioned Hurrian texts found in a place called "Nuzi," which is about 10 miles southwest of modern Kirkuk in northeastern Iraq. These Hurrian texts included about 5,000 tables from family archives from approximately 1500 B.C. and they give us insight into life in the days of the patriarchs.

According to these documents from Nuzi, possession of the household gods was connected to inheritance and property rights of their owner. Therefore, Rachel stole the household gods in order to establish a future claim on Laban's family inheritance. She thought by possessing them would somehow help validate the legitimacy of her husband's title to the flocks he had acquired while serving Laban and represent the inheritance she had a right to expect.

The household gods were a token of rightful claim to the possessions and the headship of the family. Rachel must have felt justified in stealing these gods and in expecting to share in the family inheritance. After all, this is what she and Leah had just affirmed to Jacob: Genesis 31:14, "Rachel and Leah said to him, 'Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house?'"

From Rachel's perspective, getting Laban's wealth was God's will and if that was the case with the matter of the flocks which Jacob had been tending, why should it not be true of the estate at Laban's death? Also, Rachel does not tell Jacob of her theft since he would undoubtedly disapproved of her taking anything with her that was Laban's property since he already rejected anything that was her father's.

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 493–494); accessed October 16, 2017.

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Genesis 31:19 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.

### Why did Rachel steal the teraphim? (Lange)

Lange: *It is not the business of Scripture to acquaint us with the kinds and characteristics of false worship. Hence we know little of the teraphim, except they were employed by those who professed to worship the true God. Rachel had a lingering attachment to these objects of her family's superstitious reverence, and secretly carried them away as relics of a home she was to visit no more, and as sources of safety to herself against the perils of her flight.*

## Why did Rachel steal the teraphim? (Lange)

Lange continues: *It is hardly probable that Rachel intended, by a pious and fanatical theft, to free her father from idolatry, for then she would have thrown the images away. She appears to have stolen them with the superstitious idea that she would prevent her father from consulting them as oracles, and under their guidance from overtaking and destroying Jacob. She attributed to the images a certain magical, though not religious, power (perhaps as oracles). The very lowest and most degrading supposition is that she took the images, often overlaid with silver, or precious metals, from mercenary motives. Jacob himself had at first a low rather than a strict conscience in regard to these images (Ch. Genesis 35:2), but the stricter view prevails since the time of Moses. (Exodus 20; Joshua 24:2; Joshua 24:14.) The tendency was always hurtful, and they were ultimately rooted out from Israel. Laban had lapsed into a more corrupt form of religion, and his daughters had not escaped the infection.*<sup>361</sup>

Lange: *“Literally, Teraphim, Penates, small figures, probably resembling the human form, which were honored as guardians of the household property, and as oracles. But as we must distinguish the symbolic adoration of religious images (statuettes) among ancients, from the true and proper mythological worship, so we must distinguish between a gentler and severe censure of the use of such images upon Shemitic ground. Doubtless the symbolic usage prevailed in the house of Laban and Nahor. It is hardly probable that Rachel intended, by a pious and fanatical theft, to free her father from idolatry (Gregory Nazianzen, Basil), for then she would have thrown the images away, She appears to have stolen them with the superstitious idea that she would prevent her father from consulting them as oracles, and under their guidance, as the pursuer of Jacob, from overtaking him and destroying him (Ibn Ezra).*

Lange: *The supposition of a condition of war, with its necessity and strategy, enters here with apologetic force. This, however, does not exclude the idea, that she attributed to the images a certain magical, though not religious, power (perhaps, as oracles. Chrysostom). The very lowest and most degrading supposition, is that she took the images, often overlaid with silver, or precious metals, from mercenary motives (Peirerius). Jacob himself had at first a lax rather than a strict conscience in regard to these images (see ch. Genesis 35:2), but the stricter view prevails since the time of Moses (Exodus 20, Joshua 24:2; Joshua 24:14 f.).*

Lange: *The derivation of the Hebrew word teraphim, always used in the plural, is doubtful. Some derive it from taraph, to rejoice—thus dispensers of good; others, from a like root, to inquire—thus they are oracles; and others, like Kurtz and Hofmann, make it another form of Seraphim. They were regarded and used as oracles (Judges 17:5–6, Ezekiel 21:21, Zechariah 10:2). They were not idols in the worst sense of the word, and were sometimes used by those who professed the worship of the true god (1Samuel 19:13). The tendency was always hurtful, and they were ultimately rooted out from Israel. Laban had lapsed into a more corrupt form of religion, and his daughters had not escaped the infection. We may modify our views of Rachel’s sin, but it cannot be excused or justified” (CDHCG, 542). With the last statement in the foregoing we must agree. However, Rachel’s theft of Laban’s teraphim (which undoubtedly were figurines or images in human form) is much better understood today, in the light of the documents from Nuzi, not far from modern Kirkuk, excavated 1925–1934.*

Lange: *Genesis 31:19—“Rachel stole the teraphim.” “Appropriated, also Genesis 31:32. Heb. stem gnb, which usually means ‘to steal.’ But it also has other shadings in idiomatic usage. Thus the very next clause employs the same verb, no doubt deliberately and with telling effect, in the phrase ‘lulling the mind,’ i.e., stealing the heart; the phrase is repeated in 26; in 27, with Laban speaking, the verb is used by itself in the sense of ‘to dupe.’ Finally, in Genesis 31:29, the passive participle occurs (twice) to designate animals snatched by wild beasts.*

<sup>361</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21 (suggestive comments).

## Why did Rachel steal the teraphim? (Lange)

Lange: *The range of gnb is thus much broader, in Heb. in general, and in the present narrative in particular, than our 'to steal' would indicate. A reasonably precise translation is especially important in this instance, The issue is bound up with the purpose of Rachel's act. If it was inspired by no more than a whim, or resentment, or greed, then Rachel stole the images. But if she meant thereby to undo what she regarded as a wrong, and thus took the law, as she saw it, into her own hands, the translation 'stole' would be not only inadequate but misleading. On the other hand, when Laban refers to the same act further down (Genesis 31:30), he clearly meant 'steal' (Speiser, ABG, 245).<sup>362</sup>*

Lange concludes: *It is not a chance that we meet here in the idols of Laban the earliest traces of idolatry in the Old World, although they had doubtless existed elsewhere much earlier and in a proper form. We can see how Polytheism gradually developed itself out of the symbolic image worship of Monotheism. (Romans 1:23.) Moreover, the teraphim are estimated entirely from a theocratic point of view. They could be stolen as other household furniture (have eyes but see not). They could be hidden under a camel's saddle. They are a contemptible nonentity, which can render no assistance. The zeal for gods and idols is always fanatical.<sup>363</sup>*

I may have screwed up the order of these Lange quotes.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

I have clearly engaged in overkill in this particular topic, and need to excise a lot of this material.

Genesis 31:19 [While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.](#)

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (College Press Bible Study)

The College Press Bible Study: *Of greater significance to us, however, is the question, Why did Rachel steal this teraphim? "To be rejected are such conjectures as merely to play her father a prank; or to take them for their intrinsic worth, supposing that they were gold or silver figurines; or to employ a drastic or almost fanatical mode of seeking to break her father's idolatry—views current among Jewish commentators and early church fathers and to some extent to this day. More nearly correct might seem to be the opinion which suggests that she aimed to deprive her father of the blessings which might have been conferred by them, Most reasonable of all, though it does not exclude the last-mentioned view, is the supposition that Rachel took them along for her own use, being herself somewhat given to superstitious or idolatrous practices. For though Genesis 30:23–24 suggest a measure of faith and of knowledge of the true God, even as Jehovah, yet it would seem that as a true daughter of her father she had been addicted to his religion and now had a kind of divided allegiance, trusting in Jehovah and not wanting to be deprived of the good luck teraphim might confer. In any case, since she took what did not belong to her, she is guilty of theft—she 'stole'" (EG, 840).*

College Press Bible Study continues: *"The rabbis sought to excuse Rachel's theft by saying she took the teraphim because she feared they might disclose Jacob's whereabouts to Laban. Actually, the story gives no motive for her theft, unless it be that suggested, in the lesson, to prove the superiority of Jacob's God over the gods of Laban. For this reason probably the story told with considerable gusto not only that Rachel stole these gods, which were powerless to defend themselves, but also that she subjected them to greater indignity by sitting on them (Genesis 31:34). Use of teraphim became regarded as inconsistent with the pure worship of God and was prohibited: 2Kings 23:24; cf. 1Samuel 15:23" (Morganstern, *ibid.*).*

<sup>362</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Genesis 31:19 (Teraphim).*

<sup>363</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21 (suggestive comments).*

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (College Press Bible Study)

College Press Bible Study continues: *“They were used for divination; hence she stole them that they should not reveal to Laban that Jacob had fled [Rashbam]. They were idols, and she stole them in order to keep Laban from idolatry [Rashi]. E [Abraham Ibn Ezra] inclines to the former reason, for if the latter were her purpose, she should have hidden them and not taken them with her. As for the teraphim, E mentions two views: that it was a kind of clock, or an image which was so made that at certain times it spoke. His own opinion is that it was a kind of dummy which could be mistaken for a human being, the proof being that Michal deceived David’s pursuers by putting teraphim in the bed, which they mistook for David (1Samuel 19:13 ff.). N [Nachmanides] also quotes the story of Michal, from which he deduced that not all teraphim were worshipped as idols, for in that case David would certainly not have possessed them. He conjectures that it was an object used to foretell the future (apparently a kind of fortune–telling clock). Men of little faith therefore worshipped it as an idol” (SC, 182).*

College Press Bible Study continues: *“Probably it is true . . . that the main purpose for the mention of the images is to disparage Laban for the superstitious value he put on them, and by contrast to indicate that Jacob was superior to such things. In that case, Rachel’s sitting upon them would be only another stroke in the picture of the idols’ degradation. But there is another road on which imagination travels. Suppose that Rachel sat upon the images not to make her father’s search for them ridiculous, but because she craved to keep them for herself. Then that might be taken as evidence simply of pathetic superstition on her part; but it is possible to see in it something more than that. Suppose that on her way to an unfamiliar country and to a strange new relationship, Rachel wanted to carry with her what had been significant at home. That can be a wholesome human instinct. None of us is isolated and self-sufficient. The meaning of life is bound up with the complex of associations of the family or the group. If these are altogether left behind, the human being will be lonely and lost” (IBG, 713).*

College Press Bible Study continues: *We have presented these various theories as to the nature of the teraphim and Rachel’s motives in stealing them to show how great is the scope of speculation on these subjects. We terminate this study with what we consider to be the sanest and most thoroughgoing presentation of it, as follows: “The teraphim were figurines or images in human form. Rachel’s theft of Laban’s teraphim (Genesis 31:34) is much better understood in the light of the documents from Nuzu, not far from modern Kirkuk, excavated 1925–1934.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *The possession of these household gods apparently implied leadership of the family and, in the case of a married daughter, assured her husband the right to the property of her father. Since Laban evidently had sons of his own when Jacob left for Canaan, they alone had the right to their father’s gods, and the theft of these household idols by Rachel was a serious offense (Genesis 31:19; Genesis 31:31; Genesis 31:35) aimed at preserving for her husband the first title to her father’s estate. Albright construes the teraphim as meaning ‘vile things,’ but the images were not necessarily cultic or lewd, as frequently the depictions of Astarte were.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *Micah’s teraphim (Judges 17:5) were used for purposes of securing an oracle (cf. 1Samuel 15:23, Hosea 3:4; Zechariah 10:2). Babylonian kings oracularly consulted the teraphim (Ezekiel 21:21). Josiah abolished the teraphim (2Kings 23:24), but these images had a strange hold on the Hebrew people even until after the Exilic. Period” (Unger, UBD, 1085). The present writer finds it difficult to disassociate these objects from some aspect of the Cult of Fertility—the worship of the Earth–mother and the Sun–father—which was so widespread throughout the ancient pagan world; cf. the Apostle’s description, Romans 1:18–32.*

College Press Bible Study continues: *Every phase of this Cult of Fertility reeked with sex perversions of every kind, including ritual prostitution and phallic worship: remains of this cult have been brought to light in recent years by the discovery of hundreds of figurines of pregnant women throughout the Mediterranean world. Crete seems to have been the center from which this cult became diffused throughout the ancient world.*

## Why did Rachel steal these small religious statues? (College Press Bible Study)

College Press Bible Study continues: *The Children of Israel had to battle this cult from the time of their origin as a people, and apparently were always influenced to it by some extent: cf. the moral struggle of the prophet Elijah with the wicked queen Jezebel. It is our conviction that Rachel “appropriated” these (surely more likely than this) teraphim with the intention of using them for whatever ends they were supposed by her paternal household to serve. That the legal aspect, as indicated by the Nuzi records, could have been a very important part of her objective seems to be both historical and reasonable. However, we cannot get away from the basic conviction that Rachel was imbued with the spirit of paganism which seems to have characterized her people generally. Even Jacob himself and his people were not immunized against this cultism (cf. Genesis 35:2–4; Joshua 24:2; Joshua 24:14 f.; Judges 10:16). Again quoting Lange: “Laban had lapsed into a more corrupt form of religion, and his daughters had not escaped the infection. We may modify our views of Rachel’s sin, but it cannot be excused or justified.”*

*The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Genesis 31:19 (Teraphim).*

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Whereas, there is a great deal written about why Rachel stole the idols, there is very little written about the exact mechanics of stealing them.<sup>364</sup> What appears to be the case is, Jacob and his two wives talk about leaving—some specifics are determined (I would guess that the day that Laban leaves to shear the sheep would be the day that they kicked this into high gear). As Rachel gathers up her own stuff, she also grabs the idols and threw them into the storage compartment of her saddle.

Some suggest that stealing these idols—even though the exact reason why she did it is unknown—reveals her lack of spirituality.<sup>365</sup> This very well could be; and let me also suggest that, her nearly being caught and nearly being executed (**vv. 31–36**), may have turned her around considerably (this is speculation on my part, but speculation which is not without some **evidence**).

As an aside, I do not mind speculating; and sometimes, I find it to be mentally stimulating. However, we need to be able to distinguish between the clear facts and speculation. Sometimes we can fill in some narrative gaps with good and reasonable speculation; but we should still be careful to label it as such.

On the other hand, I speak as a person writing fairly long and extensive commentaries. When a pastor-teacher works on this material, he cannot devote 50 lessons to the teaching of Genesis 31. So, as a result, the teacher must sometimes shortcut the information and sometimes insert some reasonable speculation as what has happened, without a lot of qualification. Obviously, any of this speculation cannot contradict the faith. As long as the end result is teaching which is consistent with the narrative of the Bible and with the accepted doctrines, it is fine. For instance, R. B. Thieme, Jr. often spoke of certain believers in Biblical narratives moving into spiritual maturity. There may not be any specific verses which specifically say that; there is often evidence of their looking at things more from the divine perspective (which would certainly be indicative of spiritual growth). Bob, who taught an amazing amount of material, was not going to stop every time and say, “Now, we know that Abraham was in spiritual maturity at this point because...” A pastor-teacher has to concern himself with getting out a reasonable amount of spiritual information with a reasonable amount of detail, without getting bogged down.

One more thing needs to be said: a pastor cannot feed his flock by teaching 20 minute lessons 2 or 3 times a week. No spiritual growth will occur. Bob used to teach 1 hour 15 minutes lessons (sometimes they went longer); and many doctrinal pastors today teach 45–55 minutes worth of material. I think that 3 or 4 times a week is a bare

<sup>364</sup> The <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017 discussed this briefly.

<sup>365</sup> For instance, <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

minimum,<sup>366</sup> and that 45 minute lessons are the minimal length. We need to counteract the great amount of propaganda that we face in every society. Underneath all that we see is a struggle for our minds, to think divine viewpoint or to think human viewpoint (or, Satanic viewpoint). 90–99% of what we are exposed to outside of church is going to be human viewpoint or Satanic viewpoint. We need enough material in our souls to counteract this.

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

So, Laban has gone out the shear his sheep (this is the money day—that is, this wool can be sold for a great deal of money—it is like harvesting to a farmer). Jacob planned his escape to occur during the shearing of Laban's flocks. He did not just leave on some random day. He left at a time to get the maximum amount of time on the road before Laban realized that he was gone. Jacob would be traveling with small children and many animals; so he would not be able to move very fast. Therefore, he would need this head start.

What appears to be the case is, there would be a significant period of time involved in the shearing and a common set of events which would occur, leading up to the shearing and the actual shearing itself. Perhaps the sheep will all be washed as well. These events allowed for the greatest amount of time to pass between the times when Jacob is seen by Laban or by his sons.

Rachel, while her sister is gathering up the children (Leah has about a half dozen or so; Rachel has one), steals into her father's tent and steals the images which belong to her father. These are little deities; little gods. Although we are not given the motivation here, let me suggest several possible reasons: (1) Rachel will not get an inheritance from her father and whatever inheritance there was, has been spent; (2) these little statues might be valuable (they might even be made of the silver promised to them); (3) she might be taking these for good luck (that is, she might actually believe that these deities are effective); or (4) she knew the statues were of value to her father and she simply wanted to take something from him out of anger.

Now, remember the names that Leah named her children? At first, she was thinking about Jacob and her relationship with Jacob. But with Judah, she named him *praised* because she has been *praised of the Lord* (Genesis 29:35). So she has shown some change of attitude over the years, as well as some acceptance for her situation. *Praised* suggests that she is happier with her life (at least on some days).

Rachel, on the other hand, has been upset over not having more children; she is jealous of Leah; and here, she steals from her own father. You may recall that she got so irrational that Jacob told her that she needed to lighten up (Genesis 30:1–2).

One of the things which concerned me is, *what about Laban's herds that Jacob was tending? Who watched after them?* We are not told. My guess is, many of them were shipped to Laban to be sheared. If this did not represent his entire herd, then what happened to the other animals? Nothing is said about this; however, since Laban does not later complain about missing animals when he meets up with Jacob, this suggests that Jacob saw to their care. Perhaps he left a trusted servant in charge of them; and this trusted servant led the herds and flocks to Laban, where Jacob's exit was revealed to Laban. This seems to be the most logical explanation.

| Genesis 31:20a                     |  |                  |                           |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's #        |
| wa (or va) (i)<br>[pronounced wah] | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wāw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |

<sup>366</sup> R. B. Thieme, Jr. used to teach 8–10 lessons a week in his prime and many more during a conference, when double-sessions were often standard. If memory serves, he taught 5 nights a week during the week; a ladies class on Monday morning; 3 sessions on Sunday, and a class over at U of H.

## Genesis 31:20a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| gânab (גָּנַב) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ]  | <i>to steal, to take away by theft; to deceive</i>                                 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ġuh-KOH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ]   | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i> | masculine proper noun                                       | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                             | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay<sup>b</sup>V</i> ]   | <i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>                               | masculine singular construct                                | Strong's #3820<br>BDB #524 |
| The NET Bible: <i>Heb "stole the heart of," an expression which apparently means "to deceive." The repetition of the verb "to steal" shows that Jacob and Rachel are kindred spirits. Any thought that Laban would have resigned himself to their departure was now out of the question.</i> <sup>367</sup> |  |   |                            |
| Whedon: <i>Stole away unawares to Laban — Hebrews, stole the heart of Laban. There is a play on the words heart and Laban — stole the Leb-Laban. Rachel stole the teraphim, Jacob the heart, of Laban. He used deception in keeping Laban from any suspicion of his plans for flight.</i> <sup>368</sup>    |  |   |                            |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]   | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>                | masculine singular proper noun; location                    | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| 'Ārammîy (אַרַּמִּי) [pronounced <i>uh-rahm-MEE</i> ]   | <i>exalted; transliterated/translated Aramæan, Aramite; Syrian</i>                 | gentilic adjective with the definite article                | Strong's #761<br>BDB #74   |

**Translation:** So, Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramæan,... This appears to be a way of saying that Jacob deceived Laban or Jacob kept this information from Laban.

There is a play on words found here, where both Rachel and Jacob steal from Laban. **While Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which [belonged] to her father. So, Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramæan, [and] he did not make know to him that he was fleeing.** Only a couple of translations made this play on words known in the English. Rachel steals the household teraphim from Laban when he is unaware; and Jacob steals his family away from Laban (actually, the Hebrew text reads: *Jacob steals Laban's heart*) which is a play on words to indicate that Jacob deceived Laban.

Jacob has outsmarted Laban here. The verb is *gânab* (גָּנַב) [pronounced *gaw-NAB*] and it means to steal in the literal or the figurative sense. It can mean *to take by stealth* or it can refer to *the sudden sweeping off by storm*. Here, Jacob is stealing away. There is nothing implied in terms of taking anything. The common use for this verb means to do something quietly and suddenly. *Heart* is *lab* (לֵב) [pronounced *la<sup>b</sup>V*] and it refers to the inner man. However, what is done here is a play on words. Laban is *lâbân* (לָבָן) and heart is *lab*; so we have a bit of playfulness with the language in Jacob's part, who, for twenty years, wanted to saying something about the heart of Laban and this gave him his first opportunity—to be recorded forever in the Word of God. Jacob, in v. 20b, explains what he meant.

<sup>367</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 14, 2016.

<sup>368</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:20.

What we are concerned with is the fact that Jacob left town without telling Laban, and in this way, he stole from the heart of Laban. Laban was deceptive and tricky and Jacob finally was the same way back. Jacob always had the ability, but not against someone as sharp and as schooled as his uncle/father-in-law.

Genesis 31:20 So, Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramæan, [and] he did not make know to him that he was fleeing.

### Jacob stole the heart of Laban (Various Commentators)

Barnes: *The heart is the seat of the understanding in Scripture. To steal the heart of anyone is to act without his knowledge.*<sup>369</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *A second theft, though of a different kind. He causes great distress to Laban by stealing away unawares and depriving the tribe of what it saw as part of itself, without negotiation. He was stealing what was closest to Laban's heart, part of his tribe.*<sup>370</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Heb. stole the heart of Laban the Aramean. Cf. Genesis 31:26. Jacob outwitted Laban; fled secretly, and got three days' start. For the phrase, cf. the Greek κλέπτειν νοῦν, "to steal the mind," i.e. to deceive; see 2Samuel 15:6.*<sup>371</sup>

E. W. Bullinger: *Hebrew stole the heart. Figure of speech Synecdoche (of the Part)...heart being put for knowledge. Compare Genesis 31:27. Rachel stole Laban's idols; and Jacob stole Laban's heart.*<sup>372</sup>

E. W. Bullinger: *[That is,] Jacob baffled Laban's knowledge by hiding his intentions.*<sup>373</sup>

Gill gives two views: *And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian,.... Went away without his knowledge, or giving him any notice of it; he was too cunning for Laban the Syrian; notwithstanding his astrology and superstitious arts, which the Syrians are addicted to, he had no foresight of this matter.*

Gill: *or he "stole away the heart of Laban" ...that which his heart was set upon; not his gods, these Rachel stole away; nor his daughters, for whom he does not appear to have had any great affection and respect; but rather the cattle and goods Jacob took with him, which Laban's eye and heart were upon, and hoped to get into his possession by one means, or at one time or another; but the former sense, that he "stole from" his heart, or stole away without his knowledge, seems best to agree with what follows.*<sup>374</sup>

Matthew Poole: *Heb. Stole away the heart of Laban, to wit, his daughters, his cattle, and his gods, upon which his heart was vehemently set.*<sup>375</sup>

<sup>369</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20–24.

<sup>370</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21.

<sup>371</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:20.

<sup>372</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20.

<sup>373</sup> *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p. 648.

<sup>374</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20. Gill cites two other sources there.

<sup>375</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20.

## Jacob stole the heart of Laban (Various Commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The meaning of the expression “stole the heart” of Laban is understood by comparing it with the prepositional phrase “by not telling him (Laban) that he (Jacob) was fleeing.” Therefore, Jacob stole the heart of Laban in the sense that he left secretly and unobserved by Laban so that Laban had no knowledge of and was totally unaware that Jacob had left. The fact that Jacob left secretly was “not” a sin since in Scripture we see that David kept his whereabouts secret from Saul in order to protect himself (1Samuel 19:2). The Lord Jesus Christ went in secret to the Temple in order to avoid a confrontation with the Pharisees, which could lead to His premature arrest before the time that the Father had ordained for Him (See John 7:1-10). However, although it was not a sin that Jacob left secretly, it was a sin that he left secretly out of fear of Laban.*<sup>376</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Genesis 31:20b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| ‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahʼ</i> ]                            | <i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>   | preposition of relative proximity   | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752 |
| b <sup>e</sup> lîy (לֹא) [pronounced <i>b<sup>e</sup>LEE</i> ] | <i>not, without</i>   | negative/substantive  | Strong's #1097<br>BDB #115 |
| nâgad (נִגַּד) [pronounced <i>naw-GAHD</i> ]                   | <i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect   | Strong's #5046<br>BDB #616 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]                   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix              | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]                            | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition  | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| bârach (בָּרַח) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHKH</i> ]                 | <i>going [pass] through, fleeing [away]; hastening, coming quickly; reaching across</i>   | Qal active participle   | Strong's #1272<br>BDB #137 |
| hûw' (אוּהוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]                         | <i>he, it; himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied | Strong's #1931<br>BDB #214 |

**Translation:** ...[and] he did not make know to him that he was fleeing. Jacob did not reveal to Laban that he was fleeing (or, leaving).

This is quite significant. Despite Laban's continual cheating, Jacob has lived with him and his family for 20 years now. He has married Laban's two daughters (we don't know if Laban has other daughters). And his 12+ children are Laban's grandchildren.

<sup>376</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 494); accessed October 16, 2017.

Genesis 31:20 So, Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramæan, [and] he did not make know to him that he was fleeing.

### Jacob surreptitiously steals away (commentators/discussion)

H. C. Leupold: *This plan [to sneak away] is not to be commended. If the separation from Laban was permissible and right, and God has even sanctioned it, then it should have been carried out openly as the honorable thing that it actually was. Fear of the consequences should have been dismissed, since divine approval was assured. Here, too, Jacob is seen putting undue confidence in purely human devices.*<sup>377</sup>

Whedon: *Laban went to shear his sheep — This afforded an opportunity for Jacob to effect his escape without trouble or excitement, for he feared forcible opposition from Laban. Genesis 31:31.*<sup>378</sup>

David Guzik: *God has already told him to go and promised him safe passage. Jacob is clearly acting in the flesh, because has no need to be afraid of Laban or to sneak away.*<sup>379</sup>

Barnhouse: *He could have announced his departure and gone in the glory of an army with banners. But fear made it impossible to reap the full measure of blessing. He sneaked away into the will of God instead of departing in triumph.*<sup>380</sup>

John Wesley justifies what Jacob has done: *That part of his flock which was in the hands of his sons, three days journey off. Now, It is certain it was lawful for Jacob to leave his service suddenly: it was not only justified by the particular instructions God gave him, but warranted by the fundamental law of self - preservation which directs us, when we are in danger, to shift for our own safety, as far as we can do it without wronging our consciences. It was his prudence to steal away unawares to Laban, lest if Laban had known, he should have hindered him, or plundered him. It was honestly done to take no more than his own with him, the cattle of his getting. He took what providence gave him, and would not take the repair of his damages into his own hands.*<sup>381</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. also justifies Jacob: *The fact that Jacob desired to leave Laban secretly was “not” a sin since in Scripture we see that David kept his whereabouts secret from Saul in order to protect himself (1 Samuel 19:2). The Lord Jesus Christ went in secret to the Temple in order to avoid a confrontation with the Pharisees, which could lead to His premature arrest before the time that the Father had ordained for Him.*<sup>382</sup>

David kept his whereabouts secret from Saul because Saul actually was trying to kill him. This was well-known. The pharisees also wanted to do the Lord harm as well. There is nothing in our narrative that tells us that Laban wants to do Jacob harm. Both men have their shortcomings; but they will have a chance to air out their differences and anger; and both of them will make some cogent points.

If I were to make an educated guess as to what Jacob really feared; it would be that Laban might take some of his flock back. I don't believe that Jacob really thought that Laban would harm him or his wives or grandchildren; I don't believe there is any indication that Laban would say, “No, sorry; you cannot leave Haran.” But, he might have kept some of Jacob's livestock which were legitimately his. Near the end of this chapter, we will discuss the other options and why they would not be legitimate options.

<sup>377</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>378</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:19.

<sup>379</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:17–21.

<sup>380</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:17–21.

<sup>381</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:19 (I think that Wesley may have copied this from someone else, like Matthew Poole).

<sup>382</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 487); accessed October 15, 2017.

## Jacob surreptitiously steals away (commentators/discussion)

Wenstrom also writes: *Jacob should have left openly, trusting that the Lord would protect him from Laban as He said He would in Genesis 28:15 in the phrase "I will keep you." Jacob's sin of fear due to a lack of faith repeats the sin of his grandfather Abraham who out of fear of Pharaoh of Egypt and Abimelech said that Sarah was his sister and not his wife (See Genesis 12:9-20; 20:1-18).*<sup>383</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Genesis 31:20** And Jacob deceived the heart of Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he fled.

When Jacob leaves, it is sudden, with the idea that he would have a 3-day head start, and his father-in-law would not be told during this time, as no one else would know. Jacob would be 3 days gone before Laban is aware of what happened.

God told Jacob that it was time for him to return to the Land of Promise. This does not mean that he should do it like this.

Laban is not called a Syrian because of his lineage, but because of where he lives. His father, Bethuel, came from Mesopotamia; but Laban would have been raised in Syria and possibly even born there. Understanding this explains a number of apparent contradictions in the Bible. Unlike the United States, where people move every 5 years, in ancient times, once a person moved to here or there, they tended to remain there. Jacob, did a fair amount of moving; but he was nearly always tied to the Land of Promise.

In fact, as an aside, Jacob is typical of the Jewish people. Despite understanding the importance of the Land of Promise, Jacob will leave this land twice; and, in fact, die outside of the land. Prior to the first advent, the Jews would be moved out of the land on two occasions (also known as, **the 5<sup>th</sup> stage of national discipline**).

### Genesis 31:21a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                                 | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>      | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| bârach (בָּרַח) [pronounced baw-RAHKH]                          | <i>to go [pass] through, to flee [away]; to hasten, to come quickly; to reach across</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #1272<br>BDB #137 |
| hûw' (אוּה) [pronounced hoo]                                    | <i>he, it; himself as a demonstrative pronoun: that, this (one); same</i>                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied | Strong's #1931<br>BDB #214 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                    | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>                    | masculine singular noun without the definite article  | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |

<sup>383</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 487); accessed October 16, 2017.

## Genesis 31:21a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings                | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #        |
|--|--|---|---------------------------|
| ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר)<br>[pronounced ash-ER] | that, which, when, who, whom;<br>where | relative pronoun  | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]              | to, for, towards, in regards to        | directional/relational<br>preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup><br>person masculine<br>singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510 |

Literally translated *all that to him, all which to him*. This is reasonably translated *all that is his, all that belongs to him, all which is his, all that was with him*.

**Translation:** So he fled—he and all that he had. The personal pronoun here is not emphasizing the person of Jacob. It seems to be more connect that he took all that was his with him.

Jacob, like Isaac and Abraham, lived in a state of fear of certain people. He feared Laban, even though God has given Jacob several guarantees, including the fact that God told him to return to the land of Canaan.

**Jacob Fleeting Laban** (a painting by Filippo Lauri); from [Spencer Alley](#); accessed October 26, 2017.



No idea which man would be Jacob.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Genesis 31:19–21a While Laban had gone out to oversee the shearing of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban the Aramæan, and he did not inform him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had.

### Jacob's timing for his escape (commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *Jacob chose a good time for his departure. It was the time of sheep shearing. Everyone would be busy with shearing the sheep and with the subsequent feast (see 1Samuel 25:11; 2Samuel 13:23 on). And he was helped by the fact that Laban with his flocks was some distance away, by Laban's choice (Genesis 30:36). This explains how so great a move was achieved in some secrecy.*<sup>384</sup>

Gill: *And Laban went to shear his sheep,.... Which were under the care of his sons, and were three days' distance from Jacob's flocks; this gave Jacob a fair opportunity to depart with his family and substance, since Laban and his sons were at such a distance, and their servants with them also.*<sup>385</sup>

<sup>384</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21.

<sup>385</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:19.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Genesis 31:21b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                     | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| qûwm (קום) [pronounced koom]                        | to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow                  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #6965<br>BDB #877 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                     | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âbar (אַבַּר) [pronounced 'gaw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR] | to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over [beyond], to cross, to cross over; to go away, to depart; to violate [a law] | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect    | Strong's #5674<br>BDB #716 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]                        | untranslated generally; occasionally to, toward   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| nâhâr (נָהַר) [pronounced naw-HAWR]                 | stream, river   | masculine singular noun with the definite article           | Strong's #5104<br>BDB #625 |

**Translation:** He rose up and crossed over the river. This would be the Euphrates River; so Laban was located between the two rivers.

Genesis 31:19–21a-b While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban the Aramæan, and he did not inform him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed over the river.

### Which river is found in Genesis 31:21? (Various Commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *The Euphrates is called "the river" on account of its greatness...[just as] "the sea" is put for "the Great Sea," which is another...[name for] the Mediterranean.*<sup>386</sup>

Barnes: *The Frat, near which, we may conclude, Jacob was tending his flocks. Haran was about seventy miles from the river, and therefore, Laban's flocks were on the other side of Haran. "Toward mount Gilead;" about three hundred miles from the Frat.*<sup>387</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *That is, the River Euphrates.*<sup>388</sup>

<sup>386</sup> *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p. 682.

<sup>387</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20–24.

<sup>388</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:19–21.

### Which river is found in Genesis 31:21? (Various Commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *[That is,] the Euphrates. See note on Genesis 15:18. Cf. Psalm 72:8, "from the River unto the ends of the earth." "Haran" (Genesis 24:4) was Laban's home.*<sup>389</sup>

Clarke: *The Euphrates, as the Targum properly notices. But how could he pass such a river with his flocks, etc.? This difficulty does not seem to have struck critics in general. The rabbins felt it, and assert that God wrought a miracle for Jacob on this occasion, and that he passed over dry shod. As we know not in what other way he could pass, it is prudent to refer it to the power of God, which accompanied him through the whole of his journey. There might, however, have been fords well known to both Jacob and Laban, by which they might readily pass.*<sup>390</sup>

Clarke's comments may suggest that perhaps this was another river that they crossed over. According to most maps, Jacob was already west of the Euphrates River (however, the text of Jacob's trip does not necessarily place him in the same place that Abraham's servant went).

Gill: *and he rose up, and passed over the river; the river Euphrates, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it, which lay between Mesopotamia and Canaan.*<sup>391</sup>

Matthew Poole: *The river Euphrates, which lay between Mesopotamia and Chaldea, Genesis 15:18, which for its largeness and famousness is oft called the river emphatically, as Exodus 23:31 Joshua 24:2,3, &c.*<sup>392</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The "Euphrates" river was located in southern Mesopotamia and rises in the mountains of Armenia Major and flows through Assyria, Syria, Mesopotamia, and the city of Babylon, from 1,700 to 1,800 miles into the Persian Gulf.*<sup>393</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

### Genesis 31:21c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| sîym (שׂיַם) [pronounced seem]; also spelled sûwm (שׂוּם) [pronounced soom] | <i>to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint</i>                                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #7760<br>BDB #962 |

<sup>389</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:21.*

<sup>390</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>391</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>392</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>393</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 494); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Genesis 31:21c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| ʿēth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                          | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object   | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84            |
| pānîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]  | <i>face, faces, countenance; presence; person; surface</i>                      | masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular) with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #6440<br>BDB #815          |
| Matthew Poole: <i>And set his face, i.e. resolutely directed his course. See Jer. 50:5 Luke 9:51,53.</i> <sup>395</sup> |   |   |                                     |
| har (הַר) [pronounced har]  | <i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country, a mountainous area, mountain region</i> | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249 |
| Gil <sup>ē</sup> ād (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced gil-ĠAWD]  | <i>rocky region; transliterated Gilead</i>                                      | masculine proper noun with the definite article   | Strong's #1568<br>BDB #166          |

**Translation:** Then he set his face [toward] the hill country of Gilead. Jacob knew the bearing of the hill country of Gilead, and he went in that direction.

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob then left before Laban knew anything about his plans. He and his party forded the River Euphrates (the river is sufficiently shallow at certain points near its source for this) and headed for Mount Gilead, far to the southwest...It is possible, of course, that Jacob had already worked his flocks around to the south as far as possible so as to have the advantage of a head start when he was ready to leave.*<sup>396</sup>

Genesis 31:19–21 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban the Aramæan, and he did not inform him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed over the river. Then he went toward the hill country of Gilead.

### The name of Gilead (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *toward the mountain of Gilead [is]...towards the hill-country on the east side of Jordan. The name "Gilead" is here used in its widest application.*<sup>397</sup>

<sup>394</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>395</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>396</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 483.

<sup>397</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:21.

### The name of Gilead (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *Gilead = perpetual fountain. Compare Num. 32:1, Num. 32:39. Deut. 3:12–16; Deut. 34:1.*<sup>398</sup>

Whedon: *Mount Gilead — So called by anticipation here. Comp. Genesis 31:47–48.*<sup>399</sup>

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Genesis 31:19–21 While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father. Jacob deceived Laban the Aramæan, and he did not inform him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed over the river. Then he went toward the hill country of Gilead.

### Location of Gilead (various commentators)

Henry M. Morris: *Mount Gilead is actually a mountainous region east of the Jordan River. Its northern edges are nearly three hundred miles from Haran; so a long journey stretched ahead of them.*<sup>400</sup>

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

Smith continues: *Actually his father-in-law was out shearing the sheep and it was three days before Laban even found out that he was gone. He probably had worked his flocks down to the southern extremities anyhow. And probably put about ninety miles distance between at the start of the time before he started driving them away. And then he put three days more journey between him and Laban and Laban couldn't just leave the shearing of the sheep immediately. Probably finished up as fast as he could before he took off to catch Jacob. But because he was forced in a fast march to catch Jacob, he caught him down around the area of Mount Gilead. Just about three hundred miles distance.*<sup>401</sup>

Clarke: *What the ancient name of this mountain was, we know not; but it is likely that it had not the name of Gilead till after the transaction mentioned Genesis 31:47. The mountains of Gilead were eastward of the country possessed by the tribes of Reuben and Gad; and extended from Mount Hermon to the mountains of Moab – Calmet. It is joined to Mount Libanus, and includes the mountainous region called in the New Testament Trachonitis – Dodd.*<sup>402</sup>

Gill: *and set his face toward the mount Gilead: he travelled and bent his course that way: this, was a mountain on the border of the land of Canaan, adjoining to Lebanon, near which was a very fruitful country, which had its name from it: it is so called here by way of anticipation; for this name was afterwards given it from the heap of stones here laid, as a witness of the agreement between Laban and Jacob, Genesis 31:45.*<sup>403</sup>

<sup>398</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>399</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:21.

<sup>400</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 483.

<sup>401</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20–21.

<sup>402</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>403</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

## Location of Gilead (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *Mount Gilead*, a very high and long mountain beyond Jordan, adjoining to the mountain of Lebanon, at the foot of which there was a large and fruitful country, which from the mountain received the name of Gilead, Deut. 34:1 Jer. 8:22 22:6. This mountain is here called Gilead by anticipation, as appears from Genesis 31:48.<sup>404</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *"The hill country of Gilead"* was a fertile, high plateau in Transjordan, which was located between Yarmuk that runs into the Jordan and south of the Sea of Galilee and the northern shore of the Dead Sea.<sup>405</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge on the mentions of Gilead in Scripture: Genesis 31:23; Num. 32:1; Deut. 3:12; Joshua 13:8–9; Judges 10:18; 1Kings 17:1.<sup>406</sup>

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### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

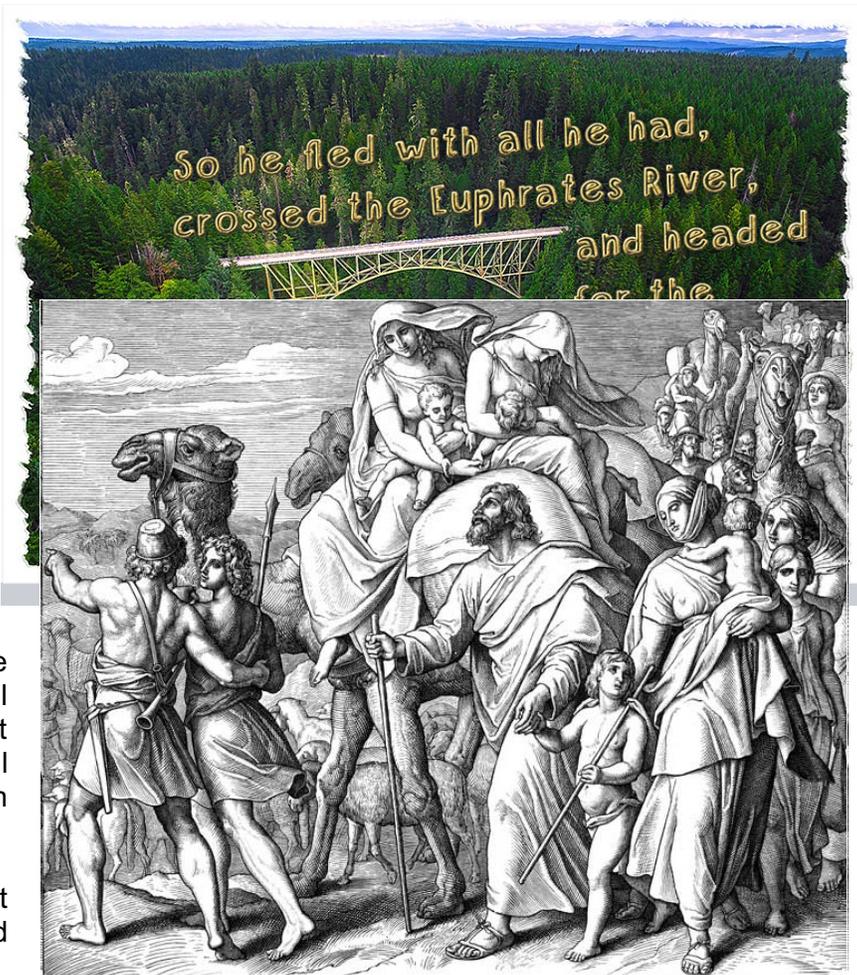
Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. on Jacob's journey: *Jacob's caravan forded the Euphrates River, which is sufficiently shallow at certain points near its source for this, and headed for Mount Gilead, which was far to the southwest and is a very mountainous region east of the Jordan River whose northern edges are nearly three hundred miles from Haran. Therefore, Jacob and his party had a very long journey to undertake.*<sup>407</sup>

**Genesis 31:21** (a graphic); from **Warren Camp Design**; accessed October 21, 2017.

**Genesis 31:21** And he fled with all that was his. And he rose up and passed over the river, and set his face toward Mount Gilead.

Jacob does not steal Laban's animals; he only takes that which are his by their agreement (even though Laban changed this agreement several times). Nothing is said about where Jacob left Laban's sheep. However, it is reasonable to suppose that Jacob was faithful in this thing. He may have had one of Laban's slaves working with him, and once they got to a particular place, he told the slave to take the sheep back to Laban. That is all speculative. However, we can be certain that Laban's sheep were taken care of, as this will not be an issue when Laban catches up with Jacob.

Interestingly enough, there is a river that Jacob must cross over; and that would



<sup>404</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>405</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 494); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>406</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:21.

<sup>407</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 494); accessed October 18, 2017.

logically be the Euphrates River. Although I have always pictured Laban living just west of the Euphrates; he must have been living east of the Euphrates (at least, at this time). So, to get to the land of Canaan, Jacob would be going west and cross over the River. This would have been quite an undertaking. Although we are not given much information at this point, Jacob has a great many animals and servants, as well as family members. All told, there are probably no fewer than 25 people (servants, wives and children), and possibly as many as 30 (or even more). They will cross over another (and smaller) river in Genesis 32:22.

**Jacob Leading His Family Away** (a graphic); from [Credo Bible Study](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:17–21 **Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels. And he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, livestock in his possession which he had gathered in paddan aram, to go to Isaac his father, to the land of Canaan. When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the river, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.**

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:17–21

1. Jacob loads all his family, including wives and children on to camels and makes preparations for a quick departure.
2. That he employed haste is seen by the fact that he drove the flocks, he did not make a leisurely
3. His possessions were primarily composed of flocks, but also included other things he had acquired in Haran. 30:43
4. His plan was to return to his father, and to his native land, Canaan.
5. While Jacob is acting in a secretive manner, it must be observed that he did not take anything of Laban's, this was all wealth he had honestly acquired by hard work.
6. The reason for his haste is found in vs 19, the fact that Laban was out of the immediate area, taking care of his flocks.
7. The flocks were some three days apart, and Laban and his sons, as well as most of his staff would be busy for some days.
8. This provided Jacob a perfect opportunity to slip away.
9. This action indicates that Jacob was somewhat fearful of Laban and not conducting himself in an upright fashion.
10. Jacob still does not faith-rest his safety, and sneaks away.
11. Rachel takes advantage of her father's absence to sneak into his house and steal his religious idols.
12. The teraphim were household gods, who were believed by reversionists to promote domestic blessing and prosperity.
13. They were also used for divination, seeking to foretell future events or uncover hidden knowledge.
14. They were basically small and man made, but superstitious religious types thought they had some special powers.
15. If they ever provided anything in the way of insight, it would have come through demonic activity.
16. This is most likely the meaning behind Laban's statement in 30:27.
17. These types of idols are mentioned in every period of Israel's history, indicating that this practice was continued throughout its history.
18. These sorts of objects at the very least are man made and have no value, and at the worst may be involved in demonic activity, so believers should not tolerate their use.
19. Rachel demonstrates that she was somewhat superstitious and involved in the idol worship of her father.
20. The question must be addressed as to why she would steal these items from her father.
21. Suggested answers include:
  - 1) to play a prank on him.
  - 2) to use this to break her father of his idolatry.
  - 3) to get revenge by depriving him of any blessings which might come through the idols.
  - 4) to use for herself.

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:17–21

- 5) to guarantee succession of the property of her father to her husband.
22. Some have suggested that based on the Nuzi tablets, the custom of that time was for a man to turn over his household idols to a son-in-law if he desired him to inherit as the principal heir.
23. Appearance in court with the teraphim, after the man's death was considered proof of such a transaction.
24. Rachel certainly was consumed with the monetary aspect of things as noted by her statement in vs 14-16.
25. This was likely part of her motivation, but partially Rachel no doubt believed in the power of the idols, since she was cosmic/sinful trend of Adam's in her orientation. 30:14
26. So her desire to inherit, coupled with her religious reversionism led her to take the teraphim.
27. Of course, Jacob was totally unaware of what was occurring, since he did very little to deal with his wives sinful trend of Adam's.
28. Rachel was a double-minded believer, who was unstable in all her ways. Jms. 1:8
29. Jacob crossed the river, while not mentioned by name has to be the river, Euphrates, and headed for the region of Gilead in northeastern Canaan.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:17–21 [Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.](#)

[When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. And Jacob deceived \[stole the heart of\] Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the Euphrates River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.](#)

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:17–21

Jacob's Flight from Laban (vv. 17-21)

1. The account of Jacob's escape from Laban is fairly brief.
2. As soon as Jacob has the consent and support of his wives he moved quickly placing his children and wives on camels (v. 21; an indication of a man of means).
3. The ambitious listing of his possessions in v. 22 is designed to bring to the attention of the reader what a formidable undertaking this exodus was.
4. "Property which he had acquired/accumulated" in Haran echoes Abraham's leaving Haran 220 years earlier (12:5).
5. The designation Paddan-Aram appears at the outset of Jacob's exile when Isaac sent him away (cf. 28:2, 5,6,7 "Arise, go to Paddan-Aram..." cf. 25:20).
6. His father Isaac was still alive and waiting for the 3rd heir of the covenant to return.
7. One can only imagine the magnitude of such a livestock drive and the care the animals required under these conditions.
8. The aside in v. 19 informs the reader as to how Jacob was able to leave unnoticed.
9. Laban was some three days away during the sheep shearing season (v. 19).
10. Rachel took the opportunity to steal "the household idols."
11. The term is teraphim.
12. Teraphim were small idols that were supposed to represent family ancestors.
13. They were often taken on journeys to bring good luck.
14. It is said that they could predict the future but it is not explained how that was accomplished.
15. In any case, Rachel took them unbeknownst to anyone else and secured in small pouch in a saddle bag (v. 34).

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:17–21

16. The teraphim were her Saint Christopher.
17. A humorous aspect of the story is how does one steal a god?
18. Are gods at the caprice of humans?
19. This is a jab at the stupidity of idolatry seen poked fun at elsewhere in the OT.
20. Superstition, magic and idolatry was never very far from even those who held to the faith.
21. The translation "Jacob deceived" is literally "stole the heart of Laban."
22. The phrase only occurs here and in v. 26.
23. The arch deceiver and manipulator falls victim to his own tactics.
24. This is the only instance in which Jacob is said to have sinned against his father-in-law over the 20 years of his stay in Haran.
25. In both instances of sinning Jacob and Rachel demonstrate a lack of trust in God.
26. Jacob should have told Laban he was leaving and let God handle Laban.
27. God steps in Laban's path and threatens him with instant death if he so much as speaks anything threatening to Jacob once he caught up with his son-in-law (v. 24).
28. The proper noun Euphrates is in italics and is referred to simply as "the River" in v. 21.
29. Jacob and his entourage forded this major obstacle which means that the time of crossing was when the water was at its lowest.
30. This assumes that Haran and Paddan-Aram were located on the north side of the Euphrates.
31. Jacob having successfully crossed this river made a bee-line for the hill country of Gilead.
32. Gilead is located on the east side of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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## Laban Pursues Jacob and Overtakes Him

Dr. Robert Dean: *Starting in verse 22 we are going to see the family conflict come to a head and see how the conflict resolves itself. When we get to this and read it we see that it is not a very satisfactory resolution. That is the reality we often see in Scripture. Frequently in conflicts that we experience in life, even with believers, there is not a satisfactory resolution because the person we are in conflict with is in carnality. They are operating in arrogance or self-centered motivation, on anger, bitterness, or whatever the cause may be, and just like Jacob and Laban we may be in the right, they are in the wrong and are going to say everything they can to justify their position and belittle us and make it look like we are in the wrong, and sometimes we just have to come to a peaceable accord and there will never be real resolution. We need to make sure it is not because of anything in our mental attitude but that it is always the result of the other person's failure.*<sup>408</sup>

Gen. 31:22–23 When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead.

Gen 31:24 But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

<sup>408</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

Gen 31:25 And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. (ESV)

### Laban pursues and overtakes Jacob (commentators/discussion)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 31:22-24, we have the record of Laban pursuing Jacob and overtaking him and confronting him in the hill country of Gilead.*<sup>409</sup>

Matthew Henry: *Tidings were brought him, on the third day, that Jacob had fled; he immediately raises the whole clan, takes his brethren, that is, the relations of his family, that were all in his interests, and pursues Jacob (as Pharaoh and his Egyptians afterwards pursued the seed of Jacob), to bring him back into bondage again, or with design to strip him of what he had.*<sup>410</sup>

We actually do not know what Laban was planning to say and do—or even if he knew what he was going to say and do—when he took off after Jacob and family. We do know what he actually said to Jacob, after God spoke to him first before he caught up to Jacob.

When Laban assembled his men for a fast chase, I do not think that even he knew exactly what he planned to do and say. Laban observes that his gods are gone and he may be thinking, *who else knows what Jacob has stolen from me?*

Matthew Henry continues: *Seven days' journey he [Laban] marched in pursuit of him, Genesis 31:23. He would not have taken half the pains to have visited his best friends. But the truth is bad men will do more to serve their sinful passions than good men will to serve their just affections, and are more vehement in their anger than in their love.*<sup>411</sup>

James Burton Coffman (quoting both Kline and Aalders): *"Laban's pursuit covered about 300 miles. Jacob's company had about ten days to cover somewhat less than that, for he would have stationed his flocks strategically for departure." As a matter of fact, we learned in Genesis 30:36 that Jacob had stationed them "three days' journey" from Laban; and that means Jacob traveled about 250 miles to reach the place of their confrontation. Even Song of Solomon 25 miles a day with a large herd of cattle appears to be unusual, and it is not unlikely that Laban may have lost a day or two getting started. He had to gather together his forces, and make arrangements for leaving his flocks and herds safely tended, and even if he got started the very next day, which the text seems to say, it might have been quite late. We are inclined to agree with Aalders that, "Laban knew that Jacob would be compelled to move slowly, and thus he was in no hurry to gather his forces and launch his pursuit."*<sup>412</sup>

Why did I place this at the beginning? Perhaps it takes in more of the passage?

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**And so it is made known to Laban in the day the third that fled Jacob. And so he takes his brothers with him and so he follows after him a way of seven of days. And so he comes upon him in a hill of the Gilead.**

Genesis  
31:22–23

**On the third day, it was made known to Laban that Jacob fled. So Laban [lit., he] took his brothers with him and he followed after Jacob [lit., him] [along] the way for seven days. He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead.**

**Laban found out that Jacob fled on the third day. Therefore, he took his relatives with him and he followed after Jacob for seven days. He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead.**

<sup>409</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>410</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17–24.

<sup>411</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17–24.

<sup>412</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. This link for additional references.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)   | And so it is made known to Laban in the day the third that fled Jacob. And so he takes his brothers with him and so he follows after him a way of seven of days. And so he comes upon him in a hill of the Gilead.   |
| Targum (Onkelos)          | And Jakob concealed from Laban <u>the Aramite</u> , and <u>showed him not that he went</u> . And he went, he and all that were his; and he arose and passed the Phrat, and set his face toward the mountain of Gilead. And it was shown to Laban on the third day that Jakob had gone. And he took his brethren with him, and Pursued after him; going seven days; and he overtook him in the Mountain of Gilead.  |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)  | <u>But after Jakob had gone, the shepherds went to the well, but found no water; and they waited three days, if that it might (again) overflow; but it overflowed not ; and then came they to Laban on the third day, and he knew that Jakob had fled; because through his righteousness it had flowed twenty years. [JERUSALEM. And it was, when the shepherds were gathered together, they sought to water the flock, but were not able; and they waited two and three days, if that the well might overflow; but it overflowed not; and then came they to Laban in the third day, because Jakob had fled.]</u><br>And he took his kinsmen with him, and pursued after him, going seven days, and overtook him, while sojourning in Mount Gilead <u>offering praise and praying before his God</u> . |
| Douay-Rheims 1899 (Amer.) | It was told Laban on the third day, that Jacob fled. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days; and overtook him in the mount of Galaad.   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta   | Laban was told on the third day that Ya'aqub had fled. He took his relatives with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey. He overtook him in the mountain of Gilead.   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)         | And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days journey; and they overtook him on mount Gilead.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)        | Laban pursues Jacob. Gn.31.22-55<br>But it was told Laban the Syrian on the third day, that Jacob was fled. And having taken his brethren with him, he pursued after him seven days' journey, and overtook him on Mount Galaad.  |
| Significant differences:  | The targums are way off on this verse. The other texts are all pretty close to one another   |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Easy English              | After 3 days, someone told Laban that Jacob had run away with his family. Laban took his relatives and followed Jacob. He followed him for 7 days, and then he found him. He found him in the hill country of Gilead. |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006 | Three days later Laban learned that Jacob had run away. So he gathered his men together and began to chase Jacob. After seven days Laban found Jacob near the hill country of Gilead.                                 |
| God's Word™               | Two days later Laban was told that Jacob had left in a hurry. He and his relatives pursued Jacob for seven days. Laban caught up with him in the mountains of Gilead.   |
| Good News Bible (TEV)     | <b>Laban Pursues Jacob</b><br>Three days later Laban was told that Jacob had fled. He took his men with him and pursued Jacob for seven days until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.               |

International Children's B. Three days later Laban learned that Jacob had run away. So Laban gathered his relatives and began to chase Jacob. After seven days Laban found him in the mountains of Gilead.

*The Message*

Three days later, Laban got the news: "Jacob's run off." Laban rounded up his relatives and chased after him. Seven days later they caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

NIRV

#### Laban Chases Jacob

On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had run away. He took his relatives with him and went after Jacob. Seven days later he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Contemporary English V.

Three days later Laban found out that Jacob had gone. So he took some of his relatives along and chased after Jacob for seven days, before catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

The Living Bible

Laban didn't learn of their flight for three days. Then, taking several men with him, he set out in hot pursuit and caught up with them seven days later, at Mount Gilead.

New Berkeley Version

On the third day of Jacob's flight Laban was told of it, so, taking along his kinsmen, he went in pursuit of him for seven day until he overtook him in the Gilead range.

New Century Version

Three days later Laban learned that Jacob had run away, so he gathered his relatives and began to chase him. After seven days Laban found him in the mountains of Gilead.

New Life Version

But Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had gone. So he took the men of his family with him, and followed Jacob for seven days. He found him in the hill country of Gilead.

New Living Translation

#### Laban Pursues Jacob

Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he gathered a group of his relatives and set out in hot pursuit. He caught up with Jacob seven days later in the hill country of Gilead.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible

Well, it was three days later that Laban the Syrian was finally told that Jacob had gone. But then he gathered his brothers and chased after them, catching up with them after seven days at Mount Gilead.

International Standard V

Three days later, somebody reported to Laban that Jacob had left, so he took his relatives with him and pursued Jacob. Laban [Lit. *He*] was on the road for seven days when he finally caught up with Jacob [Lit. *him*] in the hill country of Gilead.

New Advent (Knox) Bible

Meanwhile, in the absence of her father Laban, who had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole his household gods from him. Jacob had given his father-in-law no warning of his flight, and it was not till he and all that belonged to him had gone away, and crossed the Euphrates, and were making for the hills of Galaad, that a message came to Laban, three days too late, Jacob has fled. So now he took his kinsmen with him and gave chase; and he had been on the road seven days before he overtook him on the hills of Galaad. Vv. 19–21 are included for context.

Translation for Translators

#### Jacob rebuked Laban after Laban caught up with him

On the third day after they left, someone told Laban that Jacob and his family had left. So he took some of his relatives with him and started to pursue Jacob. They walked for seven days.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | It was to be reported to Laban on the third day, that Jacob is to have hastened away. He was to take his brothers, and was to pursue after him, a seven days journey, and was to rejoin with him at Mount Gilead.                       |
| Conservapedia           | Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had run away. He took his brothers with him, and chased after him for a seven-days' journey, and they followed hard on Jacob's tail in Mount Gilead.   |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible     | But on the third day it was reported to Laban that Jacob had fled. Then he took his relatives with him and pursued after him — a seven days' journey, and came up with him at Mount Gilad.  |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Upon the third day after, was it told Laban that Jacob was fled. Then he took his brethren with him and followed after him seven days journey, and overtook him at the mount Gilead.  |
| HCSB                    | <b>Laban Overtakes Jacob</b><br>On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he took his relatives with him, pursued Jacob for seven days, and overtook him at Mount Gilead.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | <b>(b) The Interference of Laban (v. 22-42)</b><br>And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled. So he took his kinsmen with him and pursued after him a seven days' journey and he overtook him in Mount Gilead.         |
| Tree of Life Version    | <b>Laban Confronts Jacob and Makes Covenant</b><br>When Laban was told on the third day after Jacob had fled, he took his relatives with him and pursued him a seven days' journey. Then he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he took his relatives with him and pursued him for a seven days' journey. He overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Now Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had run away. And he took his relatives with him, and pursued after him traveling seven days, and they overtook him at Mount Gilead.   |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And it Laban was informed on the third day that Jacob had fled. And he took his brothers with him, and he chased after him, a seven day journey, and he attached to his path at Gilead.   |

#### **Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| The Heritage Bible        | And it was caused to stand out boldly to Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled. And he took his brothers with him, and ran after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in Mount Gilead.  |
| New American Bible (2011) | On the third day, word came to Laban that Jacob had fled. Taking his kinsmen with him, he pursued him for seven days [ <b>For seven days:</b> lit., "a way of seven days," a general term to designate a long distance; it would actually have taken a camel caravan many more days to travel from Haran to Gilead, the region east of the northern half of the Jordan. The mention of camels in this passage is apparently anachronistic since camels were not domesticated until the late second millennium.] until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. |
| New English Bible         | <b>Laban pursues Jacob.</b><br>Three days later, when Laban heard that Jacob had run away, he took his kinsmen with him, pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill-country of Gilead.  |

#### **Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible | Not until the third day was Lavan told that Ya'akov had fled. |
|-----------------------|---|

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| The Complete Tanach        | <p>Lavan took his kinsmen with him and spent the next seven days pursuing Ya'akov, overtaking him in the hill-country of Gil'ad.<br/>On the third day, Laban was informed that Jacob had fled.</p> <p><b>On the third day:</b> For there was a three-day journey between them.</p> <p>So he took his kinsmen with him, and he pursued him seven days' journey, and he overtook him at Mount Gilead.</p> <p><b>his kinsmen:</b> Heb. אָרְבֵּי, lit., his brothers, his kinsmen.</p> <p><b>seven-days' journey:</b> All those three days [during the time] the reporter went to tell Laban, Jacob went on his way. We find that Jacob was six days distant from Laban, and on the seventh day, Laban overtook him. We find that the entire distance that Jacob had traversed in seven days, Laban traversed in one day (as it is said: "and he pursued him seven-days' journey," but it does not say: "and he pursued him seven days.") - [from Gen. Rabbah 74:6]</p> |
| exeGeseges companion Bible | <p>And on the third day<br/>they tell Laban that Yaaqov fled:<br/>and he takes his brothers with him<br/>and pursues after him a journey of seven days;<br/>and they adhere to him in the mount Gilad.</p>  |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)          | <p>On the third day, Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead.</p>  |
| Kaplan Translation         | <p>On the third day [See Genesis 30:36.], Laban was informed that Jacob had fled. He took along his kinsmen and pursued [Jacob] for seven days [See note on Genesis 30:36. The normal distance covered would be 238 miles, but if rushing, the entire distance of 370 miles could have been covered (see notes on Genesis 14:15, 28:19). In ten days, Jacob could easily have covered the distance.], intercepting him in the Gilead Mountains.</p>   |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible      | <p>And it was told Lavan on Yom HaShlishi that Ya'akov was fled.<br/>And he took his achim with him, and pursued after him derech shivat yamim; and they overtook him at Har Gil'ad.</p>  |
| The Scriptures 1998        | <p>And on the third day Lab'an was told that Ya'aqob? had fled. Then he took his brothers with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gil'ad.</p>   |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | <p><b>Laban Pursues Jacob</b><br/>On the third day [after his departure] Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he took his relatives with him and pursued him for seven days, and they overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.</p>  |
| The Expanded Bible         | <p>Three days later ·Laban learned [‘it was told/reported to Laban] that Jacob had ·run away [fled], so he ·gathered [‘took] his ·relatives [‘brothers] and began to ·chase [pursue] him. After seven days Laban ·found [caught up with] him in the mountains of Gilead.</p>   |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | <p>And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the Mount Gilead. Jacob had a start of three days, but he was hampered by his large herds, whereas Laban, with his tribesmen, could travel very rapidly. Still Jacob had made excellent time in the ten days of his journey.</p> |
| NET Bible®                 | <p>Three days later Laban discovered Jacob had left. [<i>Heb</i> “and it was told to Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled.”] So he took his relatives [<i>Heb</i> “his brothers.”]</p>   |

with him and pursued Jacob [*Heb* “him”; the referent (Jacob) has been specified in the translation for clarity.] for seven days [*Heb* “and he pursued after him a journey of seven days.”]. He caught up with [*Heb* “drew close to.”] him in the hill country of Gilead.

The Pulpit Commentary

And it was told Laban on the third day—i.e. the third after Jacob’s departure, the distance between the two sheep—stations being a three days’ journey (vide Genesis 30:36)—that Jacob was fled. And he took his brethren—i.e. his kinsmen, or nearest relations (cf. Genesis 13:8; Genesis 29:15)—with him, and pursued after him (Jacob) seven days’ journey (literally, a way of seven days); and they overtook him in the mount Gilead. The distance between Padan—aram and mount Gilead was a little over 300 miles, to perform which Jacob must at least have taken ten days, though Laban, who was less encumbered than his son—in—law, accomplished it in seven, which might easily be done by traveling from forty to forty—five miles a day, by no means a great feat for a camel.

The Voice

Three days later, Laban was told that Jacob had left. So he gathered a group of his relatives, and together they pursued him for seven days until they closed in on Jacob in the hill country of Gilead.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner’s Mechanical Trans.

...and he told to Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> in the third day that Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> fled away, and he took his brothers with him and he pursued after him a road of seven of the days and he adhered to him in the hill of Gil'ad <sup>[Mound of witness]</sup>,...

Concordant Literal Version

And it is being told Laban, the Syrian, on the third day, that Jacob ran away. And taking is he all his brethren with him, and is pursuing after him a way of seven days, and hard is he following after him in mount Gilead.

English Standard V. – UK

When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days and followed close after him into the hill country of Gilead.

Modern English Version

#### Laban Pursues Jacob

Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. He took his kinsmen with him and pursued him for seven days until he caught up with him in the mountains of Gilead.

NASB

#### Laban Pursues Jacob

When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, then he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days’ journey, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.

New European Version

#### Laban Meets Jacob

Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. He took his relatives with him, and pursued after him seven days’ journey. He overtook him in the mountain of Gilead.

Updated Bible Version 2.11

And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled. And he took his brothers with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he stuck [closely] in the mountain of Gilead.

Young’s Updated LT

And it is told to Laban on the third day that Jacob has fled, and he takes his brothers with him, and pursues after him a journey of seven days, and overtakes him in the mount of Gilead.

**The gist of this passage:**

3 days after Jacob left, Laban found out about it, so he gathered up some of his men and pursued him for 7 days, catching up to him in the hill country of Gilead.

| Genesis 31:22  |   |  |                             |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                               | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced <i>naw-GAHD</i> ]                                    | <i>to be made conspicuous, to be made known, to be expounded, to be explained, to be declared, to be informed</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hophal imperfect            | Strong's #5046<br>BDB #616  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition                                     | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]                        | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                               | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526  |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]                         | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>               | a preposition of proximity   | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |
| yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]  | <i>day; time; today or this day (with a definite article); possibly immediately</i>                               | masculine singular noun with the definite article                      | Strong's #3117<br>BDB #398  |
| sh <sup>e</sup> lîyshîy (שִׁלְשִׁי) [pronounced <i>sh<sup>e</sup>li-SHEE</i> ] | <i>third, a third part, a third time; chambers [of the third story]</i>   | masculine/feminine adjective/ordinal numeral with the definite article | Strong's #7992<br>BDB #1026 |
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]  | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition                       | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471  |
| bârach (בָּרַח) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHKH</i> ]                                 | <i>to go [pass] through, to flee [away]; to hasten, to come quickly; to reach across</i>                          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                 | Strong's #1272<br>BDB #137  |
| Ya'ăqôb (בְּקָעִי) [pronounced <i>yah-ăuh-KOH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ]               | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>                                | masculine proper noun  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784  |

**Translation:** [On the third day, it was made known to Laban that Jacob fled.](#) Jacob made a quiet, clean break. Only his family realized what it was that he is doing. 3 days later, it is clear that Jacob is nowhere to be found. If this is a situation where all of the tents are side-by-side, this seems like an awfully long time. However, this tells us that Jacob is a distance from Laban. Since Laban has to be told this, Jacob and Laban must not live anywhere near one another. Since no one appears to notice that Jacob is missing for 3 days, this suggests that Jacob lived in his own area alone and took care of his own business. What is most likely the case is, these herd and flocks are spread out all over, overseen by various men (like Jacob; like Laban's sons). They are too far from one another to be seen.

There is somewhat of a contrast between this verse and v. 1, which reads: [Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth."](#) (ESV) In v. 22, Jacob's fleeing is *made known* to Laban. That means someone figured out, knew or observed that Jacob and his family were gone and they went and told Laban about it. The period of time between them leaving and Laban receiving this report was 3 days.

One would think that Jacob's wives and family would be living close enough to Laban's family that their going missing might be noticed; but whenever it became clear that everyone was gone, 3 days had passed. In the alternative, when it was noticed that Jacob's wives and children were gone, it took 3 days to inform Laban and for him to get prepared to chase after Jacob. My guess is, it was the missing wives and family which alerted those sympathetic to Laban.

So, somehow, Jacob has to separate out his animals (which he has been doing) and he might graze them to the west, while someone else under Jacob grazes the herd belonging to Laban to the east. At various points, these men might meet up. However, after 3 days, it became apparent that Jacob was nowhere around. Jacob said, "I am going to feed the herd over here." which he does; and when they are far enough to be out of sight, Jacob gets everyone saddled up in his family and they leave.

Genesis 31:22 **On the third day, it was made known to Laban that Jacob fled.** This is a marvelous verse. Back in Genesis 30:35–36, Laban had struck an agreement with Jacob to give Jacob the spotted and striped livestock, and then Laban went and took the livestock which Jacob had which was striped and spotted and hauled it away a three day's journey away from Jacob. This was Laban being sly. He not only stole the animals which would have likely produced offspring which would have been Jacob's, but he moved these animals three days away from Jacob, so that Jacob cannot somehow take them. However, because of this, when Jacob leaves, he automatically has a three day-head start from the outset. Even though Jacob did not behave as he should have, it is somewhat gratifying to see that Laban had outsmarted himself in this case. I think ultimately, people knew that Jacob and company had left because the wives and children were gone. But the distance between the herds meant that it would be a long time before Laban's sons would know.

Genesis 31:22 **On the third day, it was made known to Laban that Jacob fled.**

### Three days' head start (various commentators)

Henry M. Morris: *If the three days journey, which typically separated him from Laban's flocks was oriented in such a way as to place Jacob's flocks a three days' journey southwest of Laban's home (the sheep-shearing would probably have taken place not too far from there), then Jacob and his flocks would have already been approximately eighty or ninety miles on their way when their flight began in earnest. A day's journey was usually reckoned at about thirty miles for men traveling unencumbered. However, once they began moving the flocks along, they would be able to make only fifteen or twenty miles a day. Thus, once they started driving the cattle, it would take them probably ten days or so to reach the Mount Gilead region.*<sup>413</sup>

J. C. Gray: *Laban did not hear of Jacob's flight till three days had passed. This part of the journey Jacob would naturally travel with all speed.*<sup>414</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Catching up with Jacob was no easy matter, for he had gained three days' lead time. By the time Laban had rushed home, discovered the loss of his gods, and gathered the relatives who were armed for battle, a fourth day must have been lost. Remember, Laban and his men were out in the field busy sheep-shearing and were busy with not only the work itself but also the festivities that were connected with this annual event.*

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. continues: *Laban didn't get word of Jacob's departure until Jacob had been on the trail for three days. No doubt Laban was furious with Jacob but he and his men could not drop the work of sheep-shearing immediately so by the time they were ready to pursue Jacob, probably another day had gone by.*

<sup>413</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017. Wenstrom cites The Genesis Record, page 483, Baker Book House.

<sup>414</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22–42 (Slightly edited).

### Three days' head start (various commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. concludes: *Once, on the trail, Laban would have driven his men hard to catch up to Jacob and it appears that he and his men covered the entire three hundred miles in only seven days, which is confirmed in that from the Euphrates to Gilead is some three hundred miles.*<sup>415</sup>

Even though the herds were separated 3 days apart, I think it was the missing wives and children which actually alerted those sympathetic to Laban.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Genesis 31:22** It was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled.

Because of their schedules and their locations, it was not known for 3 days that Jacob had gone. Recall the Laban went out of his way to put a great deal of space between Jacob's flock and those of his sons—a 3-day's journey, in fact (Genesis 30:36). Laban does not find out about this personally. Someone has to tell Laban that Jacob was gone with his entire family.

My guess is, it is not Jacob's absence which was noticed at first, but the absence of his wives and children.

### Genesis 31:23a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i> ]  | <i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                                       | Strong's #3947<br>BDB #542 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]   | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                              | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                                    | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| 'achîym (אֶחָיִם) [pronounced <i>awhk-EEM</i> ]  | <i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>             | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix                | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26   |
| Owens has that this is a masculine singular noun; but it should be a masculine plural noun. There is no difference between its spelling here and in v. 24. That is it plural is also shown at Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (Enhanced) (on e-sword) for this verse. |   |  |                            |
| 'îm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]  | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>   | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

**Translation:** *So Laban [lit., he] took his brothers with him...* Laban brings some of his relatives with him to track down Jacob. We have been given the names or a description of a half-dozen people who live in Haran, but we do not really know exactly how many relatives of Abraham's live there. Also, the term *brothers* could simply refer to *allies* as well as *relatives*.

<sup>415</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017.

It is reasonable that Laban knows where Jacob lived originally. This would simply be information that Laban would have known. So, when he learns that Jacob has gone, he saddles up some of his men and they go to find Jacob. He would bring enough adults in order to be able to call the shots once he catches Jacob. My guess is, there are 4 or more of Laban's toughest men with him—maybe as many as a dozen or two dozen.

We do not know any of the relatives of Laban. We know that he has sons; we know that his father is Bethuel and that his sister is Rebekah. The fact that we only know these names does not mean that he does not have other relatives. And he may have synched up with another family, as Esau had done. But their names are not given in Scripture, which suggests to me that many or all of them had not believe in the Revealed God.

Benson: *He took his brethren* — *That is, his relations, and pursues Jacob to bring him back into bondage, or to strip him of what he had.*<sup>416</sup>

Gill: *And he took his brethren with him,....Some of his relations, the descendants of his father's brethren, the sons of Nahor, of whom there were seven, besides Bethuel; and who all perhaps lived in Haran the city of Nahor, see Genesis 22:20; or some of his neighbours and acquaintance whom he might call to.*<sup>417</sup>

| Genesis 31:23b  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                                     | wāw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| rādaph (רָדַף) [pronounced raw-DAHf]  | <i>to pursue, to follow after; to chase with hostile intent, to persecute</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                           | Strong's #7291<br>BDB #922 |
| 'achārêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]  | <i>behind, after; following; after that, afterwards; hinder parts</i>   | preposition; plural form with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #310<br>BDB #29   |
| derek <sup>e</sup> (דֶּרֶךְ) [pronounced DEH-rek <sup>e</sup> ]                   | <i>way, distance, road, path; journey, course; direction, towards; manner, habit, way [of life]; of moral character</i> | masculine singular construct   | Strong's #1870<br>BDB #202 |
| shib <sup>e</sup> âh (שִׁבְעָה) [pronounced shi <sup>b</sup> v <sup>e</sup> -GAW] | seven   | numeral feminine construct   | Strong's #7651<br>BDB #987 |
| yâmîym (יָמִים) [pronounced yaw-MEEM]   | <i>days, a set of days; time of life, lifetime; a specific time period, a year</i>                                      | masculine plural noun  | Strong's #3117<br>BDB #398 |

**Translation:** ...and he followed after Jacob [lit., him] [along] the way for seven days. Bear in mind that Jacob has flocks and herds, which take time to move; and children of varying ages. So Jacob cannot just jump on his camels and ride; it took more time for him to move than for Laban to move. In 7 days, they are able to catch up to Jacob, who has had a 3 day head start.

<sup>416</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:23.

<sup>417</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:23.

A troop as large as Jacob's would have left tracks; and Laban would have known the direction that they would follow (I assume that there are trading routes which were popular; there might have only one or two). So Laban is quick to pick up his trail and direction.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob was encumbered with his herds and flocks and loses his three days' advantage by the time seven days of pursuit are ended. Laban and his sons had no intention of letting Jacob take all his flocks to Canaan and were intending to take them by force if necessary and even do harm to Jacob as indicated by the verb radhaph, "pursued," which is used of chasing after someone to do them harm.*<sup>418</sup>

| Genesis 31:23c   |   |   |                                     |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                  |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                         | wāw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| dābaq (דָּבַק) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHK]   | <i>to cause to adhere, to make to cleave; to follow hard; to come upon, to reach, to be caused to reach</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect                             | Strong's #1692<br>BDB #179          |
| Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: <i>Further indicating that Laban was intending to harm Jacob is the verb davaq, "overtook," which denotes military pursuit and is in the hiphil (intensive and reflexive) stem expressing Laban's hostility towards Jacob indicating that Laban intently caused himself to overtake Jacob.</i> <sup>419</sup> |   |   |                                     |
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]   | <i>him, it; he; untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally to him, toward him</i>                   | sign of the direct object affixed to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84            |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]   | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>         | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88           |
| har (הַר) [pronounced har]   | <i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country, a mountainous area, mountain region</i>                             | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249 |
| Gil <sup>e</sup> ād (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced gil-ĠAWD]   | <i>rocky region; transliterated Gilead</i>  | masculine proper noun with the definite article   | Strong's #1568<br>BDB #166          |

**Translation:** He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead. The hill country of Gilead is mentioned twice because this is where Laban catches up with Jacob.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 31:23, the verb davaq, does not mean that Laban "overtook" Jacob in the sense that he made contact with him and met with Jacob face to face but rather it means that he "kept close to" Jacob but did not make contact. This interpretation is confirmed by the context since Genesis 31:24 indicates that Laban spent the night where Jacob was encamped before making contact with him or meeting him face to face. Therefore, the verb davaq implies that Laban "kept close to" Jacob so that he could make a reconnaissance and evaluate the situation but did not make contact and did not reveal his position to Jacob.*<sup>420</sup>

<sup>418</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>419</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>420</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017.

Genesis 31:23c He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead.

### Is Gilead an Anachronism? The Bible Query

Q: In Gen 31:23 and Gen 37:25, is Gilead an anachronism, since Num 26:26 says that Manasseh was the grandfather of Gilead?

A: Not at all. First a point that is not relevant to the answer, and then the answer.

**Not a part of the answer:** Gilead was a somewhat common name. Gilead was not only a descendant of Manasseh (Numbers 26:29-30 and Joshua 17:1), but a different Gilead was Jephthah's father (Judges 11:1), and a third Gilead was from Gad (1 Chronicles 5:14).

**The answer is** that the word "Gilead" shows the time of the writing. Jacob and Joseph would not have called the region Gilead, but nobody claims the book of Genesis was written in the time of Jacob and Joseph.

Rather, Genesis was written in Moses' time. The two and a half Transjordan tribes were already going to receive their land before Moses died.

An anachronism is when a document that claims to be written at one time uses words or terms that would only be used at a later time. It is not an anachronism to use words at the time of writing to describe a prior time. For example, it is no anachronism, when someone in the twentieth century says the region of Gilead was in the country of Jordan. Jacob, Joseph, and Moses did not know of the modern country of Jordan, but then, nobody claims that they did.

Let me suggest, instead, that Genesis was preserved orally; that it was memorized generation to generation, and the place names were sometimes replaced for the audience.

*Bible Query*; March 2006 version. Copyright (c) Christian Debater(tm) 1997-2006.; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:23.

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Regarding the name *Gilead*, let me suggest that, Gilead the person may have been named after Gilead the territory. Or, if there was a different ancient name for that area, it may have simply been changed in the repeating of this narrative, so that the hearers understood where the place was. There did come a time when the text was considered sacred and not changed, when it was committed to papyri (or whatever) and preserved in writing. However, maintaining the same *text* when repeating the narrative verbally would have been a matter of convenience (it is hard to memorize something which changes with each telling of it).

Jacob was traveling with two wives, two mistresses, a few slaves and children (some who were teenagers). For these reasons, he traveled slower than Laban did. Laban was riding with a vengeance. He did not like to be out-deceived and as quite upset when Jacob deceived him. He was quite indignant and self-righteous about it.

*Whedon: Such a movement as Jacob's, whose family and herds made a large caravan, could not long be kept a secret.*<sup>421</sup>

Genesis 31:23 Laban found out that Jacob fled on the third day. Therefore, he took his relatives with him and he followed after Jacob for seven days. He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead.

### Catching up to Jacob after traveling for 7 days (Various Commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *We learn from Genesis 30:36 that the flocks of Laban and Jacob were kept a three days journey apart, so apparently a servant saw Jacob leave and immediately went to tell Laban.*<sup>422</sup>

<sup>421</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22.

<sup>422</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:22.

## Catching up to Jacob after traveling for 7 days (Various Commentators)

What Utley suggests here makes the most sense. Jacob cannot simply abandon Laban's animals so, after he has surreptitiously gotten everything ready, he says to some of Laban's servants, "We are leaving; here are the keys to the pens of Laban's sheep." In some way, there is a handoff of Laban's sheep to someone close to Laban (a son, a servant, a relative). That person immediately informs Laban (a process which takes at least 3 days).

Matthew Poole: *That he heard of it no sooner must be ascribed to the great distance which Laban had put between his and Jacob's flocks, Genesis 30:36, and to the care and art which Jacob used to prevent a sooner discovery.*<sup>423</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *The sheep shearing and what accompanied it had kept all his men busy. This may indicate a period of about one and a half days, or even longer. 'On the third day' may be like 'three days journey', not to be taken too literally but simply meaning a short period.*<sup>424</sup>

Barnes seems to make this pretty complicated: *This shows that Laban's flocks kept by his sons were still three days' journey apart from Jacob's. His brethren - his kindred and dependents. "Seven days' journey." On the third day after the arrival of the messenger, Laban might return to the spot whence Jacob had taken his flight. In this case, Jacob would have at least five days of a start; which, added to the seven days of pursuit, would give him twelve days to travel three hundred English miles. To those accustomed to the pastoral life this was a possible achievement.*<sup>425</sup>

J. C. Gray: *So large a caravan could not march without leaving the plain track behind. Laban in pursuit for seven days, i.e., until ten days after Jacob had started. Reaching the mountains of Gilead and their defiles, and not overtaken; Jacob might think the pursuit had not been undertaken, or if so, then abandoned. Evening of tenth day Laban and his band approach. Too exhausted by the march to bring matters to an issue at once. The two camps retired to rest. Night settles down on the hills of Gilead.*<sup>426</sup>

Gill figures this at 13 days total: *and pursued after him seven days' journey; which must be reckoned, not from Jacob's departure from Haran, but from Laban's; for Laban being three days' journey from thence, where he had to return, after he received the news of Jacob being gone; Jacob must have travelled six days before Laban set out with his brethren from Haran; so that this was, as Ben Gerson conjectures, the thirteenth day of Jacob's travel; for Laban not having cattle to drive as Jacob, could travel as fast again as he, and do that in seven days which took up Jacob thirteen.*<sup>427</sup>

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Genesis 31:23 Laban found out that Jacob fled on the third day. Therefore, he took his relatives with him and he followed after Jacob for seven days. He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead.

## Comparing the mileage to the narrative (various commentators)

Benson: *They overtook him in the mount Gilead — This mount was about two hundred and fifty miles from Haran; so that Jacob travelled twenty-five miles each day, and Laban, in pursuing him, thirty-seven.*<sup>428</sup>

<sup>423</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:22.

<sup>424</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:22.

<sup>425</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20–24.

<sup>426</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22–42 (Slightly edited).

<sup>427</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:23.

<sup>428</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:23.

## Comparing the mileage to the narrative (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *It would possibly take a little more than seven days to reach the hill country of Gilead (not the same as the later Gilead) although they would be moving at forced pace. This hill country was split into two halves, north (Joshua 13:31; Deut. 3:13) and south (Deut. 3:12 RV; Joshua 12:2; Joshua 12:5) of the Jabbok.*<sup>429</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *There has been some discussion about the possibility of this much distance being traveled in such a short time. However, we are talking about a ten day period of forced march. It is uncertain what the exact distance is, possibly between 250 and 350 miles because (1) we are not certain of the location in Syria where Jacob's flock was located and (2) we are not sure of the eastern boundary of Gilead.*<sup>430</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *The distance covered by Jacob creates a problem. Some have computed that the distance involved is about 350 miles as the crow flies. This need not necessarily be assumed. We have accurate maps that represent it to be no more than about 275 miles to the fringes of Mount Gilead. Besides, in shifting his grazing ground Jacob may have so arranged things before he took his flight in hand as to gravitate some three days' journey to the south of Haran—certainly not an impossibility. If only fifteen miles constituted an average day's journey, the total distance would be cut down to almost 230 miles. Now, certainly, 2.843 Jacob will have pressed on faster than the average day's journey, perhaps even at the cost of the loss of a bit of cattle. The cooler part of the day and portions of the night may have been utilized in order to spare the cattle. Then, too, the boundaries of Gilead may originally have extended nearer to Damascus. Skinner's criticism that "the distance is much too great to be traversed in that time" is quite out of place. K. C. shows that "Gilead" is used for the country east of Jordan in general.*<sup>431</sup>

We ought to keep in mind that the 3 day's journey between Jacob and Laban's sons was a 3-day journey leading sheep. The 7-day journey by Laban would be moving on the quickest animal possible which had been domesticated for such a trip (camels? Horses?).

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**Genesis 31:23** And he took his brothers with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey. And they overtook him in Mount Gilead.

I would assume that a dozen or two camels along with a very large flock of sheep and goats left an easy trail to follow. Furthermore, Laban knew the direction that Jacob would go in. Furthermore, there were not a lot of options for going from Paddan-aram to Canaan. It wasn't as if there were a great many commonly used routes. If there were even 2 or 3 routes, I would be surprised.

*Brothers* can be a reference to various relatives. We are never told exactly how much of Abraham's family moved to Haran. We studied a very specific line of this family. We know about *that* line. However, that is not necessarily all of Laban's relatives. So Laban quickly gathers up some men who would be able to pursue Jacob with great alacrity.

Laban is going to challenge Jacob legally—as if he had committed some sort of crime or sin against Laban. Perhaps Jacob had committed some moral breach against Laban. However, Laban will only have one actual charge to use against Jacob.

Dr. Peter Pett: *[This dogged pursuit] is an indication of the seriousness of the situation that such a force should make such a journey. This was more than just something personal between Jacob and Laban. The whole tribal confederacy was involved. They were losing a part of themselves.*

<sup>429</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:23.

<sup>430</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:23.

<sup>431</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

Pett continues: *The picture is a vivid one. Jacob, aware that pursuit will come, urging his men and his flocks to ever greater efforts; Laban and his small army pounding through day and night, all the while becoming ever more determined to prevent their escape. The situation was extremely serious. They were angry at what they saw as treason. But then comes divine intervention.*<sup>432</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *Laban really had been traveling fast to overtake him. You may be sure that Laban doesn't mean any good as far as Jacob is concerned. I am of the opinion that he is angry enough to kill him. But God intervened.*<sup>433</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *That Mount Gilead is meant by "on the mountain" is entirely clear from verse 23. In the case of Laban the specific statement that it was "Mount Gilead" where tents were pitched makes it entirely plain that both had pitched on the same mountain, though over against one another. The critical correction, which tries to put Jacob on Mount Mizpah, grows out of the desire to prove that two threads of narrative intertwine. Critics are continually, though often unwittingly, "doctoring up" the evidence.*<sup>434</sup>

**And so comes Elohim unto Laban the Aramæan in a dream of the night. And so He says to him, "Take heed to yourself lest you speak with Jacob from good as far as evil."**

Genesis  
31:24

**But Elohim came to Laban the Aramæan in a dream of the night. He said to him, "Be careful for yourself that you do not speak to Jacob from good to evil."**

**God came to Laban (the Aramæan) in a night dream, saying to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob regarding the morality of his leaving."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so comes Elohim unto Laban the Aramæan in a dream of the night. And so He says to him, "Take heed to yourself lest you speak with Jacob from good as far as evil."  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And <u>a word</u> came <u>from before</u> the Lord to Laban the Aramite in a dream of the night, and He said to him, Beware, lest thou speak with Jakob from good to evil.  |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And there came <u>an angel with a word from before</u> the Lord; and he drew the sword against Laban the deceitful in a dream of the night, and said to him, Beware lest thou speak with Jakob from good to evil. |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And he saw in a dream God saying to him: Take heed you speak not any thing harshly against Jacob.   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Take heed to yourself that you do not speak to Ya'aqub either good or bad."   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And God came to Laban, the Aramean, in a dream by night, and said to him, Take heed that you speak not to Jacob either good or bad.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And God came to Laban the Syrian in sleep by night, and said to him, Take heed that you speak no evil thing to Jacob at any time.   |
| Significant differences: | The targums has additional text. The Latin leaves out <i>Laban the Syrian</i> ; which also leaves out the passive nature of Laban in the verse. The Greek appears to have   |

<sup>432</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:23.

<sup>433</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>434</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

*sleep* rather than *dream*. The Latin appears to guess at the general meaning of the final words and has something different. The Greek leaves out *the good*.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Easy English              | Then God came to Laban the Aramean. He appeared to him in a dream at night. God said to Laban, 'Be careful what you say to Jacob. Do not say that you will do anything to him.' |
| Easy-to-Read Version—2008 | That night God came to Laban in a dream and said, "Be careful! Be careful of every word you say to Jacob."  |
| Good News Bible (TEV)     | In a dream that night God came to Laban and said to him, "Be careful not to threaten Jacob in any way."   |
| Names of God Bible        | <b>Elohim</b> came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything at all to Jacob."  |
| New Simplified Bible      | In a dream that night God came to Laban. God said: »Be careful not to threaten Jacob in any way.«   |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible    | That night, God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and said, "Be careful and don't say anything hastily to Jacob one way or the other."       |
| Contemporary English V. | But God appeared to Laban in a dream that night and warned, "Don't say a word to Jacob. Don't make a threat or a promise."                          |
| The Living Bible        | That night God appeared to Laban in a dream.<br>"Watch out what you say to Jacob," he was told. "Don't give him your blessing and don't curse him." |
| New Living Translation  | But the previous night God had appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and told him, "I'm warning you—leave Jacob alone!"                          |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | However, God came to Laban the Syrian in his sleep that night and said to him: 'Be very careful not to say anything bad about Jacob.'                                      |
| International Standard V    | <b>God Warns Laban</b><br>That night, God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and warned him, "Be careful what you say to Jacob, whether it's one word good or bad."  |
| Revised Knox Bible          | Here, in his sleep, he had a vision of God warning him, Have a care you do not speak to Jacob harshly.   |
| Translation for Translators | Then God appeared to Laban in a dream at night. He said to him, "When you catch up to Jacob, be sure that you do not say anything at all [HYP] to him in an angry manner!" |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible  | He of mighty ones was to come to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream by night, and was to say: Be watching yourself! - was you to speak with Jacob, that well or that unpleasant?   |
| Conservapedia       | God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream at night, and told him, "Watch yourself! Don't let your communication with Jacob go from friendly to unfriendly." Literally, "beware-you to you from to speak of with Jacob from good unto evil." The common interpretation of "not speak to him either good or bad" does not appear to be well-supported here. |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible | But God appeared to Laban the Arami in a dream by night, and said to him ; " Guard yourself in what you do to Jacob for either good or ill."  |

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | And God came to Laban the Sirian in a dream by night, and said unto him: take heed to yourself, that you speak not to Jacob anything save good.        |
| Tree of Life Version    | But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Watch yourself—lest you say anything to Jacob, good or bad."                   |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Now God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."                      |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And God came to Laban the Aramite in a dream one night; and said to him, "just keep yourself from talking to jacob, neither about good nor about bad." |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| The Heritage Bible        | And God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream by night, and said to him, Hedge yourself about lest you speak to Jacob either good or bad. |
| New American Bible (2002) | But that night God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and warned him, "Take care not to threaten Jacob with any harm!"              |
| New American Bible (2011) | But that night God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream and said to him: Take care not to say anything to Jacob.                      |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | But God appeared to Laban the Aramaean in a dream that night and said to him, 'On no account say anything whatever to Jacob.'             |
| New RSV                   | But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night, and said to him, 'Take heed that you say not a word to Jacob, either good or bad.' |
| Revised English Bible     | But God came to Laban the Aramaean in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful to say nothing to Jacob, not a word."                 |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible | But God came to Lavan the Arami in a dream that night and said to him, "Be careful that you don't say anything to Ya'akov, either good or bad." |
| The Complete Tanach   | And God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night, and He said to him, "Beware lest you speak with Jacob either good or evil."          |

**either good or evil:** All the good of the wicked is considered evil to the righteous. — [from Yev. 103]

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| exeGesés companion Bible | And Elohim comes to Laban the Aramiy in a dream by night and says to him, Guard that you word not to Yaaqov from good to evil.                         |
| Hebraic Roots Bible      | And Elohim came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said to him, Watch out for yourself, that you not speak with Jacob from good to evil. |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)        | But God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad."                    |
| Kaplan Translation       | God appeared to Laban the Aramaean that night in a dream, and said, 'Be very careful not to say anything, good or bad, to Jacob.'                      |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible    | And Elohim came to Lavan HaArami in a chalom halailah, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Ya'akov either tov or rah.                  |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Kretzmann's Commentary | And God came to Laban, the Syrian, a name used to distinguish him from the members of God's own people, in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. Literally, Laban should, in speaking to Jacob, not pass from good to bad, from a hasty greeting of his daughters and their children to reproaches and other indications of anger. The power of the |
|------------------------|---|

enemies of God, so far as His children are concerned, is limited by God's permission.

NET Bible®

But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and warned him [*Heb* "said to him."], "Be careful [*Heb* "watch yourself," which is a warning to be on guard against doing something that is inappropriate.] that you neither bless nor curse Jacob [*Heb* "lest you speak with Jacob from good to evil."]."

The Pulpit Commentary

And God—Elohim is here employed, neither because the section belongs to the fundamental document (Tuch, Bleek, Colenso, et alii), nor because, though Laban had an outward acquaintance with Jehovah (vide Genesis 31:49), his real religious knowledge did not extend beyond Elohim (Hengstenberg), but simply because the historian wished to characterize the interposition which arrested Laban in his wrath as supernatural (Quarry)—came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night,—(cf. Genesis 20:3; Job. 33:15; Matthew 1:20). This celestial visitation occurred the night before the fugitives were overtaken (vide Genesis 31:29). Its intention was to guard Jacob, according to the promise of Genesis 28:15, against Laban's resentment—and (accordingly God) said unto him, Take heed—literally, take heed for thyself, the verb being followed by an ethical dative, as in Genesis 12:1; Genesis 21:16, q.v.—that thou speak not to Jacob—literally, lest the, speak with Jacob; μή ποτε λαλήσῃς μετὰ Ἰακώβ (LXX.) either good or bad. Literally, from good to bad, meaning that on meeting with Jacob he should not pass from peaceful greetings to bitter reproaches (Bush, Lunge), or say anything emphatic and decisive for the purpose of reversing what had occurred (Keil); or, perhaps more simply, say anything acrimonious or violent against Jacob (Rosenmóller, Murphy), the expression being a proverbial phrase for opposition or interference (Kalisch). (Cf. Genesis 14:1–24:50; 2Samuel 13:23).

The Voice

Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream during the night with a message. **Eternal One:** Be careful what you say and do to Jacob.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans.  | ...and Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> came to Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> , the one of Aram <sup>[Palace]</sup> , in a dream of the night and he said to him, be guarded to yourself, otherwise you will speak with Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> out of function as well as dysfunction, ... |
| Concordant Literal Version  | And coming is the Elohim to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream in the night. And saying is He to him, "Beware, you, lest you be speaking with Jacob from good unto evil!"  |
| English Standard Version    | But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."   |
| Green's Literal Translation | And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said to him, Watch out for yourself, that you not speak with Jacob from good to evil.   |
| Modern English Version      | But God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night and said to him, "Take care that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."   |
| Webster's Bible Translation | And God came to Laban, the Syrian, in a dream by night, and said to him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.   |
| Young's Updated LT          | And God comes in unto Laban the Aramaean in a dream of the night, and says to him, "Take heed to yourself lest you speak with Jacob from good unto evil."   |

### The gist of this passage:

God will allow Laban to catch up to Jacob, but He tells Laban to play it cool and to not become judgmental over these circumstances.

| Genesis 31:24a                                      |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                     | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                     | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| bôw' (בּוּ) [pronounced boh]                        | <i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>                            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect       | Strong's #935<br>BDB #97   |
| Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]           | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>     | masculine plural noun  | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]                           | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i> | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)  | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN]   | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>                                     | masculine singular proper noun; location                       | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| Ārammîy (אַרְמִי) [pronounced uh-rahm-MEE]          | <i>exalted; transliterated/translated Aramæan, Aramite; Syrian</i>                                      | gentilic adjective with the definite article                   | Strong's #761<br>BDB #74   |
| b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>     | a preposition of proximity                                     | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| châlôwm (חֻלּוֹם) [pronounced khuh-LOHM]            | <i>dream</i>  | masculine singular construct                                   | Strong's #2472<br>BDB #321 |
| lay <sup>e</sup> lâh (לַיְלָה) [pronounced LAY-law] | <i>night; that night, this night, the night</i>   | masculine singular noun with the definite article; pausal form | Strong's #3915<br>BDB #538 |

**Translation:** *But Elohim came to Laban the Aramæan in a dream of the night.* God does speak to various men in Scripture, and it is not clear whether they are believers or not. Laban seems to have some respect for God, based upon Genesis 24 and based upon his response to God here. When God comes to a man in a dream, God is generally expecting to change his thinking or behavior.

Prior to the completion of the canon of Scripture, God spoke to many people in dreams. Genesis 31:10, Genesis 31:29, Genesis 20:3, Genesis 40:5, Genesis 41:1; Num. 12:6, Num. 22:20, Num. 22:26; 1Kings 3:5; Job. 33:15–17, Job. 33:25; Matthew 1:20, Matthew 2:12, Matthew 27:19.<sup>435</sup> However, this is unnecessary in an age of the completed canon of Scripture.

Taking these verses as if in chronological order, (1) Laban moves close to Jacob, but not reveal his position to him; (2) God appears to Laban in a dream that night; (3) Laban makes contact with Jacob.

One wonders if God has shown Himself to many unbelievers. As far as I can recall, there has only been one, the first unbeliever, Cain (and Cain may have believed in the Revealed God; but he also acted despicably, killing his brother). From Genesis 24:31, 50–51, we can determine that Laban was probably a believer, one who has strayed

<sup>435</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:24.

far from God in his life. His daughters are evidently believers; although we do not know if that can be attributed to the witness of Jacob or to Laban (or someone else in their family).

Genesis 31:24a [God came to Laban \(the Aramean\) in a night dream...](#)

### Laban the Syrian (from College Press Bible Study)

Laban the Syrian (Genesis 31:24), in Hebrew, Aramean. "The Arameans were an important branch of the Semitic race, and closely akin to the Israelites. The kingdom of Damascus or Syria, during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., the most powerful and dangerous rival of the northern kingdom of Israel, was the leading Aramean state. The language of the Aramean tribes and states consisted of several closely related dialects. After the Exile, Aramean gradually supplanted Hebrew as the vernacular of the Jewish people. Certain portions of the Bible (Jer. 10:11, Dan. 2:4 to Dan. 7:28, Ezra 4:8 to Ezra 6:18, Ezra 7:12–26) are written in Aramaic, as are considerable portions of rabbinic literature" (Morganstern, JIBG). (Our Lord Himself spoke Galilean Aramaic, cf. Matthew 27:46). The progenitor of the Aramean peoples was Aram, the son of Shem (Genesis 10:22–23). These peoples spread widely through Syria and Mesopotamia from the Lebanon Mountains on the west to the Euphrates River on the east, and from the Taurus Range on the north to Damascus and northern Palestine on the south. Contacts of the Arameans with the Hebrews began in the patriarchal age, if not earlier (cf. Paddan-aram, "the plain of Aram," Genesis 24:10; Genesis 28:5; Genesis 31:47).

The maternal ancestry of Jacob's children was Aramaic (Deut. 26:5). During the long period of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, that of the wanderings in the Sinaitic Wilderness, and the extended period of the Judges in Canaan, the Arameans were spreading in every direction, particularly southward. By the time of the reign of Saul (c. 1000 B.C.), this expansion was beginning to clash with Israelite strength and several Aramaic districts appear prominently in the Old Testament Scriptures. (See UBG, s.v. "Aram," "Aramaic"). The Greeks called Aram, "Syria"; consequently the language is called "Syriac" (Dan. 2:4).

David conquered these Aramean kingdoms at his very back door and incorporated them into his kingdom, thus laying the foundation of Solomon's empire. (Aram-Naharaim, "Aram of the Two Rivers," was the name by which the territory around Haran was known; the region where the Arameans had settled in patriarchal times, where Abraham sojourned for a time, and from which Aramean power spread. Aram-Damascus was a south Syrian state which became the inveterate foe of the Northern Kingdom of Israel for more than a century and a half (1Kings 11:23–25).

Aram-Zobah, a powerful kingdom which flourished north of Hamath, was conquered by David and incorporated into his realm (2 Sam., ch. 8). Aram-Maachah was a principality east of the Jordan near Mount Hermon (Joshua 12:5; Joshua 13:11). Aram-Beth-Rehob in the general vicinity of Geshur, probably near Maacah and Dan (Num. 13:21, Judges 18:28). Geshur was a small principality east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee (Deut. 3:14, 2Samuel 15:8; 2Samuel 13:37). Tob was also a small Aramaic principality east of the Jordan, some ten miles south of Gadara, (the region from which the Ammonite king drew soldiers to war against David. A battle ensued in which the "Syrians" were routed (2Samuel 10:8–19). Genesis 31:20; Genesis 31:24—Laban the Aramean: "The reason for this apposition is puzzling. It hardly grows out of the Hebrew national consciousness which here proudly asserts itself. Perhaps the opinion advanced by Clericus still deserves most consideration. He believes Laban's nationality is mentioned because the Syrians were known from of old as the trickiest people; here one of this people in a kind of just retribution meets one trickier than himself. Yet this is not written to glorify trickery" (EG, 841).

The discussion of why Laban is called a Syrian seems overly confusing to me. This is where he lived; he lived in the Syrian (Aramaic) world. He may have even been born there. He is spending all or most of his life there. So that simply describes his chosen geographic position.

*The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Genesis 31:24 (Laban the Syrian).*

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *As in Genesis 31:20, Genesis 31:24 also describes Laban as the "Aramean," which is an ethnic designation denoting a tribal population, which lived from Mesopotamia to Asia Minor and Syria-Palestine and who like the patriarchs were descendants of Shem. The emphasis upon Laban's ethnic affiliation alerts the reader that Laban and Jacob are now totally alienated from each other and represent two distinct groups of people.*<sup>436</sup>

| <b>Genesis 31:24b</b>  |  |  |                             |
|--|--|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Hebrew/Pronunciation</b>                                  | <b>Common English Meanings</b>   | <b>Notes/Morphology</b>  | <b>BDB and Strong's #</b>   |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                      | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| 'âmar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]                     | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                                     | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55    |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]                            | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| shâmar (שמר) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAR</i> ]                   | <i>to be kept, to be preserved; to be careful; to abstain oneself [from anything]; to beware [of anything]; to care [for something]; to take heed</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect                                  | Strong's #8104<br>BDB #1036 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]                            | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| pen (פן) [pronounced <i>pen</i> ]                            | <i>lest, peradventure, or else, in order to prevent, or, so that [plus a negative]</i>   | conjunction  | Strong's #6435<br>BDB #814  |
| dâbar (דבר) [pronounced <i>daw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR</i> ]        | <i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect                                    | Strong's #1696<br>BDB #180  |
| 'im (עם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]                           | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>  | preposition of nearness and vicinity   | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767  |
| Ya'ăqôb (יעקב) [pronounced <i>yah-ġuh-KOH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>   | masculine proper noun  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784  |

<sup>436</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 496); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Genesis 31:24b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]  | <i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>  | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced <i>toh<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]   | <i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>  | masculine feminine singular adjective which can act like a substantive | Strong's #2896<br>BDB #373 |
| As a noun, this can mean <i>the good thing, that which is good [pleasing, approved, kind, upright, right]; goodness, uprightness, kindness, right; that which is fair [beautiful]</i> . Owens translates this very well in 1Kings 2:18. |   |  |                            |
| ʿad (דַּעַ) [pronounced <i>gahd</i> ]   | <i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>   | preposition of duration or of limits                                   | Strong's #5704<br>BDB #723 |
| Together, min...wa ʿad (דַּעַ ... מִן) mean <i>from...to</i> or <i>both...and</i> ; as in <i>from soup to nuts</i> or <i>both young and old</i> .   |   |  |                            |
| raʿ (עַר) [pronounced <i>rahg</i> ]   | <i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i> | masculine singular adjective/noun; pausal form                         | Strong's #7451<br>BDB #948 |

**Translation:** He said to him, “Be careful for yourself that you do not speak to Jacob from good to evil.” God tells Laban, “You cannot expect to put moral judgments upon Jacob.” The idea being, Laban has pretty much forced Jacob into a set of actions.

The NET Bible: *The precise meaning of the expression, which occurs only here and in v. 29, is uncertain. Since Laban proceeded to speak to Jacob at length, it cannot mean to maintain silence. Nor does it seem to be a prohibition against criticism (see vv. 26-30). Most likely it refers to a formal pronouncement, whether it be a blessing or a curse. Laban was to avoid saying anything to Jacob that would be intended to enhance him or to harm him.*<sup>437</sup> Hence, the NET Bible translated this: “Be careful that you neither bless nor curse Jacob.”

What occurred to me, at first, is that maybe God should have said, “Do not harm Jacob.” However, I was not around at this time to advise God. So, why is what God said smarter than my first thought? First of all, Laban probably was not going to harm Jacob, so there is no need to tell him not to. Secondly, Jacob is in front of his family, and he is the patriarch and their spiritual head. He has left because God told him to leave. Therefore, Laban is not to come and verbally rip into Jacob (which is probably what he originally intended to do).

On the other hand, Laban does level some complaints. I would assume that Laban’s words were greatly restrained compared to what they would have been, if God had not spoken to him. However, neither man seems to be very restrained in what they say. Laban admits that God spoke to him.

Bear in mind that Laban had become disenchanted with Jacob and, it seems, with his daughters (at least from their perspective). Therefore, Laban may be mad about Jacob just suddenly leaving without giving any notice; but he has to be thinking, “And good riddance to him.”

However, also, Laban is not to try to encourage Jacob to come back (that would be the *good* word).

<sup>437</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 16, 2016.

Several things which Laban has said or done have come back to haunt him, so to speak. Taking livestock which may have resulted in more lambs and kids for Jacob and moving them himself and the livestock three days from Jacob, is what gave Jacob the head start. And, when informed many years ago that the Lord had apparently answered the prayer of Isaac's servant concerning Rebekah, Laban's sister, Laban said, "[The matter comes from the Lord, so we cannot speak to you bad or good.](#)"

Jacob has been sent by God away from Laban (just as Abraham was sent away from his relatives almost two centuries previous), so God has warned Laban not to speak to Jacob, good or bad. From the use of this expression, here, and back in Genesis 24, this appears to be an idiom of that time. God was not forbidding Laban to catch up to Jacob nor was He denying Laban the chance to speak to Jacob. God has made it clear that Jacob is His and that Laban needed to guard whatever it was that he had to say to Jacob. In other words, Laban was not to judge Jacob or his motives. Since Jacob is obeying God, Laban is to watch his tongue with regards to Jacob's actions.

Genesis 31:24 [God came to Laban \(the Aramæan\) in a night dream, saying to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob regarding the morality of his leaving."](#)

This is a peculiar warning, as God tells Laban not to say anything good or bad about his leaving; and that is exactly what Laban does. My assumption is, Laban holds back somewhat.

### God's warning to Laban (Various Commentators)

Benson: *The Hebrew is, from good to bad — That is, enter into no altercations, and use no harsh language with him, which may occasion a quarrel. Say nothing against his going on with his journey, for the thing proceedeth from the Lord. The same Hebraism we have, Genesis 24:50 [Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good.—ESV]. The safety of good men is very much owing to the hold God has on the consciences of bad men, and the access he has to them.*<sup>438</sup>

Barnes: *God appears to Laban on behalf of Jacob, and warns him not to harm him. "Not to speak from good to bad" is merely to abstain from language expressing and prefacing violence.*<sup>439</sup>

Clarke: *God's caution to Laban was of high importance to Jacob - Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad; or rather, as is the literal meaning of the Hebrew, ער דע בוטם mittob ad ra, from good to evil; for had he neither spoken good nor evil to Jacob, they could have had no intercourse at all. The original is, therefore, peculiarly appropriate; for when people meet, the language at first is the language of friendship; the command therefore implies, "Do not begin with Peace be unto thee, and then proceed to injurious language and acts of violence."*<sup>440</sup>

Guzik: *God's speaking to Laban in a dream shows he had evil intention towards Jacob. God is protecting Jacob.*<sup>441</sup>

Matthew Henry: *God interposed in the quarrel, rebuked Laban and sheltered Jacob, charging Laban not to speak unto him either good or bad (Genesis 31:24), that is, to say nothing against his going on with his journey, for that it proceeded from the Lord. The same Hebraism we have, Genesis 24:50. Laban, during his seven day's march, had been full of rage against Jacob, and was now full of hopes that his lust should be satisfied upon him (Exodus 15:9); but God comes to him, and with one word ties his hands, though he does not turn his heart.*<sup>442</sup>

<sup>438</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:24 (slightly edited).

<sup>439</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:20–24.

<sup>440</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:24.

<sup>441</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:22–24.

<sup>442</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:17–24.

## God's warning to Laban (Various Commentators)

J. C. Gray: *Probably it was this night that Laban had a wonderful vision, in which he was warned respecting his treatment of Jacob. From the nature of the vision it is plain how murderous his intentions were.*<sup>443</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Being accompanied by a number of his people, he might have used violence had he not been divinely warned in a dream to give no interruption to his nephew's journey. How striking and sudden a change! For several days he had been full of rage, and was now in eager anticipation that his vengeance would be fully wreaked, when lo! his hands are tied by invisible power (Psa\_76:10). He did not dare to touch Jacob, but there was a war of words.*<sup>444</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *This is a crucial intervention. Laban is warned by God in a vivid dream, no doubt during a short period of snatched sleep, to be careful how he speaks to Jacob. That this awesome experience affects him deeply comes out in the subsequent narrative. His whole attitude is transformed. He ceases to be the powerful avenger and becomes the wary negotiator and broken-hearted parent. It changes his whole approach to the situation. Jacob is one thing, but to fight with the manifested supernatural is another.*

Dr. Peter Pett continues: *"Either good or bad." Compare Genesis 24:50; Num. 24:13. He must not say what he wants to say but only what he is told. He must remember that he is speaking to one under God's protection.*<sup>445</sup>

Matthew Poole: *Neither persuading him by flattering promises and cunning artifices, nor compelling him by threatenings, to return. For so these general words must be limited, as is evident from God's design in them, and from the following relation. So this is a synecdochical expression.*<sup>446</sup>

Trapp: *That is, that you seek not, either by flattery or force, by allurements or affrightment, to bring him back. They write of the asp, that he never wanders alone, without his companion with him.*<sup>447</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad" This is a Hebrew idiom ("take heed that you do not say a word to Jacob either good or bad") which apparently means "leave him completely alone." Again, God's grace and protection are clearly seen in delivering the patriarchal family again and again.*<sup>448</sup>

Whedon's interpretation: *That is, do not from good friendly greetings pass to bad words of violence. Do not make matters worse.*<sup>449</sup>

L. M. Grant: *Before their confrontation, however, God spoke to Laban in a dream, charging him that he must not speak to Jacob "either good or bad" (v.24). Of course, he was most likely to speak bad to Jacob, for he was angry with him, and God made it clear that Laban was not Jacob's judge. It is interesting, however, that Laban must not speak good to Jacob. Why is this? It is because God was dealing with Jacob, and Laban must not interfere.*<sup>450</sup>

<sup>443</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22–42 (Slightly edited).

<sup>444</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:22–55.

<sup>445</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:24.

<sup>446</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:24.

<sup>447</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:24 (slightly edited).

<sup>448</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:24.

<sup>449</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:24.

<sup>450</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017. Grant goes on to present this as an object lesson for Gentiles regarding nation Israel (we are not to judge them for good or bad). I just don't see that application, although I can see how Grant draws the line from this to that.

## God's warning to Laban (Various Commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *God's appearance to Laban was the same type as His appearance in an earlier event to Abimelech, indicating that, for special reasons, God sometimes communicated with persons outside the covenant. It is also possible that He did so in the case of Pharaoh when he had taken Sarah into his harem.*<sup>451</sup>

*Outside the covenant* is a reference to someone outside of the Abrahamic covenant. These would not necessarily be unbelievers. Laban has certainly fallen from the faith, to where he seems to allow for other gods; but it appears that he did believe in the Creator God at one time.

Perhaps God spoke to Laban about language, which clearly ruled out actual violence.

Or, perhaps Laban was not to speak evil to Jacob, in such a way as to require him to return to Haran to stand trial for whatever he has done wrong; Laban was not to speak good to Jacob, to try to convince him to remain in Haran.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Genesis 31:24 God came to Laban (the Aramæan) in a night dream, saying to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob regarding the morality of his leaving."

### "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad." (Wenstrom)

Thomas Whitelaw: *This is an idiomatic expression, "a proverbial phrase for opposition or interference."*<sup>452</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: "Be careful" is the nihil imperative form of the verb *shamar* (שָׁמַר) (*shaw-mar*), which means, "to pay attention, listen and obey" and the preposition *le* (ל) (*lamed*), which functions as an ethical or reflexive dative of advantage meaning, "yourself, for your benefit." Therefore, God is saying to Laban in the dream, "Watch yourself," or in other words, "Pay attention and do what I say for it is your benefit that you do so."

Wenstrom continues: "That you do not" is the conjunction *pen* (פֶּן), which indicates the prevention of a possible or potential event, implying that God is taking measures to prevent Laban from taking military action against Jacob and doing him harm. "Speak" is the verb *davar* (דָּבַר) (*daw-var*), which emphasizes the activity of speaking. "Either good or bad": (1) Preposition *min* (מִן), "either" (2) Noun *tov* (טוֹב), "good" (3) Preposition *`adh* (אֲדָה), "or" (4) Noun *ra`* (רָע), "evil." I believe that it is the combination of the two prepositions which gives this the unusual meaning here.

Wenstrom continues: The preposition *min* is combined with the preposition *`adh* and together they literally mean, "from...to" expressing an inclusive idea meaning everything or anything. Therefore, literally speaking this entire expression translated "either good or bad" in the New American Standard literally means, "from good to bad" but idiomatically, it means, "anything positive or negative."

Wenstrom: The noun *tov*, "good" refers to speaking anything "positive" to Jacob that could influence him to return to Paddan Aram such as sweet talking Jacob and proposing any new deals with him. Whereas, the noun *ra*, "evil" refers to Laban speaking anything "negative" to Jacob that would intimidate him and cause him to go against the will of God and return to Paddan Aram .

<sup>451</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>452</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. This link for additional reference.

## "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad." (Wenstrom)

Wenstrom: *This exact expression appears in Genesis 24:50 where Laban and Bethuel respond to Abraham's servant Eliezer's story of God's providential activities and proposing that Isaac marry Rebekah by saying "we cannot speak to you bad or good." This expression is an example of "merism" which is an expression of totality through the combination of opposites. Therefore, Laban and Bethuel's response meant that they couldn't say anything at all and have no choice in the matter since it is clearly God's will that Isaac marry Rebekah .*

Wenstrom: *In Genesis 31:24, the expression, "do not speak to Jacob either good or bad" is also an example of "merism." Therefore, the expression means that God prohibited Laban from saying anything to influence Jacob to return since that would be against His will or to say anything by way of bitter reproach or intimidation. This expression does "not" mean he was prohibited from speaking anything at all to Jacob but that he could not say anything to influence Jacob in returning or saying anything by way of bitter reproach. This expression was a proverbial phrase for opposition or interference. Therefore, God does not want Laban sweet talking or proposing any new deals that would entice Jacob to return with him to Paddan Aram, nor, does God want Laban speaking harsh and bitter words to Jacob in order to intimidate Jacob and cause him to return to Paddan Aram.*

Wenstrom: *This proverbial expression therefore indicates that God does not want Laban to oppose or interfere with Jacob returning to Canaan, which is His will. God does not want Laban saying positive or negative to Jacob that would prevent him from returning to Canaan when it is God's will for him to return .*

Wenstrom concludes: *Therefore, we could translate Genesis 31:24, "God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night and said to him, "Watch yourself, pay attention and do what I say, do not say anything positive or negative to Jacob (so as to prevent him from returning to Canaan), for it is for your benefit."*

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 496–497); accessed October 18, 2017.

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What would Laban have done? Chuck Smith suggests: *Laban really had other ideas. He had really ideas of taking by force all that Jacob had. He had ideas of perhaps even killing Jacob. But God came to him in the night before and said, "Hey, don't you even talk to him good or bad". Well, that was a hard order and so Laban comes in and he puts on this whole hypocritical thing, you know. "Why did you steal off? I wanted to kiss my grandchildren. We could have had a big party", you know. In reality he would have never let Jacob go. He would have just ripped him off and sent him away without anything. But because God has now put the squeeze on him and won't let him do anything, he's just, you know, acting like he's been hurt and offended and all.*<sup>453</sup>

We actually do not know what Laban would have done, if Jacob came to him and said, "The Lord has asked me to return to the land, so I will take my wives, my children and my livestock and leave." However, we have studied the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob thus far—whether the patriarch was obedient and followed the words of God or whether he was rebellious, and did what he thought was right, what was the end result? The will of God came to pass—every time, in every instance, no matter what any of the principals did. God has a plan and He is going to move His plan forward, whether we participate or try to obstruct it. It is a fool's errand to stand in front of a train to stop it.

**Genesis 31:24** And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Take heed that you do not speak either good or bad to Jacob."

God comes to Laban and speaks to him. He tells Laban to be careful and not to speak ill of Jacob when he catches up to him.

<sup>453</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:22–28.

There is no reason to assume that Laban is an unbeliever. You may recall from Genesis 24, when the servant said that meeting Rebekah was an answer to prayer; and Laban and his father Bethuel said, "We cannot argue with that." It is likely that much of Abraham's extended family had faith in the Revealed God (and were, therefore, saved).

God allows Laban to pursue Jacob; God allows Laban to catch up with him and to confront him. However, Laban is not to speak good or bad of him. Recall that Jacob has left Paddan-aram on God's direct orders. Therefore, geographically speaking, what he is doing is right. Picking up his family and taking them to Canaan—this is what God has told him to do.

However, sneaking out on Laban—this was Jacob's idea, not God's. Even though God occasionally gave the patriarchs some direction in their lives (Jacob was told to return to Canaan), God does not micro-manage. Jacob, true to form, does a right thing in a wrong way.

Genesis 31:24 **God came to Laban (the Aramæan) in a night dream, saying to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob regarding the morality of his leaving."** There are two dreams in this chapter, and it might be interesting to contrast them. Jacob had a dream where God spoke to him, reassured him that He is the God of Bethel, that He has been overseeing the increase of Jacob's livestock, and that it is now time for him to leave Paddan-aram. In our study of this first dream, we do not know how long ago that Jacob had it. Was it a week ago, a month ago, a season ago? The dream occurred when it was mating season; and in this chapter, we are in the shearing season for sheep—this indicates to me that several months have passed and Jacob did not act on this dream. His wives did not hear about this dream until Jacob called them out to the field to speak with him (which is probably during the past few days). Laban's dream is happening right now, when he is encamped not far from Jacob's camp; and it will impact his behavior that next day. It is not that Laban is more spiritual; but that he was apparently more concerned about God taking further action against him.<sup>454</sup>

Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:22–24 **When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled then he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead . God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad."**

Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead.

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:22–24

#### Laban's Pursuit of Jacob (vv. 22-24)

1. Jacob was three days out when news of Jacob's exit from Haran became known to Laban.
2. Laban had set a three days distance between himself and Jacob and now Jacob does the same.
3. Laban was engaged in sheep-shearing
4. The distance from the Euphrates to the hill country of Gilead is some c.350 miles on a straight line.
5. To cover this distance in 10 days would require a 35-40 mile a day pace which is quite high considering Jacob's entourage, but not impossible.
6. Laban and his men covered the distance averaging 50 miles per day.
7. Laban leaves with his "kinsmen" which includes male relatives and close neighbors.
8. It took Laban seven days to cover the same ground that it took Jacob ten days to cover.
9. Laban in hot pursuit intended to take Jacob and all that was his back to Paddan-Aram by force if necessary.
10. Laban intends to settle the score with Jacob the outsider.
11. On the final day when Laban's forces made initial contact with Jacob's camp, God "came" to Laban in a dream (v. 24).
12. In the dream God tells Laban not to harm Jacob in any way (cf. v.29).

<sup>454</sup> I do not recall any commentators spending any time contrasting these two dreams.

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:22–24

13. In this way God preempts Laban's intent to harm his son-in-law.
14. The words "lest you speak to Jacob from good unto evil" means that Laban is not to threaten Jacob ("unto evil") if he refuses to turn around and come back to Haran peacefully ("from good").
15. Refusal on Jacob's part would involve Laban speaking "unto evil."
16. Laban realized that he was treading on thin ice and that he was not permitted to discuss the matter of Jacob's return to Haran.
17. Otherwise Laban could say and do whatever he wished as the subsequent narrative makes apparent.
18. The scene is set for the confrontation between the two men as their camps were adjacent to one another (v.25).
19. This has the feel of two military organizations on the day before hostilities break out.
20. Even the choice of verbs for "pitched" or "camped" (taqa) has a militaristic connotation.
21. The verb means to strike a blow and is used of setting up tents by pounding stakes into the ground.
22. Its most frequent use is in connection with the blowing of trumpets signaling attack (cf. Num. 10:4).
23. The verb taqa is used in contexts of impending violence and warfare.
24. The other term for pitching a tent is the verb nata found in 12:8; 26:25; 33:19; 35:21.
25. How appropriate to find taqa in v. 25 (2x) where intended violence if necessary was in the offing apart from divine intervention.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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**And so overtakes Laban Jacob. And Jacob has pitched his tent in the hill and Laban has pitched [his tent] with his brothers in a hill of the Gilead.**

Genesis  
31:25

**So Laban had overtaken Jacob. While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, Laban with his brothers had pitched [his tent] [nearby] in the hill country of Gilead.**

**So Laban did overtake Jacob. While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, Laban was encamped nearby in the hill country of Gilead as well—he, his relatives and his slaves.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so overtakes Laban Jacob. And Jacob has pitched his tent in the hill and Laban has pitched [his tent] with his brothers in a hill of the Gilead. |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Laban overtook Jakob; and Jakob had spread his tent in the mountain; and Laban made his brethren abide in the mountain of Gilead.                |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Laban came upon Jakob. And Jakob had spread his tent in the mountain, and Laban made his brethren abide in the mount of Gilead.                  |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain: and when he with his brethren had overtaken him, he pitched his tent in the same mount of Galaad.    |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Laban caught up with Ya'aqub. Now Ya'aqub had pitched his tent in the mountain, and Laban with his relatives encamped in the mountain of Gilead.     |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent on the mount; and Laban with his brethren encamped on mount Gilead.                        |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Laban overtook Jacob; and Jacob pitched his tent in the mountain; and Laban stationed his brothers in the mount Galaad.                          |

Significant differences: None.

**Limited Vocabulary Translations:**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Easy English              | Jacob had put up his tent in the hill country of Gilead. And Laban found him. So Laban and his relatives also put up their tents in this place.  |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2008 | <b>The Search for the Stolen Gods</b><br>The next morning Laban caught up with Jacob. Jacob had set up his camp on the mountain, so Laban and all his men set up their camp in the hill country of Gilead. When Laban reached him, Jacob's tents were pitched in the Gilead mountains; Laban pitched his tents there, too. |
| <i>The Message</i>        | When Laban reached him, Jacob's tents were pitched in the Gilead mountains; Laban pitched his tents there, too.  |
| NIRV                      | Jacob had set up his tent in the hill country of Gilead. That's where Laban caught up with him. Laban and his relatives camped there too.  |

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| The Living Bible       | Laban finally caught up with Jacob as he was camped at the top of a ridge; Laban, meanwhile, camped below him in the mountains.  |
| New Berkeley Version   | When Laban overtook Jacob, Jacob had pitched camp at the mountain [Shortly named Mizpah because of the agreement between Laban and Jacob.] and Laban, too, camped at the Gilead mountain with his kinsmen. |
| New Century Version    | <b>The Search for the Stolen Idols</b><br>So Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had made his camp in the mountains, so Laban and his relatives set up their camp in the mountains of Gilead.            |
| New Life Version       | Then Laban came to Jacob. Now Jacob had put up his tent in the hill country. Laban and the men of his family put up their tents in the hill country of Gilead.   |
| New Living Translation | Laban caught up with Jacob as he was camped in the hill country of Gilead, and he set up his camp not far from Jacob's.  |

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Beck's American Translation | Laban caught up with Jacob when Jacob was putting up his tents in the hills. Laban and his relatives also put up their tents in the hills of Gilead.   |
| International Standard V    | Meanwhile, Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain, where Laban had caught up with him [Lit. <i>Jacob</i> ]. Laban and his relatives encamped on that same mountain in the hill country of Gilead, too. |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | Jacob had already pitched his tent on the hills, and now Laban, coming up with his kinsmen in pursuit, encamped in these same hills of Galaad.   |
| Translation for Translators | The next day, by the time Laban caught up with Jacob, Jacob and his household had set up their tents in the hilly Gilead area. So Laban and his relatives set up their tents there, too.                   |

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible     | Laban was to overtake Jacob. Jacob is to have thrust in the pegs of his tent, at the mount, and Laban, with his brothers, is to have thrust in his pegs, at Mount Gilead. |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible    | Laban, however, overtook Jacob : and Jacob had pitched his tent on the hill, but Laban with his relatives on Mount Gilad.   |
| H. C. Leupold          | And Laban came up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain, and Laban on his part pitched in Mount Gilead together with his kinsmen.                    |
| NIV, ©2011             | Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too.   |
| Tree of Life Version   | So Laban caught up to Jacob. (Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, so Laban and his brothers pitched their tents in the hill country of Gilead as well).       |
| Unlocked Literal Bible | Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country. Laban also camped with his relatives in the hill country of Gilead.                             |

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country and Laban with his relatives pitched in the mount of Gilead.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Laban caught up with Jacob, and Jacob had planted his tent into the mountain, and Laban planted his kinfolks on the mountain of Gilead. |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| The Heritage Bible        | And Laban reached Jacob, and Jacob had pitched his tent at the mount; and Laban pitched at Mount Gilead with his brothers.  |
| New American Bible (2002) | When Laban overtook Jacob, Jacob's tents were pitched in the highlands; Laban also pitched his tents there, on Mount Gilead.  |
| New American Bible (2011) | <i>Jacob and Laban in Gilead.</i><br>When Laban overtook Jacob, Jacob's tents were pitched in the hill country; Laban also pitched his tents in the hill country of Gilead. |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | Laban caught up with Jacob, who had pitched his tent in the hills; and Laban pitched camp on Mount Gilead.  |
| Revised English Bible     | When Laban caught up with him, Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill-country of Gilead, and Laban encamped with his kinsmen in the same hill-country.                      |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| exeGesés companion Bible | ... - and Laban overtakes Yaaqov.<br>And Yaaqov stakes his tent in the mount:<br>and Laban with his brothers<br>stake in the mount of Gilad. |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)        | Laban overtook Jacob. Jacob had pitched his tent on the Height, and Laban with his kinsmen encamped in the hill country of Gilead.           |
| Kaplan Translation       | Laban then overtook Jacob. Jacob had set up his tents on a hill, while Laban had stationed his kinsmen on Mount Gilead.                      |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible    | Then Lavan overtook Ya'akov. Now Ya'akov had pitched his ohel on the har; and Lavan with his achim encamped in Har Gil'ad.                   |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| The Expanded Bible     | <b>The Search for the Stolen Idols</b><br>So Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had ·made his camp [ <sup>l</sup> pitched his tent] in the mountains, so Laban and his ·relatives [ <sup>l</sup> brothers] ·set up their camp [pitched] in the mountains of Gilead.  |
| Kretzmann's Commentary | <b>Verses 25-35</b><br>Laban Scolds Jacob<br>Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount; and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. So Jacob had gone into camp on the height of the mountain range of which Mount Gilead was the highest peak, and Laban, in overtaking him with his kinsmen, also pitched his tent.  |
| NET Bible®             | Laban overtook Jacob, and when Jacob pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead, Laban and his relatives set up camp there too [ <i>Heb</i> “and Jacob pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban pitched with his brothers in the hill country of Gilead.” The juxtaposition of disjunctive clauses (note the pattern conjunction + subject + verb in both clauses) indicates synchronism of action]. |
| The Pulpit Commentary  | Then (literally, and) Laban overtook Jacob. Now (literally, and) Jacob had pitched his tent—this was done by means of pins driven into the ground, the verb תָּקַע signifying to fasten, or fix anything by driving (cf. Judges 4:21; Isaiah 22:23, Isaiah 22:25)—in the mount (vide supra, Genesis 21:21): and Laban with his brethren   |

(kinsmen, ut supra) pitched—his tent; not ἐστήσε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς (LXX.)—in the mount of Gilead (vide supra, Genesis 21:21).

The Voice

Laban caught up to Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent *and set up camp* in the hill country; and Laban, along with his relatives, also camped in the hill country of Gilead. *Laban went out to meet Jacob.*

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| English Standard Version    | And Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen pitched tents in the hill country of Gilead. |
| Green's Literal Translation | And Laban overtook Jacob. And Jacob had pitched his tent at the Mount. And Laban with his brothers had pitched at Mount Gilead.                       |
| New King James Version      | So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.             |
| World English Bible         | Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain, and Laban with his relatives encamped in the mountain of Gilead.          |
| Young's Updated LT          | And Laban overtakes Jacob; and Jacob has fixed his tent in the mount; and Laban with his brothers have fixed theirs in the mount of Gilead.           |

**The gist of this passage:** Laban eventually catches up to Jacob; they are all camped in the mountains of Gilead.

### Genesis 31:25a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                 | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâsag (נָסַג) [pronounced naw-SAHG]  | <i>to reach, to attain, to overtake; to cause to reach; to be able to be secure; to have enough</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect | Strong's #5381<br>BDB #673 |
| Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: [T]he verb <i>nasagh</i> means that Laban "overtook" Jacob in the sense that he made contact with him and identified his position to Jacob and met with Jacob face to face.                                       |   |   |                            |
| Wenstrom continues: "Caught up" is the verb <i>nasagh</i> (נָסַג) ( <i>naw-sag</i> ), which means that Laban "overtook" Jacob in the sense that he "came up to" him, or made contact with him and confronted him face to face. <sup>455</sup>      |   |   |                            |
| Wenstrom continues: The verb <i>davaq</i> in Genesis 31:23 indicates that Laban did not make contact with Jacob whereas <i>nasagh</i> in Genesis 31:25 indicates that he came right up to Jacob so as to confront him face to face. <sup>456</sup> |   |   |                            |
| ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]   | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| Yaʿăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-ăuh-KOH <sup>BV</sup> ]  | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent</i> and is transliterated <i>Jacob</i>           | masculine proper noun                                       | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |

<sup>455</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 498); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>456</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 495); accessed October 18, 2017.

**Translation:** **So Laban had overtaken Jacob.** Jacob was traveling with children, wives and a herds of sheep and goats, as well as other animals. Therefore, he could not keep up a fast pace. It is unclear whether he expected to be followed or not; however, he left without telling anyone to get as good of a head start as possible.

I would make the assumption that Laban realizes that he has caught up to Jacob; yet he does not make contact with him, as it is evening and time to make camp. I would also make the assumption that Jacob does not realize that Laban is right there, close by.

Gill: *He was come to the mount the overnight, but now in the morning he came nearer to him, so as to hold a conversation with him.*<sup>457</sup>

### Genesis 31:25b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #          |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וַ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                               | simple wâw conjunction                                 | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ăuh-KOH<sup>B</sup>V</i> ]       | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>                  | masculine proper noun                                  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784  |
| tâqa' (תַּקַּע) [pronounced <i>taw-KAHG</i> ]                         | <i>to fasten, to thrust; to drive, to clap [or strike] [hands], to give a blow, to give a blast</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect | Strong's #8628<br>BDB #1075 |

The key to the meaning of this verb is context and the direct object. When the direct object is *tent*, it means *to pitch, to peg down* (Genesis 31:24 Jer. 6:3). The relationship here is, the tent pegs are *fastened, thrust, driven* into the ground.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *"Pitched" is the verb taqa (תַּקַּע) (taw-kah), and is not the usual verb for pitching a tent, which is natah (הִנָּח) (naw-taw) (See Genesis 12:8; 26:25).*

Wenstrom: *The fact that Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit employs this verb taqa rather than natah indicates that he is trying to paint a picture of a tense and suspenseful scene where violence is about to break out.*<sup>458</sup>

|  |   |   |                                     |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                     | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                     | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84            |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced <i>OH-heh</i> ]                | <i>tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling</i>  | masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13            |
| b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ] | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's # none<br>BDB #88          |
| har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i> ]                       | <i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country, a mountainous area, mountain region</i>                     | masculine singular noun   | Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249 |

<sup>457</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:25.

<sup>458</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 498); accessed October 18, 2017.

**Translation:** *While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country,...* It appears that Laban came across Jacob's campsite. Why we have *hill country* here and *hill country of Gilead* below, I do not know. It appears that they are the same.

Dr. Bob Utley makes the odd observation: *This is the first mention that Jacob had put up his tent, so apparently the forced march had not allowed them to stop earlier. Apparently, Jacob felt that they were far enough away to be safe.*<sup>459</sup> This is a very odd position to take—that because Jacob pitching a tent in this verse means that he did not do that until now. I have no doubts that Utley, upon reading this opinion, would be easily dissuaded from it.

### Genesis 31:25c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #          |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                               | simple wâw conjunction                                 | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| Lâbân (לַבָּן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]                | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>                                 | masculine singular proper noun; location               | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526  |
| tâqa' (תָּקַע) [pronounced <i>taw-KAHG</i> ]                            | <i>to fasten, to thrust; to drive, to clap [or strike] [hands], to give a blow, to give a blast</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect | Strong's #8628<br>BDB #1075 |

The key to the meaning of this verb is context and the direct object. When the direct object is *tent*, it means *to pitch, to peg down* (Genesis 31:24 Jer. 6:3). The relationship here is, the tent pegs are *fastened, thrust, driven* into the ground.

Here, its use above in v. 24b determines its use here (which is not always the case).

|  |   |   |                                     |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                     | <i>with, at, near, by, among, directly from</i>   | preposition (which is identical to the sign of the direct object)               | Strong's #854<br>BDB #85            |
| 'achîym (אֶחָיִם) [pronounced <i>awhk-EEM</i> ]          | <i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>                             | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26            |
| b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ] | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's # none<br>BDB #88          |
| har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i> ]                       | <i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country, a mountainous area, mountain region</i>                     | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249 |
| Gil'êd (גִּלְעָד) [pronounced <i>gil-GAWD</i> ]          | <i>rocky region; transliterated Gilead</i>  | masculine proper noun with the definite article                                 | Strong's #1568<br>BDB #166          |

**Translation:** *...Laban with his brothers had pitched [his tent] [nearby] in the hill country of Gilead.* It appears that Laban encamps nearby. One he has caught up to Jacob, there is no running from him. With all that Jacob has, he cannot get away from Laban at this point.

Also, we do not know if Jacob is aware of Laban's presence. It does not appear that he knows Laban is there.

<sup>459</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:25.

Genesis 31:25 So Laban did overtake Jacob. While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, Laban was encamped nearby in the hill country of Gilead as well—he, his relatives and his slaves.

### The relative positions of Jacob and Laban (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett sees this opposite of how I see it—he believes that Jacob is aware of Laban’s near arrival: *Aware of the approaching threat, which he had long anticipated, Jacob takes his men and his possessions into a mountainous place. He knows that there may be fighting and he wants to protect his possessions and to have the advantage of the most strategic position. So he pitches his camp ‘in the mountain’. Then he watches as the forces of Laban arrive and camp below them.*<sup>460</sup>

Speaking of Jacob, Trapp writes: *Seeing Laban so near, he set himself in as good order as he could, fearing the worst, saith Musculus. But God was better to him than his fears. He spake for him; and so he can, and doth oft for us, in the hearts of our enemies.*<sup>461</sup>

Gill describes their relative positions: *now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead; both on the same mount; one perhaps at the bottom, and the other at the top; or one on one hill of it, and the other on another, or right over against one another.*<sup>462</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *Laban evidently reached the “mount of Gilead” toward the end of the seventh day, and seeing Jacob’s tents not too far away, he lodged over night where he had halted. It was during the night that Laban had the dream, Genesis 31:29. Evidently the idea suggested is that Jacob and Laban were encamped, each on a different foothill. “In the case of Laban the specific statement that it was ‘Mount Gilead’ where the tents were pitched makes it entirely plain that both had pitched on the same mountain though over against one another.*<sup>463</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *Laban expects to use this crime [the stealing of the idols] as an opportunity to compel Jacob to return to working for him.*<sup>464</sup>

I don’t know that Laban really wants Jacob to return. I think that Laban himself does not know exactly the outcome that he wants, apart from the chance to air his grievances.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Genesis 31:25 Then Laban overtook Jacob. And Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount. And Laban with his brothers pitched in Mount Gilead.

Dr. Robert Dean: *This is the setting for the situation. God has been protecting Jacob all through this, and what we see again and again throughout the Scriptures is that God is the one who protects His people. This is just one more example of that. God is the protector of Jacob specifically because Jacob is the recipient of the Abrahamic covenant in his generation, and God had promised Abraham that He would provide world-wide blessing through his seed, and then God had renewed that promise to Jacob specifically at Bethel. And just as Jacob handles all of this testing now through his trust in that promise, just as we do with the faith-rest drill. We recognize that God is the one who is always our protection.*<sup>465</sup>

<sup>460</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:25.

<sup>461</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:25.

<sup>462</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:25.

<sup>463</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Gen\_31:26-42).

<sup>464</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>465</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

Dean then suggests a number of Scriptures for us to memorize, which recognize God's care and protection.

Psalm 18:2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 18:30 This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.

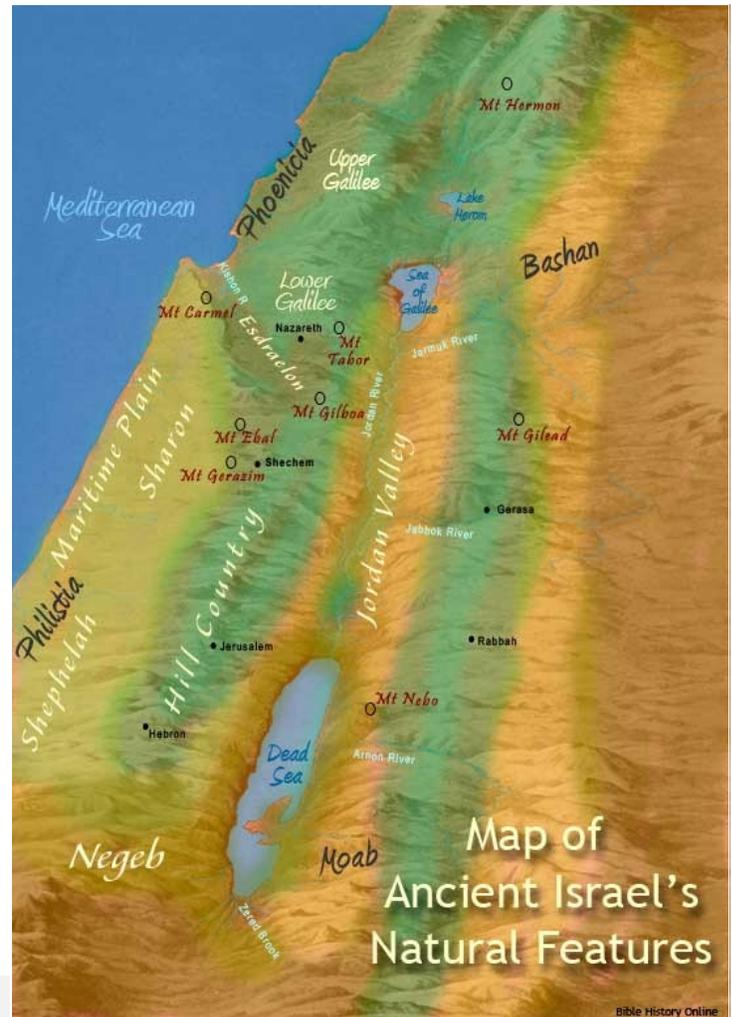
Psalm 28:7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

Psalm 33:20 Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.

Psalm 35:1–3 Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me! Take hold of shield and buckler and rise for my help! Draw the spear and javelin against my pursuers! Say to my soul, "I am your salvation!"

Psalm 91:2–6 I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

**Map of Israel's Natural Features**, from **Every Day with God**, accessed November 24, 2014. The Jordan Valley runs between the two seas, and to the east (right) of the Jordan valley is Mount Gilead, in southern Bashan. So, at this point in the narrative, Jacob is nearly home free. On the other side of the Jordan River, south of the Hill Country, is where Jacob's family is (for the most part).



## Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

College Press Bible Study: *Crossing the "River" (the Euphrates, cf. 1Kings 4:21, Ezra 4:10; Ezra 4:16), probably at the ancient ford at Thapsacus, the procession (one might well call it that) struck across the Damascus plain, and then the plateau of Bashan, thus finally entering the region known as Gilead, the area east of the Jordan that formed the frontier between Palestine and the Syrian desert. Gilead was a mountainous region, some sixty miles long and twenty miles wide, bounded on the north by Bashan and on the south by Moab and Ammon (Genesis 31:21, Deut. 3:12–17).*<sup>466</sup>

<sup>466</sup> The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Flight and Pursuit (Genesis 31:17-25).

This is the place where Laban catches up with Jacob; and he will discuss the situation with Jacob now.

Henry M. Morris: *The next morning, Laban broke camp early and overtook Jacob before his party got under way. As they rode into camp, the atmosphere must have been very tense. No one knew what Laban would attempt, but Jacob no doubt had full confidence that God would fulfill His promise, to be with him. Laban, on his part, was not only still angry and bitter, but now also frustrated, because God had barred him from carrying out his intentions.*<sup>467</sup>

This entire trip for Jacob and company is 10 days (3 days + 7 days).

Genesis 31:25 **So Laban did overtake Jacob. While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, Laban was encamped nearby in the hill country of Gilead as well—he, his relatives and his slaves.**

### Traveling from Haran to Gilead (from the College Press Bible Study)

Three days after Jacob's flight, the news of it reached Laban, who was already three days removed from Jacob and his retinue at the time the latter set out on his journey homeward. Laban set out after him—"pursued after him seven days' journey" (Genesis 31:23) "and overtook him in the mountain of Gilead." Skinner contends that "the distance of Gilead from Haran (c. 350 miles as the crow flies) is much too great to be traversed in that time (ICCG, 397). Speiser writes: "'a distance of seven days.' This is meant as a general figure indicating a distance of considerable length: cf. 2Kings 3:9. Actually, Gilead could scarcely have been reached from Haran in seven days, especially at the pace of Jacob's livestock" (ABG, 246).

Leupold suggests as follows: "Some have computed that the distance involved is about 350 miles as the crow flies. This need not necessarily be assumed. We have accurate maps that represent it to be no more than about 275 miles to the fringes of Mount Gilead. Besides, in shifting his grazing ground Jacob may have so arranged things before he took his flight in hand as to gravitate some three day's journey to the south of Haran—certainly not an impossibility. If only fifteen miles constituted an average day's journey, the total distance would be cut down to almost 200 miles. Now, certainly, Jacob will have pressed on faster than the average day's journey, perhaps at the cost of the loss of a bit of cattle. The cooler part of the day and portions of the night may have been utilized in order to spare the cattle. Then, too, the boundaries of Gilead may originally have extended nearer to Damascus. . . . K.C. (Koenig's Commentary on Genesis) shows that 'Gilead' is used for the country east of the Jordan in general" (EG, 843). We see no valid reason for the assumption that the distance specified was too great to fit the time period specified. The following quotes seem to make this clear. "'It was told Laban on the third day,' etc., i.e., the third after Jacob's departure, the distance between the two sheep—stations being a three days' journey, cf. Genesis 30:36.

The distance between Padan-aram and mount Gilead was a little over 300 miles, to perform which Jacob must at least have taken ten days, though Laban, who was less encumbered than his son-in-law, accomplished it in seven, which might easily be done by traveling from forty to forty-five miles a day, by no means a great feat for a camel" (PCG, 379). The following seems to clarify the situation beyond any reasonable doubt: "A three days' distance separated them in the first place, and another three days were required for a messenger to go and inform Laban. At the time of the messenger's arrival Jacob was six days' journey distant. Since Laban caught up with him on the next day, he covered in one day what took Jacob seven days (Rashi). Sh (Rashbam) points out that this was natural since Jacob would be traveling slowly on account of the flocks" (SC, 182). Murphy suggests the following explanation: "On the third day after the arrival of the messenger, Laban might return to the spot whence Jacob had taken his flight. In this case, Jacob would have at least five days of a start; which, added to the seven days of pursuit, would give him twelve days to travel three hundred English miles. To those accustomed to the pastoral life this was a possible achievement" (MG, 406).

Lange writes: "As Jacob, with his herds, moved slower than Laban, he lost his start of three days in the course of seven days" (CDHCG, 542). At any rate, no sooner did the information reach Laban that Jacob had fled than he set out in pursuit, and, being unencumbered, he advanced rapidly; whereas Jacob, with a young family and

<sup>467</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; pp. 484–485.

## Traveling from Haran to Gilead (from the College Press Bible Study)

numerous flocks, had to move rather slowly, so that Laban overtook the fugitives after seven days' journey, as they lay encamped on brow of mount Gilead, an extensive range of mountains that formed the eastern boundary of Canaan. The mountains constituting the northern portion of the land of Gilead, which lay between the Yarmuk on the north and the Arnon on the south, was divided at about one-third of the distance by the deep valley of the Jabbok, "which cleaves the mountains to their base." This territory, in its whole length, is often spoken of as the land of Gilead, but rarely as Mount Gilead. The portions north and south of the Jabbok are each spoken of as "half Gilead" (Joshua 12:2; Joshua 12:5; Joshua 13:31; Deut. 3:12). Evidently it was in this "mount Gilead" that Laban overtook Jacob.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Keil and Delitzsch summarize vv. 22–25: *Laban's Pursuit, Reconciliation, and Covenant with Jacob.* – As Laban was not told till the third day after the flight, though he pursued the fugitives with his brethren, i.e., his nearest relations, he did not overtake Jacob for seven days, by which time he had reached the mountains of Gilead (Genesis 31:22–24). The night before he overtook them, he was warned by God in a dream, "not to speak to Jacob from good to bad," i.e., not to say anything decisive and emphatic for the purpose of altering what had already occurred (vid., Genesis 31:29, and the note on Genesis 24:50). Hence he confined himself, when they met, "to bitter reproaches combining paternal feeling on the one hand with hypocrisy on the other;" in which he told them that he had the power to do them harm, if God had not forbidden him, and charged them with stealing his gods (the *teraphim*).<sup>468</sup>

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:22–25 When it was told to Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, Then he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. But god came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad." And laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain, and Laban with his kinsmen camped on mountain of Gilead.

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:22–25

1. News of Jacob's departure takes three days to reach Laban due to the distance he himself had put between his flocks and Jacob. 30:26
2. It seems that Laban had consolidated his flocks into one herd, which was fed by his sons.
3. There is no evidence that Jacob was still shepherding any of Laban's flocks, and he certainly did not take anything which belonged to Laban.
4. As soon as Laban receives word that Jacob has fled, he organizes his relatives, and begins pursuit of his son-in-law.
5. At the end of seven days, he had virtually caught up with Jacob in the region of Gilead.
6. The night before he actually confronts Jacob, God appears to Laban in a dream and warns him not to say anything to Jacob which would alter his present return to Canaan.
7. He is not to seek to involve Jacob in any other agreement, neither is he to threaten him with reprisals or attempt to get Jacob to return.
8. The fact that Jacob had pitched a tent is significant, since it indicates that he thought he was out of harm's way.
9. He had driven his caravan hard and had covered a distance of 250-300 miles in a period of ten days.
10. At two miles an hour, this would mean that each day consisted of 12-15 hours of travel.
11. This certainly shows that Jacob was wasting no time in distancing himself from Laban.
12. The next morning Laban finds and confronts Jacob.

<sup>468</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:22–25.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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## Laban's Complaints/Search for Laban's Household Deities

For the next few verses, we will have Laban's perception.

We go directly from Laban having caught up to the encampment of Jacob, to Laban speaking directly to Jacob. Did Laban wake up at 4 am, angry at Jacob? Was Laban unable to sleep and went over that evening? We are not told—in v. 25, the two camps are near one another and Laban has caught up to Jacob; and in v. 26, Laban is lodging his official complaint with Jacob.

Now, some commentators suggest that much of ancient world traveling takes place at night; but I think that they are taking present-day weather conditions in the Middle East and superimposing those conditions on the ancient Middle East. Personally, I think that the ancient Middle East was much more temperate with much more moisture in the air than we find today. Great countries grew up during those much more pleasant weather conditions—Egypt, Israel, Aram.

J. C. Gray: [*Laban gives a*] *Pretence of great affection (Genesis 31:27–28). Assertion of power. Acknowledgment of Divine interference. Charge of stealing the idols.*<sup>469</sup>

**And so says Laban to Jacob, “What have you done? And so you have stolen my heart? And so you have led away my daughters as captives of a sword? For why have you acted secretly to flee? And so you deceive me [and] you did not make known to me. And so I will send you away in joy and in singing; in tambourine and in lyre. And you have not permitted me to kiss to my sons and to my daughters. Now you have acted foolishly [in what you] have done.**

Genesis  
31:26–28

**Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You have deceived me [lit., *you have stolen my heart*]; and you have led away my daughters as [if] captives by the sword. Why did you act in secret to flee [from me]? You deceived me and you did not make [this thing] known to me. I would have sent you away with joy and singing; with tambourine and lyre. Furthermore, you have not permitted me to kiss my sons and my daughters [goodbye]. Now you have done foolishly.**

**Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this. Had I known, I would have sent you away with joy and singing; and with tambourine and lyre. Furthermore, you did not allow me to kiss my grandsons and granddaughters goodbye; in this, you have acted foolishly.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so says Laban to Jacob, “What have you done? And so you have stolen my heart? And so you have led away my daughters as captives of a sword? For why have you acted secretly to flee? And so you deceive me [and] you did not make

<sup>469</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22–42.

known to me. And so I will send you away in joy and in singing; in tambourine and in lyre. And you have not permitted me to kiss to my sons and to my daughters. Now you have acted foolishly [in what you] have done.

Targum (Onkelos)

And Laban said to Jacob; What hast thou done, that thou hast hidden from me, and taken away my daughters, as captives of the sword? Why didst thou conceal thy going, (or conceal yourself to go,) and didst hide it from me, and not show me, that I might then have sent thee away with mirth, and with hymns [Sam. Vers. "with chief or great things" (rabbonim)], and with tambourines, and with harps? Nor didst thou suffer me [Sam. Vers. "nor didst thou expect (or wait) that I might kiss."] to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now hast thou done foolishly.

Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan)

And Laban said to Jakob, What hast thou done? Thou hast stolen my knowledge, and led away my daughters like captives of the sword. Why didst thou hide from me that thou wouldst go, and steal my knowledge, and not tell me? For if thou hadst told me, I would have sent thee away with mirth, and with hymns, and with tambourines, and with harps. Neither hast thou suffered me to kiss the sons of my daughters, nor my daughters. Now hast thou been foolish in what thou hast done.

Revised Douay-Rheims

And he said to Jacob: Why have you done thus, to carry away, without my knowledge, my daughters, as captives taken with the sword. Why would you run away privately and not acquaint me, that I might have brought you on the way with joy, and with songs, and with timbrels, and with harps? You have not suffered me to kiss my sons and daughters: you have done foolishly: and now, indeed,...

Aramaic ESV of Peshitta

Laban said to Ya'aqub, "What have you done, that you have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly, and deceive me, and did not tell me, that I might have sent you away with mirth and with songs, with tambourine and with harp; and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now have you done foolishly.

Peshitta (Syriac)

And Laban said to Jacob, What have I done to you, that you have deceived me and carried away my daughters as though they were captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee secretly, and deceive me; and did not tell me, for I would have sent you away with joy and songs, and with harp and tambourine? And you did not permit me to give a farewell kiss to my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly in so doing.

Septuagint (Greek)

And Laban said to Jacob, What have you done? why did you run away secretly, and pillage me, and lead away my daughters as captives taken with the sword? Whereas if you had told me, I would have sent you away with mirth, and with songs, and timbrels, and harp. And I was not counted worthy to embrace my children and my daughters; now then you have wrought foolishly.

Significant differences:

No idea why the Aramaic is like the Hebrew in the first phrase; yet the Syriac has Laban saying, "*What have I done to you?*" rather than, "*What have you done?*"

In the second thing that Laban says, some translations try to give a less than literal translation—an interpretation, if you will. *Why did you leave secretly* is not found in the Greek. *Why did you deceive me and not tell me* is also missing from the Greek.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English

And Laban said to Jacob, Why did you go away secretly, taking my daughters away like prisoners of war? Why did you make a secret of your flight, not giving me word of it, so that I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with melody and music? You did not even let me give a kiss to my sons and my daughters. This was a foolish thing to do.

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Easy English              | Laban said to Jacob, 'What have you done? You have deceived me. And you have taken my daughters as if you caught them in a war. Why did you keep it a secret that you were leaving? You deceived me. Why did you not tell me that you were leaving? I would have sent you away with joy and singing to music. You did not even let me kiss my grandchildren goodbye. Or let me kiss my daughters goodbye. What you have done is not right. |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006 | Laban said to Jacob, "Why did you trick me? Why did you take my daughters like they were women you captured during war? Why did you run away without telling me? If you had told me, I would have given you a party. There would have been singing and dancing with music. You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye. You were very foolish to do this!  |
| <i>The Message</i>        | "What do you mean," said Laban, "by keeping me in the dark and sneaking off, hauling my daughters off like prisoners of war? Why did you run off like a thief in the night? Why didn't you tell me? Why, I would have sent you off with a great celebration—music, timbrels, flutes! But you wouldn't permit me so much as a kiss for my daughters and grandchildren. It was a stupid thing for you to do.                                 |
| NIRV                      | Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have tricked me. You have taken my daughters away like prisoners of war. Why did you run away in secret and trick me? Why didn't you tell me? Then I could have sent you away happily. We could have sung to the music of tambourines and harps. You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye. You have done a foolish thing.                                       |

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Contemporary English V. | Jacob had set up camp in the hill country of Gilead, when Laban and his relatives came and set up camp in another part of the hill country. Laban went to Jacob and said: Look what you've done! You've tricked me and run off with my daughters like a kidnapper. Why did you sneak away without telling me? I would have given you a going-away party with singing and with music on tambourines and harps. You didn't even give me a chance to kiss my own grandchildren and daughters good-by. That was really foolish. V. 25 is included for context. |
| The Living Bible        | "What do you mean by sneaking off like this?" Laban demanded. "Are my daughters prisoners, captured in a battle, that you have rushed them away like this? Why didn't you give me a chance to have a farewell party, with singing and orchestra and harp? Why didn't you let me kiss my grandchildren and tell them good-bye? This is a strange way to act.  |
| New Berkeley Version    | Laban said to Jacob, "What do you mean to take advantage of me and to carry off my daughters as if they were captured by the sword? Why did you flee secretly and steal away from me without telling me? I would have seen you off with mirth and song, with tambourine and harp [Jacob knew well enough that Laban would not have allowed him to leave, if he had any way to prevent it; so did Laban know it.]. Why did you not give me a chance to kiss my sons and my daughters goodbye?   |
| New Century Version     | Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You cheated me and took my daughters as if you had captured them in a war. Why did you run away secretly and trick me? Why didn't you tell me? Then I could have sent you away with joy and singing and with the music of tambourines and harps. You did not even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters good-bye. You were very foolish to do this!  |
| New Living Translation  | "What do you mean by deceiving me like this?" Laban demanded. "How dare you drag my daughters away like prisoners of war? Why did you slip away secretly? Why did you deceive me? And why didn't you say you wanted to leave? I would have given you a farewell feast, with singing and music, accompanied by tambourines and harps. Why didn't you let me kiss my daughters and grandchildren and tell them good-bye? You have acted very foolishly!  |

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | So when Laban caught up with Jacob (Jacob had pitched his tent on the mountain, and Laban had stationed his brothers all around the mountain), he asked Jacob: 'What have you done... why did you run away secretly, steal from me, and use swords to take my daughters as captives? If you had just told me first, I would have happily sent you away with singing, tambourines, and harps! Didn't you consider me worthy to hug my children and my daughters before you did such a foolish thing? V. 25 is included for context.   |
| International Standard V    | Then Laban asked Jacob, "What did you do? You deceived me [Lit. <i>You stole my heart</i> ], carried off my daughters like you would war captives [Lit. <i>captives of the sword</i> ], ran away from me secretly [Lit. <i>me, hiding yourself</i> ], and stole from me by not keeping me informed. Otherwise, I could have sent you off with a party and singing, accompanied by a band playing tambourines and harps. As it is, you didn't even allow me to kiss my grandchildren [Lit. <i>sons</i> ] and daughters goodbye! You've acted foolishly.   |
| Revised Knox Bible          | What mean you, he asked Jacob, by thus tricking me, and carrying off my daughters as if they were prisoners of war? Why would you run away when my back was turned, instead of warning me of it, so that I could have sped you on your way with good cheer, with singing, and music of timbrel and harp? But no, you would not even let me part from my own grandsons and daughters with a kiss. This was a rash act of yours, and see where it has brought you.   |
| Translation for Translators | Then Laban went to Jacob and said to him, "Why have you done this? You have deceived me by carrying away my daughters as though you had captured them in a war [MTY]! Why did you run away and deceive me? Why did you not tell me that you were going to leave, so that we could have rejoiced and sung while people played music on tambourines and harps before I said 'goodbye' to you? You did not even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye before they left!/Why did you not allow me to kiss my grandchildren and daughters goodbye before they left? [RHQ] What you have done was foolish! |

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible    | Laban was to say to Jacob: Is you to have prepared this, even was you to steal away from the midst of me, and was to lead away my daughters, as being led captive of a sword? - You is to hasten away, and is to have drawn away, even was you to steal away. You is to have told me, and I was to send you off with the gladness of song, tambourine and harp - is you to have let me alone to kiss my sons and my daughters? - You is to have been foolish to prepare this. |
| Conservapedia         | Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? Why have you run off without telling me, and why are you leading away my daughters as though they were prisoners of war? Why did you run away by stealth, and steal away from me, and not tell me? I might have sent you on your way with rejoicing, with songs, with tambourine, and with the harp. You didn't even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-bye--what a silly thing to do!"   |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible   | Laban then said to Jacob ; "What have you done ? You have carried away my daughters like captives, desolate ? Why did you steal away to fly and deceive me, and not inform me, when I would have sent you away with pleasure, and with the sound of drums and harps ? You have not even let me kiss my children, and your children. You have acted like a fool !  |
| God's Truth (Tyndale) | Then said Laban to Jacob: why have you this done to steal away my heart, and carry away my daughters as though they had been taken captive with sword? Wherefore went you away secretly unknown to me, and did not tell me, that I might have brought you on the way with mirth, singing, timbrels and harps, and have not  |

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
|                         | allowed me to kiss my children and my daughters? You was a fool to do it, for I am able to do you evil.  |
| H. C. Leupold           | Then Laban said to Jacob: Why didst thou undertake to deceive me and drive off my daughters as though they had been captured by the sword? Why didst thou flee secretly and deceive me and not inform me? I should have sent thee on thy way with joyful festivities and songs, with timbrel and harp. But thou didst not suffer me to kiss my grandchildren and my daughters, Now that was foolishly done.                                |
| Lexham English Bible    | Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done that you {tricked me} and have carried off my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you hide [your intention] to flee and {trick me}, and did not tell me so that I would have sent you away with joy and song and tambourine and lyre? And [why] did you not give me opportunity to kiss my grandsons and my daughters [goodbye]? Now you have behaved foolishly [by] doing [this]. |
| Tree of Life Version    | Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you've stolen my heart and have driven my daughters away like captives of the sword? Why did you secretly flee away, and steal from me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and with songs, with tambourines and with lyres? And you didn't even let me kiss my sons and daughters! V. 28b will be place with the next passage.                                  |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you deceived me and carried away my daughters like prisoners of war? Why did you flee secretly and trick me and did not tell me? I would have sent you away with celebration and with songs, with tambourine and with harps. You did not allow me to kiss my grandsons and my daughters good bye. Now you have done foolishly.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Laban said to Jacob, what have you done sneaking away secretly from me, and carrying my daughters away like captives taken with the sword? Why did you run away secretly and steal away from me, not telling me so that I might have sent you away with gladness and singing, with tambourine, and with lyre? I didn't even have a chance to kiss my grandsons and daughters? You have acted foolishly in doing this.                      |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, you have broken my trust, and you have carried away my daughters as if kidnapped at the point of a sword. Why did you hide your flight, and stolen from me; and if you had told me, I would have sent you off gladly, with songs with drum and harp. And you didn't deign to let me kiss my sons and my daughters; and now, have you learned from this?                                      |

### **Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Christian Community (1988) | Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, tricking me and carrying my daughters off like prisoners of war? Why did you run away secretly and cheat me? Why didn't you tell me? I could have sent you off with joy and singing and the music of tambourine and harp. V. 28 will be placed with the next passage.   |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Laban said to Jacob, What have you done, and you have stolen from my heart, and driven away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and stole away from me, and did not cause it to stand out boldly to me? I would have sent you away with gladness, and with singing, with tambourines, and with harp. And have you not thrust me off from kissing my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly in doing this.   |
| New American Bible (2002)  | "What do you mean," Laban demanded of Jacob, "by hoodwinking me and carrying off my daughters like war captives [War captives: literally "women captured by the sword"; the women of a conquered people were treated as part of the victor's booty; cf ⇒ 1 Sam 30:2; ⇒ 2 Kings 5:2.]? Why did you dupe me by stealing away secretly? You should have told me, and I would have sent you off with merry singing to the sound of tambourines and harps. You did not even allow me a parting kiss to my daughters and grandchildren! What you have now done is a senseless thing. |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| New American Bible (2011) | Laban said to Jacob, “How could you hoodwink me and carry off my daughters like prisoners of war [ <b>Prisoners of war:</b> lit., “women captured by the sword”; the women of a conquered people were treated as part of the victor’s spoil; cf. 1 Sm 30:2; 2 Kgs 5:2.]? Why did you dupe me by stealing away secretly? You did not tell me! I would have sent you off with joyful singing to the sound of tambourines and harps. You did not even allow me a parting kiss to my daughters and grandchildren! Now what you have done makes no sense. |
| New English Bible         | Laban said to Jacob, 'What have you done? You have deceived me and carried off my daughters as though they were captives taken in war. Why did you slip away secretly without telling me? I would have set you on your way with songs and the music of tambourines and harps. You did not even let me kiss my daughters and their children. In this you were at fault.   |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | Laban said to Jacob, 'What do you mean by outwitting me and then carrying off my daughters like prisoners of war? Why did you flee in secret, stealing away without letting me know, so that I could send you on your way rejoicing, with songs and the music of tambourines and harps? You did not even let me kiss my sons and daughters. You have behaved like a fool.  |
| Revised English Bible     | Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You have deceived me and carried off my daughters as though they were captives taken in war. Why did you slip away secretly without telling me? I would have set you on your way with songs and the music of tambourines and harps. You did not even let me kiss my daughters and their children. In this you behaved foolishly.   |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible    | Lavan said to Ya'akov, “What do you mean by deceiving me and carrying off my daughters as if they were captives taken in war? Why did you flee in secret and deceive me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and lyres. You didn't even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-bye! What a stupid thing to do!   |
| The Complete Tanach      | And Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you concealed from me, and led away my daughters like prisoners of war?<br><div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"><b>like prisoners of war:</b> lit., like captives of a sword. Every army that goes to war is called <span style="font-family: monospace;">כֶּבֶד</span>, sword.</div> Why have you fled secretly, and concealed from me, and not told me? I would have sent you away with joy and with songs, and with drum and with harp.<br><div style="background-color: #fff9c4; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"><b>and concealed from me:</b> [lit., you stole me, meaning] you concealed from me.</div> And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and daughters. Now, you have acted foolishly. |
| exeGesés companion Bible | And Laban says to Yaaqov,<br>What work you,<br>that you steal from my heart and drive my daughters<br>as captured with the sword?<br>Why hide you to flee and steal from me<br>- and not tell me<br>- and I send you with cheerfulness and with songs,<br>with tambourine and with harp?<br>And allow me not<br>to kiss my sons and my daughters?<br>You now folly in so working.   |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)        | And Laban said to Jacob, “What did you mean by keeping me in the dark and carrying off my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee in secrecy   |

and mislead me and not tell me? I would have sent you off with festive music, with timbrel and lyre. You did not even let me kiss my sons and daughters good-by! It was a foolish thing for you to do.

Kaplan Translation

Laban said to Jacob, 'How could you do this? You went behind my back and led my daughters away like prisoners of war! Why did you have to leave so secretly? You went behind my back and told me nothing! Why, I would have sent you off with celebration and song, with drum and lyre! You didn't even let me kiss my grandsons and daughters goodbye.

'What you did was very foolish.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

And Lavan said to Ya'akov, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my banot, like shevuyot (captives) taken with the cherev?

Why didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with simchah, and with shirim (songs), with tof (timbrel, tambourine) and with kinnor (harp)?

And hast not allowed me to kiss my banim (grandchildren) and my banot? Thou hast now done foolishly in so doing..

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible*

Then Laban said to Jacob, "What do you mean by deceiving me and leaving without my knowledge, and carrying off my daughters as if [they were] captives of the sword? Why did you run away secretly and deceive me and not tell me, so that [otherwise] I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with [music on the] tambourine and lyre? And why did you not allow me to kiss my grandchildren and my daughters [goodbye]? Now you have done a foolish thing [in behaving like this].

The Expanded Bible

Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You ·cheated me [deceived me; L stole my heart] and ·took [<sup>L</sup>carried away] my daughters as if you had captured them ·in a war [<sup>L</sup>with a sword]. Why did you ·run away secretly [sneak off] and ·trick [deceive; <sup>L</sup>steal from] me? Why didn't you tell me? Then I could have sent you away with joy and singing and with the music of tambourines and ·harps [lyres]. You did not even let me kiss my ·grandchildren [<sup>L</sup>sons] and my daughters good-bye. You were very foolish to do this!

Kretzmann's Commentary

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? Laban believed that he would make the greatest impression upon Jacob by feigning outraged fatherly love and acted accordingly, accusing him of leading his daughters off like captives of war, against their will. 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? In his passionate reproach Laban heaps the expressions which are intended to make Jacob appear as a low sneak, whereas he intimates that his own generosity would not have failed to provide an appropriate farewell festival, with joy and with songs, with drum, or tabret, and with zither. And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. The entire behavior of Jacob is here labeled downright folly by Laban.

NET Bible®

"What have you done?" Laban demanded of Jacob. "You've deceived me [*Heb* "and you have stolen my heart." This expression apparently means "to deceive" (see v. 20).] and carried away my daughters as if they were captives of war [*Heb* "and you have led away my daughters like captives of a sword."!] Why did you run away secretly [*Heb* "Why did you hide in order to flee?"] and deceive me [*Heb* "and steal me."]? Why didn't you tell me so I could send you off with a celebration complete with singing, tambourines, and harps? [*Heb* "And [why did] you not tell me so I could send you off with joy and with songs, with a tambourine and with a harp?"] You

didn't even allow me to kiss my daughters and my grandchildren [*Heb* "my sons and my daughters." Here "sons" refers to "grandsons," and has been translated "grandchildren" since at least one granddaughter, Dinah, was involved. The order has been reversed in the translation for stylistic reasons] good-bye. You have acted foolishly!

The Pulpit Commentary

And Laban (assuming a tone of injured innocence) said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me,—literally, and (meaning, in that) thou hast stolen my heart (vide supra, Genesis 31:20; and cf. Genesis 31:27)—and carried away (vide Genesis 31:18) my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? Literally, as captives of the sword, i.e. *invitis parentibus* (Rosenmóller); language which, if not hypocritical on Laban's part, was certainly hyperbolic, since he had already evinced the strength of his parental affection by selling his daughters to Jacob; and besides, so far as it concerned either Jacob or his wives, it was quite untrue, Rachel and Leah having voluntarily accompanied their husband in his flight. Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly,—literally, wherefore didst thou hide thyself to flee away; נָחַץ (*niph.*), with an *inf.* following, corresponding to the similar construction in Greek of *λανθάνειν* with a part, and being correctly rendered in English by an adverb—and steal away from me (literally, and steal me, ut supra); and didst not tell me, that I might (literally, and I would) have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs,—in Oriental countries those about to make a long journey are still sent away *cantionibus et musicorum instrumentorum concentu* (Rosenmóller)—with tabret,—the toph was a drum or timbrel, consisting of a wooden circle covered with membrane, and furnished with brass bells (like the modern tambourine), which Oriental women beat when dancing (cf. Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; Jer. 31:4)—and with harp! For a description of the kinnor see Genesis 4:21. And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons (i.e. the children of Leah and Rachel) and my daughters! It is perhaps judging Laban too severely to pronounce this complete hypocrisy and cant (Alford, Bush, Candlish, Gerlach), but equally wide of the truth is it to see in Laban's conduct nothing but generosity of feeling (Kalisch); probably there was a mixture of both paternal affection and crafty dissimulation (Delitzsch). Thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. The charge of folly in Old Testament Scriptures commonly carries with it an imputation of wrong-doing (cf. 1Samuel 13:13; 2Samuel 14:10).

The Voice

Laban (to Jacob): What have you done, deceiving me and carrying off my daughters as if they were your prisoners of war? Why did you run out on me and try to trick me? Why didn't you just tell me *you were going*? I would have sent you off with celebration and songs, with the joyful sounds of the tambourine and lyre. And why didn't you even allow me to kiss my daughters and grandchildren good-bye? What you have done is foolish.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> said to Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup>, what did you do and you stole my heart and you drove my daughters like captured ones of the sword, why did you withdraw to flee away and you stole me and you did not tell me and I sent you in joy and in songs, in tambourine and in harp, and you did not let me alone to kiss my sons and my daughters, now you did foolishly,...

Context Group Version

And Laban said to Jacob, What have you done, that you have stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly, and steal away from me, and did not tell me, that I might have sent you away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp; and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done shamelessly.

Darby Translation

And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast deceived me, and hast carried away my daughters as captives of war? Why didst thou flee away

covertly, and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have conducted thee with mirth and with songs, with tambour and with harp; and hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now thou hast acted foolishly.

**Modern English Version** Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done that you have stolen away without my knowing and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly and sneak away from me and not tell me? I would have sent you away with joy and with songs, with the tambourine and harp. And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? You have acted foolishly in so doing.

**NASB** Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre; and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

**Third Millennium Bible** 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? Why 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 taboret and with harp, and hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Thou hast now done foolishly in so doing.

**Young's Updated LT** And Laban says to Jacob, "What have you done that you will deceive my heart, and lead away my daughters as captives of the sword? Why have you hidden yourself to flee, and deceived me, and have not declared to me, and I send you away with joy and with songs, with tabret and with harp. And you have not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? —now you have acted foolishly in doing so.

**The gist of this passage:** Laban complains to Jacob about what Jacob did, stealing away his grandchildren without saying goodbye.

| Genesis 31:26a   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                      | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âmar (אמר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]                     | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| Lâbân (לבן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]        | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                 | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]                 | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition                       | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| Ya'âqôb (יעקב) [pronounced <i>yah-âuh-KOH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| mâh (מה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]                            | <i>what, how, why</i>   | interrogative; exclamatory particle                      | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |

## Genesis 31:26a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                         | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ] | <i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |

**Translation:** Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Laban is beside himself and it is not clear that he took to heart what God told him.

It is quite clear that Laban is very upset with Jacob; and both of these men have reason to be upset with one another. Did God’s coming to Laban cause Laban to dial it back somewhat? Could their discussion have escalated beyond this point? Or is Laban blowing off steam, regardless of what God has told him?

Laban is going to spend a lot of time airing out his complaints. In my opinion, Laban really does not have a game plan here, apart from recovering his idols and chewing out Jacob. Does he want Jacob to return? Does he want to take his daughters back? I don’t know that Laban has thought seriously about either of these things. (1) Laban and his sons were mad at Jacob for prospering so much and thereby, taking away Laban’s prosperity. (2) Laban would not want his daughters back because they are now a liability to him. They would never get married again and Laban would have to support his daughters and their children. I do not think that is what he wants out of this confrontation.

Both men will take this opportunity to air out their grievances; but in the end, (1) Jacob is not going to turn around and return to Laban (nor is this something that Laban wants); and (2) Laban is not going to gather up his daughters and go back to Haran.

## Genesis 31:26b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                     | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| gânab (גָּנַב) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ] | <i>to steal, to take away by theft; to deceive</i>                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |
| ʿêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                     | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                              | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object             | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| lêb (לֵב) [pronounced <i>lay<sup>b</sup>V</i> ]          | <i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking; midst</i>                                | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #3820<br>BDB #524 |

**Translation:** You have deceived me [lit., you have stolen my heart];... Jacob ran off with Laban’s daughters. In this way, he has stolen Laban’s heart. However, there appears to be a deceptive quality here. Jacob apparently planned this and ran off, apparently hoping never to see Laban again. Laban was never told by Jacob that he was doing going to do this.

Genesis 31:26 Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me,...

## “You have stolen my heart” (commentators/discussion)

Dr. Peter Pett: *“Stolen my heart.” Probably having in mind the tribal possessions Jacob has taken with him, but possibly including his daughters and grandsons.*<sup>470</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 31:26, the word “deceiving” is the same expression used in Genesis 31:20, which literally means “to steal the heart” since it is composed of the verb ganav (גָּנַב) (gaw-nav), “to steal,” and the noun lev (לֵב), “heart,” which refers to the mentality of the soul. Jacob stole the heart of Laban in the sense that he left secretly and unobserved by Laban so that Laban had no knowledge of and was totally unaware that Jacob had left.*

Wenstrom concludes with: *Jacob had not done Laban any wrong by leaving Laban secretly but he had done God wrong by leaving secretly out of fear for Laban since this fear was due to a lack of faith in God’s ability to protect him from Laban.*<sup>471</sup>

Wenstrom takes Jacob’s reasons at face value. Most of the time I would agree; but remember that this is Jacob, so his explanation delivered to Laban may not be his real concern. I think that Jacob was worried that Laban would take back some of his sheep and goats; I do not think that Laban would have taken back his daughters or grandchildren.

Now, if this is representative of Jacob’s true fear, the Wenstrom concludes: *Fear is a result of unbelief and unbelief is failure to trust that God will protect and provide for us. The fact that Jacob left secretly out of fear of Laban taking his loved ones from him by force is quite interesting because the Lord had just finished commanding Jacob to return to Canaan and reassured him that He would be with him (See Genesis 31:3). So we see quite clearly that Jacob is not resting in the promises of the Lord and is therefore, not operating in faith but rather unbelief.*<sup>472</sup>

Wenstrom speaks of Biblical faith, which would apply, whether the excuses given by Jacob are true or not: *Biblical faith is trusting in the promises of God regardless of the circumstances or consequences and resting in them. True Biblical faith is confident obedience to God’s Word in spite of circumstances and consequences. The principle of faith operates quite simply: (1) God speaks and we hear His Word. (2) We trust His Word and act on it no matter what the circumstances are or what the consequences may be.*<sup>473</sup>

Philip 4:5–6 **Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

Psalms 140:1–3 **Deliver me, O LORD, from evil men; preserve me from violent men, who plan evil things in their heart and stir up wars continually. They make their tongue sharp as a serpent’s, and under their lips is the venom of asps. Selah.**

1Peter 5:6–7 **Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (ESV)**

Wenstrom continues: *Trusting in God to keep His promises will protect the believer’s soul from stress, fear, worry and anxiety. Jacob’s fear of Laban was a total lack of faith or in other words, a total lack of trust and confidence in God’s ability to protect him.*<sup>474</sup>

Psalms 56:11 **In God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? (ESV)**

<sup>470</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:26–28.

<sup>471</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 497); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>472</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 497–498); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>473</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 498); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>474</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 498); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

## Genesis 31:26c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                    | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâhag (גָּהַג) [pronounced naw-HAHG]                    | <i>to drive away, to lead on, to guide</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect            | Strong's #5090<br>BDB #624 |
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]                            | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object          | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| bath (תַּב) [pronounced bahth]                          | <i>daughter; village</i>  | feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |
| kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> ] | <i>like, as, according to; about, approximately; combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning as, often, when, as soon as</i> | preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #453  |
| shâbâh (שָׁבַח) [pronounced shaw <sup>b</sup> -VAW]     | <i>captives, those taken captive</i>  | feminine plural, Qal passive participle; construct form              | Strong's #7617<br>BDB #985 |
| chereb (כֶּרֶב) [pronounced khe-RE <sup>b</sup> V]      | <i>sword, knife, dagger; any sharp tool</i>   | feminine singular noun; pausal form                                  | Strong's #2719<br>BDB #352 |

**Translation:** ...and you have led away my daughters as [if] captives by the sword. Laban clearly over-exaggerates the situation here. "You have led my daughters away as if they are captives of the sword." Obviously, Jacob talked his wives into doing this; but he did not take them as captives. Was Laban unaware of how he treated his daughters? Did he not get their perception of him?

Genesis 31:26 Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives.

### "You have taken away my daughters as if captives by the sword" (commentators)

Henry M. Morris: *Laban... immediately blurted out, when he met Jacob, a hypocritical speech of feigned concern over Jacob's secret snatching-away of his daughters and grandchildren, without giving Laban an opportunity to even kiss them good-bye.*<sup>475</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Laban plays the part of the outraged parent and grandparent.*<sup>476</sup>

<sup>475</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 485.

<sup>476</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## “You have taken away my daughters as if captives by the sword” (commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Laban’s daughters were taken away] like prisoners of war (2Kings 6:22) carried away unwillingly and by force.*<sup>477</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Laban’s reproach in Genesis 31:26–30 is expressed in terms of forbearance and injured innocence: why had Jacob fled secretly? why not suffer himself to be dismissed with dignity? For the sake of the God of Isaac Laban will say no more, but he must protest against the theft of his household gods.*<sup>478</sup>

Matthew Poole: *[You have taken my daughters] By force and violence. A false accusation; for they freely consented, Genesis 31:14–16.*<sup>479</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *“Carried away my daughters as captives of the sword.” Nothing makes clearer that he sees what Jacob has done as similar to an act of war. It was, of course, untrue, for they had gone willingly, but Laban cannot bring himself to believe that. Like many powerful men he did not perceive the harm he himself had done. He is trying to demonstrate that he is in the right.*<sup>480</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *However, Laban is so self-deceived and deluded that he does not recognize that Rachel and Leah are Jacob’s wives even though Jacob has fully satisfied the terms of their agreement of the marriage contract. Furthermore, both Rachel and Leah left of their own accord with Jacob and even complained bitterly of their father’s treatment of them as well as Jacob and their children.*

Wenstrom continues: *In Genesis 31:14-16, we see that both Rachel and Leah were united and in agreement in their response to Jacob informing them that the Lord wanted him to leave Laban and return home to Canaan. Thus the agreement of Jacob’s wives to leave with him refutes Laban’s accusation that Jacob carried Rachel and Leah off like prisoners of war.*<sup>481</sup>

Bruce K. Waltke writes: *Legally, the consummating sum given in marriage was to be transferred at least in part to the daughters. Some of Jacob’s wages during the fourteen years he worked for them should also have belonged to them. Further, by cheating Jacob during the last six years, Laban has continued to cheat them.*<sup>482</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Rather than treating the bride-price like a dowry, to provide a financial base for his daughters and grandchildren’s future well-being and security, as should have been done, Laban had used it up for himself and gave them nothing. Therefore, in Genesis 31:26, Laban’s first accusation is a sin against Jacob since it is a wild exaggeration, totally without basis and without fact and is in fact slander and defamation of Jacob’s character.*<sup>483</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *Laban wrongfully accuses Jacob of stealing away in the middle of the night, stealing all of his possessions, and kidnapping his daughters, all of which is completely fraudulent. Laban is not someone who is rational or honest, he is only in it to keep what he has.*<sup>484</sup>

We see this with rival politicians. No matter what A says or does, B interprets it in the worst possible way. I write this in 2017, and no matter what President Trump says or does, nearly all of it is interpreted by the Democratic party and the mainstream media as being crazy, out of control, and/or irrational. This is how Laban looks at what Jacob has done

<sup>477</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:26.

<sup>478</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:26.

<sup>479</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:26.

<sup>480</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:26–28.

<sup>481</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 499); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>482</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 500); accessed October 18, 2017. Wenstrom cites Genesis, A Commentary, page 426, Zondervan.

<sup>483</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 500); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>484</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](https://www.deanbibleministries.org/); accessed October 20, 2017.

As we have already studied, both Leah and Rachel saw themselves as simply sold off in order to increase their father's wealth. They believe that he treated them as foreigners, meaning, *foreign slaves* (you cannot simply sell some foreigner, unless they are your slave).

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Genesis 31:26–28 Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this. Had I known, I would have sent you away with joy and singing; and with tambourine and lyre. Furthermore, you did not allow me to kiss my grandsons and granddaughters goodbye; in this, you have acted foolishly.

### Laban's hypocrisy (by William Wenstrom)

Laban's first accusation against Jacob is hypocrisy as well since Laban feigns concerns for his daughters when in reality he could have cared less about them as demonstrated in his treatment of them over the past twenty years!

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines hypocrisy, “a pretense of having a virtuous character, moral or religious beliefs or principles, etc., that one does not possess; a pretense of having some desirable or publicly approved attitude.”

Laban's first accusation was hypocrisy because it was a pretense of having concern for his daughters' safety, which he did not possess as demonstrated by his treatment of his daughters and that his real motive for tracking down Jacob was to harm him and reclaim his household idols according to Genesis 31:30. He is playing the part of an outraged parent and grandparent when in fact he is an indifferent and cruel parent and grandparent who cares for no one but himself and making money!

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 500); accessed October 18, 2017.

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Dr. Robert Dean: *God had not intervened up to this point, He had operated in a covert manner in blessing Jacob and in transferring the ownership of most of the sheep and goats from Laban to Jacob, but not in an overt manner. The only time in this whole episode from chapter 28 on that we see God appear to anybody. Once He appeared to Jacob on his way out of the land, at Bethel where He renews the Abrahamic covenant with Jacob, and promises to take care of him while he is out of the land and to bring him back to the land, and then He appeared to Jacob 20 years later in chapter 31:13 to remind him of that promise and say it was time to go home. Now Laban clearly violates God's warning because he accuses Jacob of having stolen everything, but he is restrained because God has appeared to him.*<sup>485</sup>

**Genesis 31:26** And Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done, that you have deceived my heart and carried away my daughters as captives taken with the sword?”

Laban is complaining that Jacob was acting as if he were a kidnapper, who swooped in and stole Laban's daughters from him. The idea is, Jacob took Laban's daughters and grandchildren away, and without a word to Laban. Laban is not conferred with; there has been no discussion. Jacob obviously left in such a way as to get a head start from Laban.

Despite Laban's treatment of Jacob, and his exaggerated comparison, Laban has a point here.

<sup>485</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

For much of his life, Jacob acts only on his own behalf, and he never takes into consideration the thoughts and feelings of others. However, I think that things have changes, now that he is married with children.

Jacob married Laban's daughters; he fathered Laban's grandchildren. He has worked for Laban for 20 years; and Jacob has shown a fine profit after all of these years. Laban is not a great man—he is selfish, self-centered, and manipulative (very much like Jacob is). However, as the father of Jacob's wives, he deserves some respect, which Jacob has not afforded him.

Jacob has spent 20 years working for his Uncle Laban. Jacob married two of Laban's daughters, but God has told Jacob that it is time to leave Paddan-aram and return to Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Jacob left surreptitiously, with the approval of his wives. Rachel, the younger wife, snuck into her father's tent and stole some religious figurines from him.

3 days passed before Laban was told that Jacob had gone. However, as soon as Laban heard, he gathered up some of his men and pursued Jacob, who would be moving much slower with his possessions, wives and children.

**Genesis 31:25–26** Then Laban overtook Jacob. And Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount. And Laban with his brothers pitched in Mount Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done, that you have deceived my heart and carried away my daughters as captives taken with the sword?”

Laban accuses Jacob of taking his daughters away, as if he had taken them captive; as if he had kidnaped them.

### Genesis 31:27a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i> | directional/relational preposition                        | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]  | <i>what, how, why</i>   | interrogative;<br>exclamatory particle                    | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |
| Lâmed + mâh together literally mean <i>for why</i> . They can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence. BDB also offers the rendering <i>lest</i> . Gesenius, perhaps for this passage alone (1Chronicles 15:13), offers the rendering <i>on account of [that] which, because that</i> . |   |   |                            |
| châbâ' (חָבֵא) [pronounced <i>khaw<sup>b</sup>-VAW</i> ]  | <i>to hide oneself; to lie hiding; [fleeing away] secretly</i>                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal perfect | Strong's #2244<br>BDB #285 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>le</i> ]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i> | directional/relational preposition                        | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bârach (בָּרַח) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHKH</i> ]  | <i>to go [pass] through, to flee [away]; to hasten, to come quickly; to reach across</i>        | Qal infinitive construct                                  | Strong's #1272<br>BDB #137 |

The NET Bible: *The verb “hide” and the infinitive “to flee” form a hendiadys, the infinitive becoming the main verb and the other the adverb: “flee secretly.”*<sup>486</sup>

<sup>486</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 17, 2016.

**Translation:** *Why did you act in secret to flee [from me]?* Laban asks Jacob, “Why did you secretly flee from me?” Neither man appears to be terribly self-aware. One would think, with the least amount of introspection, Laban could have come up with the answer to this himself.

Here Laban asks some reasonable questions. Despite the fact that he is a liar and a cheat, he, like most men, has deep within him, some love for his own daughters and grandchildren. When he is faced with not seeing them again, he needs a bit of closure to that relationship. In this way, Jacob did *steal away his heart*, as his daughters, despite the way he used them for material gain, still had his heart. It would have been proper to come to him and for him to prepare a farewell feast.

Apparently, there is a Jewish tradition that Jacob asked Laban first if he could leave and was refused (this is according to Josephus<sup>487</sup>). However, there is nothing in Scripture which confirms such a notion.

| Genesis 31:27b                                     |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                               | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                    | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| gâbab (בָּבַב) [pronounced gaw-NAH <sup>BV</sup> ] | <i>to steal, to take away by theft; to deceive</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                           | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced ayth]                       | <i>me; untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally to me, toward me</i>  | sign of the direct object affixed to a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix      | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]                 | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation                     | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| nâgad (נָגַד) [pronounced naw-GAHD]                | <i>to make conspicuous, to make known, to expound, to explain, to declare, to inform, to confess, to make it pitifully obvious that</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect                          | Strong's #5046<br>BDB #616 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced le'                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** *You deceived me and you did not make [this thing] known to me.* Laban was deceived and Jacob had left without a word. He did not leave a note; he did not tell someone to inform Laban of what he had done. He just slipped away, purposefully without Laban knowing.

Genesis 31:26–27 Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this.”

<sup>487</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

**“You reap what you sow” (Wenstrom)**

Laban opens his questioning of Jacob by saying “what have you done?” which introduces an accusation of wrongdoing. These are the same accusatory words Jacob spoke to Laban when Laban deceived him on his wedding night and sent Leah into his tent and not Rachel. Laban has reaped what he has sowed.

Gal. 6:7 **Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.** (ESV)

Laban repeatedly defrauded Jacob from the very beginning of their relationship but now has the audacity to complain that he has been misled by Jacob.

“Deceiving” is the same expression used in Genesis 31:20, which literally means “to steal the heart” since it is composed of the verb ganav (גָּנַב) (gaw-nav), “to steal,” and the noun lev (לֵב), “heart,” which refers to the mentality of the soul.

Jacob stole the heart of Laban in the sense that he left secretly and unobserved by Laban so that Laban had no knowledge of and was totally unaware that Jacob had left.

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 499); accessed October 18, 2017.

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**Genesis 31:27c**

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
|--|--|---|-----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                                      | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced shaw-LAKH]                              | <i>to send, to send off, to send away, to dismiss, to give over, to cast out, to let go, to set free, to shoot forth [branches], to shoot [an arrow]</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Piel imperfect with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #7971<br>BDB #1018 |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                     | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>  | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |
| sim <sup>e</sup> châh (שִׂמְחָה) [pronounced sim <sup>e</sup> -KHAW] | <i>joy, gladness, mirth, great joy, rejoicing</i>  | feminine singular noun  | Strong's #8057<br>BDB #970  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]      | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                     | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>  | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |
| shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced sheer]                                     | <i>song, singing; music</i>  | masculine plural noun   | Strong's #7892<br>BDB #1010 |

**Translation:** I would have sent you away with joy and singing;... At this point, Laban can say nearly anything. “Look, we would have celebrated when you told me you were about to leave. This would have been a great party for all of us.” Laban claims that there would have been great joy in saying goodbye to Jacob and his daughters,

as they would be off to make their own lives. This probably would not have happened (we really don't know; all we have are Laban's words here).

| Genesis 31:27d   |   |                            |                             |
|--|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology           | BDB and Strong's #          |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]               | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>                   | a preposition of proximity | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |
| tôph (תוף) [pronounced tohf]                                   | <i>timbrel, tambourine; it is sort of a drum or tambourine and it is generally held in the hands of dancing women</i> | masculine singular noun    | Strong's #8596<br>BDB #1074 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction     | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]               | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>                   | a preposition of proximity | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |
| kinnôwr (כנור) [pronounced kin-NOHR]                           | <i>hand-harp, lyre</i>  | masculine singular noun    | Strong's #3658<br>BDB #490  |

**Translation:** ...with tambourine and lyre. Apparently, Laban could have either dug up a band to play at this affair, or he already knew people who were talented in this way. He promises that there would have been music and celebration.

Genesis 31:26–27 Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this. Had I known, I would have sent you away with joy and singing; and with tambourine and lyre.

### Laban suggests that Jacob's leaving could have been a celebration (commentators)

Benson: *Not as Rebekah was sent away out of the same family above one hundred and twenty years before, with prayers and blessings, but with sport and merriment; which was a sign that religion was much decayed in the family.*<sup>488</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *The suggestion of a musical accompaniment is rhetorical. The “tabret” (tôph) is the “timbrel” or “tambourine.”*<sup>489</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *In the East it is customary, when any are setting out to a great distance, for their relatives and friends to accompany them a considerable way with music and valedictory songs. Considering the past conduct of Laban, his complaint on this ground was hypocritical cant.*<sup>490</sup>

<sup>488</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:27. Wesley uses nearly the exact same words.

<sup>489</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:27.

<sup>490</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:26–30.

## Laban suggests that Jacob's leaving could have been a celebration (commentators)

Clarke: *I might have sent thee away with mirth* - החמש, *besimchah*, with rejoicing, making a feast or entertainment on the occasion; and with songs, מירשב *beshirim*, odes either in the praise of God, or to commemorate the splendid acts of their ancestors; with tabret, תב *bethoph*, the tympanum used in the east to the present day, and there called *diff*, a thin broad wooden hoop, with parchment extended over one end of it, to which are attached small pieces of brass, tin, etc., which make a jingling noise; it is held in the air with one hand, and beat on with the fingers of the other. It appears to have been precisely the same with that which is called the tambourine and which is frequently to be met with in our streets. And with harp, רונכב *bekinnor*, a sort of stringed instrument, a lute or harp; probably the same as the Greek κινυρα *kinura*, a harp; the name being evidently borrowed from the Hebrew. These four things seem to include all that was used in those primitive times, as expressive of gladness and satisfaction on the most joyous occasions.

Dr. Peter Pett: *“And did not tell me that I might have sent you away ----.”* This idea results from the change of heart brought about by his experience with God. He is now in two minds. On the one hand he wants to restore the wholeness of the tribe, but on the other he recognises that, in the light of the theophany and the divine threat, he is restricted. So he seeks to salve his pride by putting Jacob in the wrong on other counts. Thus he suggests that Jacob has behaved dishonourably by leaving without proper farewells. But both he and Jacob are aware that had Jacob approached in the way he described, his departure with all his possessions would have been prevented.

Pett continues: *“With mirth and with songs and ----.”* The picture is a brazen fiction and brings a smile to the face for its very effrontery. This was the way in which Rebekah had gone to Isaac (24:60), but the situations were very different. She was going to marry a powerful man who has paid handsomely in marriage settlements and guarantees her safety and protection. The tribe was not diminished but rather enriched. The thought of Laban and his confederates rejoicing at the departure of Jacob with all his possessions, together with his wives and children, all connections of the tribe, is ludicrous. He might have been allowed to leave, but he would have been allowed to take little with him, as both of them well knew.

Pett continues: *“And have not suffered me to kiss ---.”* Laban adds one fiction to another. The picture of him as the fond grandfather longing to kiss his grandchildren goodbye is simply a way of putting Jacob again in the wrong, and is equally ludicrous, although family ties were very strong and in its right place this would have been true.

Pett concludes: *So Laban is trying to put things in the best light for himself in view of the limitation placed on him by God. Yet we must be fair to Laban. He has much right on his side. The breaking away from the tribe was against all convention, as Jacob himself well knew. Indeed had it not been for God's intervention there would have been no such sentimental thoughts on Laban's part. Jacob would either have had to fight for it or have been put under arrest and brought on his way back to Paddan-aram, along with all he had, to face his punishment. But God's intervention has made the difference.*<sup>491</sup>

Whedon: *I might have sent thee away with mirth* — His previous conduct had given no hopes of any such kind treatment, as Jacob freely intimates, when he comes to respond.<sup>492</sup>

It is quite clear that most of these commentators were quite angry with Laban.

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Genesis 31:26–27 Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this.

<sup>491</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:26–28.

<sup>492</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:27.

## “Why did you secretly steal away from me?” (William Wenstrom)

Laban’s second question “why did you flee secretly and steal away from me” is a complaint against Jacob’s secret departure, which was against the custom of the day when someone was moving away.

Laban is telling Jacob that he didn’t give him an opportunity to say goodbye to Jacob, his daughters and grandchildren by having a party for them but this would sound hollow to Jacob’s family since they were so mistreated and disrespected by Laban.

Jacob, Rachel and Leah have already experienced Laban’s version of a party according to Genesis 29:22-27 where Laban got Jacob drunk and then sent Leah into his tent on his wedding night when he expected Rachel for whom he had just worked seven years for in lieu of the bride-price.

At this point, all of Jacob’s family are rolling their eyes since Laban’s appeal to customs such as a farewell party and kisses make a mockery of him.

Laban accuses Jacob of acting foolishly by failing to let him have a party for him, his daughters and grandchildren and this too is hypocrisy. The fact that he calls Jacob foolish reveals that he did not want to have a farewell party for Jacob and reveals his bitterness.

Laban accusatory words and hypocrisy and quick temper reveal to everybody that he is in fact the fool and not Jacob. Laban’s hypocrisy and false accusations reveal that he is a fool.

Prov. 12:23 [A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.](#) (ESV)

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 500); accessed October 18, 2017.

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**Genesis 31:27** [Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and with harp?](#)

Laban makes some reasonable points. Jacob could have left under better circumstances. His leaving could have been discussed and then celebrated. In life, it is normal to have endings to long-term ventures (although it is not always required). After all, Jacob has worked for Laban for 20 years and he has married two of Laban’s daughters.

An agreed upon exit with a celebration would have been the right thing to do. Were there potential problems? Of course; but that should not stop Jacob from attempting to do what is right.

Jacob is continually doing the right thing in a wrong way. God told Jacob to pack up and leave, so Jacob does this surreptitiously. His leaving was right; the way he left was wrong.

Jacob and Laban began to butt heads once Laban had to begin paying Jacob. Both men were sneaky, manipulative; and both men looked to turn every situation into a personal advantage. This got in the way of normal family things—which things Laban despairs of not being able to enjoy. Laban has only himself to blame for this—his attitude and actions are why Jacob left Paddan-aram without a word. His attitude and actions are why his own daughters are turned against him.

Nevertheless, Laban still has a point.

However, Dr. Bob Utley has a point as well about parties thrown by Laban: *Laban says he would have given Jacob a party. Jacob remembers the last party Laban held for him (i.e., the wedding night with Leah)! He wanted no more "parties" with his father-in-law.*<sup>493</sup>

| Genesis 31:28a   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lô <sup>3</sup> (לא or לו) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]                    | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation   | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| nâṭash (נטש) [pronounced <i>naw-TASH</i> ]                             | <i>to allow to; to leave [forsake], to let go of, to let alone in the sense of to disperse, to be spread out, to let run wild</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #5203<br>BDB #643 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]                                     | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| nâshaq (קשקש) [pronounced <i>naw-SHAHK</i> ]                           | <i>to kiss, to passionately kiss, to kiss with great emotion; to touch, to have close contact with</i>                            | Piel infinitive construct  | Strong's #5401<br>BDB #676 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]                                     | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                         | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>  | masculine plural noun  | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]                                     | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bath (בת) [pronounced <i>bath</i> ]                                    | <i>daughter; village</i>  | feminine plural noun   | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |

**Translation:** Furthermore, you have not permitted me to kiss my sons and my daughters [goodbye]. The lâmed preposition here acts much like the marker of a direct object. The idea is, Laban was not able to kiss his grandchildren goodbye. Again, despite Laban's shortcomings, he has a point.

Matthew Poole: *To kiss my sons and my daughters, as was usual at the parting of friends...But indeed Jacob took the wisest course for the security of his person and estate, especially having the direction and protection of God in it.*<sup>494</sup>

<sup>493</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:27.

<sup>494</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:28.

I disagree with Poole on this. Unless Laban had threatened Jacob's life or the lives of his family (or had harmed any one of them), I think it best that Jacob do this face to face. This is assuming that there is not more to the story which was just left out of the narrative.

First Laban accuses Jacob of stealing away his daughters as if they were prisoners of war; and then he says, "I would have wanted to throw you a party and kiss my grandchildren goodbye."

*J. Vernon McGee: How clever Uncle Laban is, how diplomatic! He tries to make Jacob feel guilty for depriving his family of wonderful send-off party. He would have had a great celebration and a fond farewell. That's what he says, but I don't think that is what he would have done. Then he goes on to appeal to sentiment.<sup>495</sup>*

I am of the opinion that Laban had a number of different things rehearsed in his mind which he would say to Jacob, once he caught up with him.

| Genesis 31:28b                                 |  |   |                            |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                           | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>gáht-TAWH</i> ] | <i>now, at this time, already</i>  | adverb of time  | Strong's #6258<br>BDB #773 |
| çâkal (סָכַל) [pronounced <i>saw-KAHL</i> ]    | <i>to act foolishly, to be foolish, to play the fool</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect | Strong's #5528<br>BDB #698 |
| ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]   | <i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i> | Qal infinitive construct                                  | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |

**Translation:** *Now you have done foolishly.* Recall the God told Laban not to say anything good or evil; but he is clearly making some judgments here.

Genesis 31:26–28 Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this. Had I known, I would have sent you away with joy and singing; and with tambourine and lyre. Furthermore, you did not allow me to kiss my grandsons and granddaughters goodbye; in this, you have acted foolishly.

### "You have acted foolishly" (several commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: "*Now you have done foolishly*" This term (BDB 698, KB 754, Hiphil PERFECT) is usually used in the Bible in connection with sin and guilt (cf. 1Samuel 13:13 in connection with Saul, and 2Samuel 24:10 in connection with David). Apparently Laban was accusing Jacob's flight of being sinful in nature.<sup>496</sup>

<sup>495</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>496</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:28.

## “You have acted foolishly” (several commentators)

Trapp: *You have now done foolishly.] And yet he had done no more than God bade him do. Wretched men dare reprehend that which they do not comprehend. But if a wise man speak evil of you, or to you, endure him; if a fool, pardon him. Shake off reproaches and hard censures, as Paul did the viper; yea, in a holy scorn, laugh at them, as the wild ass does at the horse and his rider. "Diotrephes prates against us," says St John. {3John 1:10} In the Greek (φλυαξει) it is, "trifles against us with malicious words." Although his words were malicious, and he a great man, yet all was but trifles to a clear conscience.*<sup>497</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Laban knows that all the right is on his side although he would no doubt have admitted, if pressed, that any attempt by Jacob to get away with his possessions openly would have been in vain. So he still takes the position of the aggrieved party, albeit warily. He now has in mind the confederacy leaders. They must have been wondering at his attitude. Why did he not just insist on the return of the miscreants? So he stresses Jacob's homesickness. He had other tribal loyalties.*<sup>498</sup>

We need to bear in mind the Laban is quite self-centered in his appraisal of the situation.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Genesis 31:28** And why have you not allowed me to kiss my sons and my daughters? You have done foolishly in so doing.

This is what a normal father/grandfather would want to do—to kiss his daughters and his grandsons goodbye. Laban says this was foolish to do things this way. This is actually the Hiphil perfect of the verb *çâkal* (çâkal) [pronounced *saw-KAHL*], which means *to act foolishly, to be foolish, to play the fool*. Strong's #5528 BDB #698.

Laban had to know that this would happen eventually. He has to know something about Abraham and Isaac; and about Abraham's need to go to the land of Canaan. He had to know something about Abraham's interaction with God. Therefore, as heir to Abraham, Jacob would have to return to Canaan. This had to be known by Laban to some degree.

He appears to be unhappy with Jacob anyway, and probably would not have objected to Jacob leaving. Recall that Jacob told his wives that Laban's countenance was now against him. Laban's sons were jealous of Jacob. Jacob's wives no longer had an inheritance with their father. So, it is likely that a departure could have been agreed to by all parties.

We are viewing a situation where both people are right, and both people are wrong. Jacob had been cheated by Laban; and he was right to be concerned about what Laban might do at his leaving (Laban would not have harmed him, but Laban may have used an excuse to keep back some of his herd). However, despite all the ways that Laban has sought to cheat Jacob, God has always overruled Laban's dishonorable business practices. Jacob needed to simply trust God to work things out. He should have known by experience that he could do this.

**Application:** In life, you do what is right, and let God sort everything else out. This does not mean that Jews or Christians, when facing the Nazi oppression, to openly give in to it. One has to properly gauge the situation and act intelligently. If you are a Christian missionary in a Muslim country, you certainly try to act above board as much as possible; but there would be certainly circumstances where you might lie or evade those hostile to Jesus Christ.

As usual, Jacob did a right thing (returning to Canaan) in a wrong way (sneaking away without giving any notice to Laban, his employer).

<sup>497</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:28 (slightly edited).

<sup>498</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:28–30.

There [is] strength to my hand to do with you harm; and Elohim of your father yesterday spoke to me, to say, 'Take heed to yourself from speaking to Jacob from good as far as bad.' And now going you have gone for longing you have greatly longed for a house of your father. For why did you steal my elohim?"

Genesis  
31:29–30

There [is] the power of my hand to do harm to you; but the Elohim of your father spoke to me yesterday, saying, 'Take personal care from speaking to Jacob either good or bad.' You left suddenly because you have longed greatly for your father's house. But why did you steal my elohim [= gods]?"

I have the power to do harm to you; however, the God of your father spoke to me yesterday, saying, 'Do not speak to Jacob good or bad.' You left suddenly because you greatly longed for your father's home. But why did you steal my gods?"

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | There [is] strength to my hand to do with you harm; and Elohim of your father yesterday spoke to me, to say, 'Take heed to yourself from speaking to Jacob from good as far as bad.' And now going you have gone for longing you have greatly longed for a house of your father. For why did you steal my elohim?"  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | It is in the power of my bands to do evil with thee: but the God of thy father spake to me in the evening, saying, Beware lest thou speak to Jakob from good to evil. And now, (though) going thou wouldest go, because desiring thou bast desired the house of thy father, why hast thou taken my religion [Dachatli.]?                                      |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | There is sufficiency in my hand to do evil with thee; [JERUSALEM. There are strength and ability.] but the God of thy father spake with me in the evening, saying, Be careful of speaking with Jakob from good to evil now going thou wilt go; because desiring thou hast desired the house of thy father: (but) why hast thou stolen the images of my idols? |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | It is in my power to <u>return</u> you evil: but the God of your father said to me yesterday: Take heed you speak not <u>any things harshly against</u> Jacob. Suppose you did desire to go to your friends, and had a longing after your father's house: why have you stolen away my gods?   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | It is in the power of my hand to hurt you, but God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed to yourself that you do not speak to Ya'aqub either good or bad.' Now, you want to be gone, because you greatly longed for your father's house, but why have you stolen my deities?"   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | I could have done you harm, but the God of your <u>fathers</u> said to me last evening, Take heed that you speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And now you are on your way, because you longed for your fathers house; yet why did you steal my gods?  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And now my hand has power to hurt you; but the God of your father spoke to me yesterday, saying, Take heed that you speak no evil word to Jacob. Now then go on your way, for you have earnestly desired to depart to the house of your father; why have you stolen my gods?  |
| Significant differences: | The Latin has <i>return</i> rather than <i>do</i> . The Syriac has <i>fathers</i> rather than <i>father</i> . <sup>499</sup><br><br>The Latin has <i>any things harshly against</i> rather than <i>speaking good to evil</i> . <i>Good</i> is not mentioned in the Greek. One targum leaves out <i>going, you have gone</i> .                                 |

<sup>499</sup> Which does not agree, again, with the Aramaic ESV; and they ought to be the same.

One targum has *religion* rather than *gods, deities*.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English    | It is in my power to do you damage: but the God of your father came to me this night, saying, Take care that you say nothing good or bad to Jacob. 30 And now, it seems, you are going because your heart's desire is for your father's house; but why have you taken my gods?              |
| Easy-to-Read Version—2006 | I have the power to really hurt you. But last night the God of your father came to me in a dream. He warned me not to hurt you in any way. I know that you want to go back to your home. That is why you left. But why did you steal the gods from my house?"                               |
| Good News Bible (TEV)     | I have the power to do you harm, but last night the God of your father warned me not to threaten you in any way. I know that you left because you were so anxious to get back home, but why did you steal my household gods?"   |
| <i>The Message</i>        | If I had a mind to, I could destroy you right now, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, 'Be careful what you do to Jacob, whether good or bad.' I understand. You left because you were homesick. But why did you steal my household gods?"                                   |
| Names of God Bible        | I have the power to harm you. Last night the <i>Elohim</i> of your father said to me, 'Be careful not to say anything at all to Jacob.' Now you have left for your father's home because you were so homesick. But why did you steal my gods?"  |
| NIRV                      | I have the power to harm you. But last night the God of your father spoke to me. He said, 'Be careful. Do not say anything to Jacob, whether it is good or bad.' Now you have run away. You longed to go back to your father's home. But why did you have to steal the statues of my gods?" |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Common English Bible    | Now you've acted like a fool, and I have the power to punish you. However, your father's God told me yesterday, 'Be careful and don't say anything hastily to Jacob one way or the other.' You've rushed off now because you missed your father's household so much, but why did you steal my gods?" V. 28b is included for context. |
| Contemporary English V. | I could easily hurt you, but the God your father worshiped has warned me not to make any threats or promises. I can understand why you were eager to return to your father, but why did you have to steal my idols?  |
| The Living Bible        | I could crush you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and told me, 'Be careful not to be too hard on Jacob!' But see here—though you feel you must go, and long so intensely for your childhood home—why have you stolen my idols?"  |
| New Berkeley Version    | It was a silly thing to do and I could hurt you; but your father's God told me last night, 'Be careful not to speak to Jacob, good or bad.' Now, if you hurried off because you so greatly longed for your father's home, then why did you steal my gods?"   |
| New Century Version     | You were very foolish to do this! I have the power to harm you, but last night the God of your father spoke to me and warned me not to say anything to you, good or bad. I know you want to go back to your home, but why did you steal my idols?" V. 28b is included for context.   |
| New Living Translation  | I could destroy you, but the God of your father appeared to me last night and warned me, 'Leave Jacob alone!' I can understand your feeling that you must go, and your intense longing for your father's home. But why have you stolen my gods?"   |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | 'And now, although I have enough power in my hands to harm you; the God of your father spoke to me yesterday and said, <i>Be very careful to never say anything bad about Jacob</i> . So now, go on, because you really wanted to return to the house of your father... but, why have you stolen my gods?'                              |
| International Standard V    | It's actually in my power to do some serious [The Heb. <i>lacks some serious</i> ] evil to you, but last night the God of your father told me, 'Be careful what you say to Jacob whether good or evil.' Now, you can go if you must go, because you certainly are longing to go to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods?' |
| Revised Knox Bible          | You are in my power, and I could repay the injury if I would; but the God who protects your father's race warned me yesterday, Have a care you do not speak harshly to Jacob. You were hastening to return to your own kindred? You were longing for your home? Tell me then, why have you carried away my household gods with you?     |
| Translation for Translators | My relatives and I have the power to harm you, but last night the God whom your father worships said to me in a dream, 'Be sure that you do not say anything at all to Jacob in an angry way.' Now, I know you have left because you long to go back home. But why did you steal my wooden idols?"                                      |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible     | It is in the power of my hand to do you evil. Yet he of mighty ones of your fathers is to have commanded me last night, to the intent: Be watching yourself! - was you to speak with Jacob, that well or that unpleasant? You is to have departed a departing, for you is to have yearned, a yearning after your father's house; yet you is to have stolen they he of mighty ones of mine. |
| Conservapedia          | "Lawfully, I could bring you much harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, and said, 'Watch yourself! Don't change your communication with Jacob from friendly to unfriendly.' Now I understand that you need to leave, because you very much want to go back to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods [This refers to the missing theraphim.]?"              |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible    | Truly there is a God who guides me from evil in acting with you ; for the GOD of your father last -night said to me, ' Guard yourself in dealing with Jacob for good or ill ; ' so go your journey ; for you desire the house of your father ; — but why have you stolen my gods ? "   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)  | But the God of your father spoke unto me yesterday saying: take heed that you speak not to Jacob anything save good. And now though you went your way because you long after your fathers house, yet wherefore have you stolen my gods?  |
| H. C. Leupold          | It lies within the power of my hand to do thee harm. But the God of thy fathers spoke to me last night and said, Take heed not to say anything to Jacob. So now thou hast indeed gone, for thou didst long very much after thy father's house. Why didst thou steal my gods?   |
| Tree of Life Version   | "Now, you've behaved foolishly. It is in the power of my hand to do evil with you, but yesterday the God of your fathers spoke to me, saying, 'Watch yourself—lest you say anything to Jacob, good or bad.' So now, when you up and left because you really missed your father's house, why did you steal my gods?" V. 28b is included for context.  |
| Unlocked Literal Bible | It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night and said, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' Now you have gone away because you longed to return to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods?"   |
| Urim-Thummim Version   | I have the power in my hand to injure you, but the Elohim of your father spoke to me last night commanding, guard yourself that you speak to Jacob nothing either good or bad. And now, you have certainly left because you have been longing for the home of your dad, but why have you stolen my elohim?   |

Wikipedia Bible Project I have from my hand the power to do harm to you; and the God of your fathers yesterday said to me this: Keep you from speaking to Jacob regarding right and wrong. And now you have gone and left, because halcyon is your father's house; why did you steal my Gods?"

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and daughters good bye. You have done a foolish thing and I have power to harm you, but last night the God of your father warned me saying: 'Be careful not to say anything—good or evil—to Jacob.' Now if you have gone off because you were planning to return to your father's house, why did you steal my gods?" V. 28 is included for context.

The Heritage Bible It is in the power of my hand to do you harm, and the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, Hedge about what you speak, lest you speak to Jacob either good or bad. And now, walking, you have walked because you have longed after your father's house; why have you stolen my gods?

New American Bible (2002) I have it in my power to harm all of you; but last night the God of your father said to me, 'Take care not to threaten Jacob with any harm!' Granted that you had to leave because you were desperately homesick for your father's house, why did you steal my gods?"

New Jerusalem Bible It is in my power to harm you, but the God of your father said to me last night, "On no account say anything whatever to Jacob." Now it may be you really went because you had such a longing for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"

Revised English Bible I have it in my power to harm all of you, but last night the God of your father spoke to me; he told me to be careful to say nothing to you, not one word. I expect that really you went away because you were homesick and pining for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible I have it in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night and said, 'Be careful that you don't say anything to Ya'akov, either good or bad.' Granted that you had to leave, because you longed so deeply for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"

The Complete Tanach I have the power to inflict harm upon you, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Beware of speaking with Jacob either good or bad.'

**I have the power:** There is strength and power in my hand to inflict harm upon you. Also, every tk that refers to the Deity means that He is mighty and has much strength.

But now, you have gone away, for you longed for your father's house, [but]why have you stolen my gods?"

**you longed:** You wished. There are many words in Scripture (Ps. 84:3): "My soul yearns, yea, yea, it pines" ; (Job:14:15) "You desire the work of Your hands."

exeGeses companion Bible It is in the el of my hand to work you evil:  
but Elohim of your father worded to me yesternight,  
saying,  
Guard that you not word to Yaaqov  
from good to evil.  
And now, in going, you go;  
because in yearning,  
you yearn after the house of your father:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
|                            | But why stole you my elohim?   |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)          | I have it in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father said to me last night, 'Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad.' Very well, you had to leave because you were longing for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?  |
| Kaplan Translation         | I have it in my power to do you great harm. But your father's God spoke to me last night and said, 'Be very careful not to say anything, good or bad, to Jacob.' 'I realize that you left because you missed your parents' home. But why did you have to steal my gods?'                                   |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible      | It is in the power of my yad to do you rah; but Elohei Avichem spoke unto me emesh (last night), saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Ya'akov either tov or rah. And now, though thou had to go, because thou greatly longedst after bais avicha, yet why hast thou stolen elohai?                |
| <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998 | "It is in the power of my hand to do evil to you, but the Elohim of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Guard yourself, that you do not speak to Ya'aqob either good or evil.'<br>"And now you have gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my mighty ones?" |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | It is in my power to harm you, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to speak to Jacob, either good or bad.' Now [I suppose] you felt you must go because you were homesick for your father's house and family; but why did you steal my [household] gods?"   |
| The Expanded Bible         | I have the power to harm you, but last night the God of your father spoke to me and warned me not to say anything to you, good or bad. I know you want to go back to your home [the house of your father], but why did you steal my idols [gods; 31:19]?"  |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | 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. The band which Laban had brought along was indeed large enough to inflict severe harm upon Jacob, and it was only the fear of God's punishment which deterred him from following his inclination. At this point the animosity of Laban evidently caused him to forget all prudence and to betray his bitterness and his real intention. 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 means to say that there is some explanation for Jacob's leaving, even if it was done in secret, but no excuse could be found for the stealing of his gods, of which he now accuses Jacob outright. |
| NET Bible®                 | I have [ <i>Heb</i> "there is to my hand."] the power to do you harm, but the God of your father told me last night, 'Be careful [ <i>Heb</i> "watch yourself," which is a warning to be on guard against doing something that is inappropriate.] that you neither bless nor curse Jacob [ <i>Heb</i> "from speaking with Jacob from good to evil."]. Now I understand that [ <i>Heb</i> "and now." The words "I understand that" have been supplied in the translation for clarity and for stylistic reasons.] you have gone away because you longed desperately for your father's house. Yet why did you steal my gods?"   |
| The Pulpit Commentary      | It is in the power of my hand—so the phrase לְאֵלֵי יָדִי (cf. Deut. 28:32; Nehemiah 5:5; Mic. 2:1) is rendered by competent authorities (Gesenius, Furst, Rosenmüller, Kalisch, Murphy, et alii), with which agree laxly, ἡ χεὶρ μου (LXX.), and valet manus men (Vulgate), though the translation "My hand is for God," i.e. my hand serves me as God (cf. Job. 12:6; Hebrews 1:11), is by some preferred (Keil, Knobel, Jacobus)—to do you hurt: but the God of your father—the use of this expression can be rightly regarded neither as a proof of Elohist authorship (Tuch,  |

Bleek, Colenso, Davidson) nor as a sign of Laban's spiritual degeneracy (Hengstenberg, Wordsworth), since it is practically equivalent to Jehovah (vide Genesis 28:13), but is probably to be viewed as a play upon the sound and sense of the preceding clause, as thus:—"It is in the El of my hand to do you evil, but the Elohim of your father spake to me." Another instance of this play upon the sound and sense is to be found in Genesis 4:19, Genesis 4:20—"Rachel stole the teraphim that were her father's; and Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Syrian"—*spake unto me yester night, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob*—literally, guard or keep thee for thyself (the pleon, pron. being added ut supra, Genesis 4:24) *from speaking with Jacob—either good or bad* (vide on Genesis 4:24). *And now, though thou wouldst needs be gone* (literally, going thou didst go—thou hast indeed gone), *because thou sore longedst after thy father's house* (literally, because desiring thou didst desire. The verb כָּרַח, to be pale (whence כֶּסֶף, silver, so called from its pale color), *expresses the idea of pining away and languishing through strong inward longing*), *yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?* Laban had probably gone to consult his teraphim and so discovered their loss. Augustine calls attention to this as the first Scripture reference to heathen gods, and Calvin probably supplies the right explanation of the sense in which they were so styled by Laban, non quia deitatem illie putaret esse inclusam, sed quia in honorem deorum imagines illas colebat; vel potius quod Deo sacra facturus, vertebat se ad illas imagines (of. Exodus 32:4; 1Kings 12:28). "This complaint of Laban, that his "gods were stolen, showeth the vanity of such idolatry" (Ainsworth). Cf. Judges 6:31; Judges 16:24; Jer. 10:5, Jer. 10:11, Jer. 10:15.

## The Voice

**[Laban:]** It is *certainly* in my power to punish you, but the God of your father *Isaac* spoke to me last night and said, "Be careful what you say and do to Jacob." Now you have left because you missed your father's household—*I can understand that*—but why did you have to steal my family gods?

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

- Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...there is belonging to the might of my hand to do dysfunction with you and the powers of your father had said to me last night saying, be guarded to yourself from speaking with Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> out of function as well as dysfunction, and now, you quickly walked given that you were greatly craving for the house of your father, why did you steal my powers,...
- Concordant Literal Version Forsooth! Disposed is my hand to do to you evil. Yet the Elohim of your father yesternight spoke to me, saying, `Beware, you, of speaking with Jacob from good unto evil! And now, go, yea, go, for you long longingly for the household of your father. Why have you stolen my elohim?
- Context Group Version It is in the power of my hand to do you (pl) harm: but the God of your (pl) father spoke to me last night, saying, You be careful that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad. And now, [though] you would surely be gone, because you intensely longed after your father's house, [yet] why have you stolen my gods?
- Darby Translation It would be in the power of my hand to do you hurt; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, Take care that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And now that thou must needs be gone, because thou greatly longedst after thy father's house, why hast thou stolen my gods?.
- Emphasized Bible* It is in the power of my hand, to deal with thee for harm,—but the God of your father, last night, spake unto me, saying, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not with Jacob, either good or bad. But, now, though thou, didst even take thy journey, because thou, didst sorely long, for the house of thy father, wherefore didst thou steal away my gods?

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Modern English Version     | It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take care that you not speak to Jacob either good or bad.' Now you surely have gone away because you longed desperately after your father's house, yet why have you stolen my gods?"                                   |
| NASB                       | It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.' Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"  |
| New King James Version     | It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"   |
| Updated Bible Version 2.11 | It is in the power of my hand to do you + harm: but the God of your + father spoke to me last night, saying, You be careful that you don't speak to Jacob either good or bad. And now, [though] you would surely be gone, because you intensely longed after your father's house, [yet] why have you stolen my gods? |
| Young's Updated LT         | My hand is to God to do evil with you, but the God of your father the other night has spoken unto me, saying, Take heed to yourself from speaking with Jacob from good unto evil. And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"                     |

**The gist of this passage:** Laban reminds Jacob that he could do him real harm; but that God spoke to him the night before. Then he asks, "Why did you steal my household gods?"

### Genesis 31:29a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| yêsh (יֵשׁ) [pronounced <i>yaysh</i> ]  | <i>being, substance, existence; used as a substitute for to be (without reference to number or tense); there [is, are]; to be present, to be ready, to exist</i> | substantive with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix; the verb <i>to be</i> may be implied | Strong's #3426<br>BDB #441 |
| <p>The substantive yêsh often acts as a substantive plus the absolute status quo verb <i>to be</i>; e.g., [<i>if</i>] <i>there be</i> (1Samuel 20:8), <i>there is</i> (Esther 3:8), <i>there shall be</i> (Jer. 31:6). However, this acts not as a mere copula [pronounced <i>KOP-ye-la</i>], but existence is emphasized. In the KJV, the verbal portion of this is often italicized. The second word in the second line of Job 6:6 is the substantive of existence or being—<i>or is there, or does there exist</i>. We often render this <i>there is</i>, even though <i>there is</i> no verb.</p> |  |   |                            |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'êl (אֵל) [pronounced <i>ALE</i> ]  | <i>God, god, mighty one, strong, hero; strength, power; mighty things in nature</i>  | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #410<br>BDB #42   |

The Cambridge Bible: A Hebrew idiom occurring in Deut. 28:32, Nehemiah 5:5, Proverbs 3:27, Mic. 2:1. The word "power" is "Êl," usually rendered "God"; in this idiom it denotes "power" or "might" in the abstract.<sup>500</sup>

<sup>500</sup> The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:29.

| Genesis 31:29a  |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]   | <i>hand; figuratively for strength, power, control</i>  | feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix                          | Strong's #3027<br>BDB #388 |
| E. W. Bullinger: <i>Figure of speech Synecdoche (of the Part), hand put for the whole person, "in my power".</i> <sup>501</sup>   |   |   |                            |
| Keil and Delitzsch: <i>ישׁי לֵאמֹר יְדִי: "there is to God my hand" (Mic. 2:1; cf. Deut. 28:32; Nehemiah 5:5), i.e., my hand serves me as God (Hab. 1:11; Job. 12:6), a proverbial expression for "the power lies in my hand."</i> <sup>502</sup> |   |   |                            |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| ʿâsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH]  | <i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>  | Qal infinitive construct  | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |
| ʿim (עִם) [pronounced geem]   | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>   | preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |
| raʿ (רָע) [pronounced rahg]   | <i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i> | masculine singular adjective/noun; pausal form  | Strong's #7451<br>BDB #948 |

**Translation:** There [is] the power of my hand to do harm to you;... Laban tells Jacob what is fairly obvious—that he has the power to harm him. We do not know how many people are traveling with Laban at this time, but he certainly determined to have enough men with him to harm Jacob or to, at the very least, intimidate Jacob.

Jacob is there with his two wives and children. His children are still young, the oldest possibly being in his early teens. He does have some male and female slaves. However, given Laban's intelligence, he knew how many Jacob would be traveling with and took enough men with him to overwhelm him.

Genesis 31:29a I have the power to do harm to you...

### Understanding power and authority in the ancient world (mechanical translation)

When we read the Bible we must read it from the mindset of the writer and not from our own way of thinking. The authors of the Bible lived in a culture that is very different from our own and they perceived the world from a different perspective. If we truly want to grasp what the authors were trying to say, then we must remove our westernized thinking caps and replace them with the thinking cap of one from the ancient Near East (Orient).

Have you ever heard that the ancient's considered their rulers as Gods? This is true for the Egyptians who saw the Pharaohs as gods, the Babylonians who saw the Kings as gods and the Romans who saw the Caesars as gods.

In the Biblical text the most basic word for a 'god' is אֱלֹהִים (el). This Hebrew/Semitic word is found throughout the

<sup>501</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

<sup>502</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:29.

## Understanding power and authority in the ancient world (mechanical translation)

Near East and literally means "one of power and authority." The Semitic people did not view a 'god' as strictly a supernatural deity as do but simply as "one of power and authority." Even in the Biblical text the word אֱלֹהִים is used for Laban in Genesis 31:29 - "אֱלֹהִים is in my hand to do you harm." Laban was the one in power and authority over Jacob and was by the true sense of the meaning of the word, an אֱלֹהִים.

From the ancient perspective, a 'god' is anyone or anything that has power and authority over another. Who has power and authority over us? Our government, our government is our אֱלֹהִים. In the same way Abram's אֱלֹהִים was the King of Babylon which is why God had him leave and go to the wilderness where there was no king. Also, Moses' אֱלֹהִים was the pharaoh of Egypt and God removed him from there and brought him into wilderness as well.

At this point most of you will be saying, "No, the God of the Bible is my אֱלֹהִים." Is that true? While I believe it is possible for this to be true in most cases it is not. Let's examine a scenario. Let's say that in one way or another you were prevented from worshiping God or praying to him and you are no longer able to read or study the Bible. While I do believe this will have a negative impact on you and society as a whole will it destroy you? No, you will continue to exist, you will still have grocery stores, gas stations, law enforcement and military for protection, electricity, garbage pick-up, etc. But let's change the scenario a little bit and say that our government, for one reason or another, no longer exists. Without a government we lose our entire monetary system, we lose our law enforcement and military. Without a monetary system there is no more grocery stores, gas stations, power houses, etc. In short, you are completely on your own. Could you survive? Most could not and within a few short weeks a major portion of our population would be dead. Now, which "power and authority" is more influential on your life today?

From [Mechanical Translation Commentary](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Genesis 31:29a [I have the power to do harm to you;...](#)

### “It is in my power to harm you” (various commentators)

Gill: *Jacob and his family, wives, children, and servants, who were not able to stand against Laban and the men he brought with him.*<sup>503</sup>

Although these words are not found in Scripture, this seems like a very logical conjecture. Laban would know all that was going on with Jacob, and how many men who would be with him that might be trouble. If Laban pursues and catches up with Jacob, it has to be with considerably more men.

The College Press Bible Study: *Laban claims that he could do Jacob “hurt,” when he knows he has no intention of doing so after having received a direct warning from God against that very thing. He is merely boasting. “Being accompanied by a number of his people, Laban might have used violence, had he not been Divinely warned in a dream to give no interruption to his nephew’s journey.*<sup>504</sup>

Clarke: *Literally, My hand is unto God to do you evil, i.e., I have vowed to God that I will punish thee for thy flight, and the stealing of my teraphim; but the God of Your father has prevented me from doing it.*<sup>505</sup>

<sup>503</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

<sup>504</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26-42).

<sup>505</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

**“It is in my power to harm you” (various commentators)**

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Laban then boasts that not only that he was able to do harm to Jacob but also his entire household as indicated by the plural form of the pronominal suffix meaning “every one of you.” Therefore, we see that Laban had every intention of not only harming Jacob but also his own daughters and grandchildren until the Lord warned him not to. However, in view of his dream where the Lord warned him to not harm Jacob, he knew this was an empty threat.*<sup>506</sup>

Wenstrom continues: *Laban’s claim that it was in his power to do harm to Jacob and his entire household reveals the fact that he had every intention of harming Jacob and this is confirmed by the intense way in which he pursued him for three hundred miles. The fact that Laban admits that God had warned him not to harm Jacob also reveals that Laban’s intention was to harm Jacob since God would not have given such a warning unless Laban had every intention of harming Jacob.*<sup>507</sup>

Laban concludes: *Laban apparently considers Jacob to be a servant under his authority by stating it was in his power to do harm to Jacob. However, the Lord has revealed to Laban in the dream that Jacob was under his authority and would not be touched! In fact, Laban has to acknowledge that he is under God’s authority since he obeys the Lord’s command to not harm Jacob. Laban recognizes that there is no point in carrying this particular line of questioning and conversation any further so he abruptly changes the subject in order to render another accusation and slander of Jacob’s character.*<sup>508</sup>

Laban states this from the human viewpoint. He is both powerful enough to kill Jacob (given those who are with him); but it is not fully clear what Laban wants to do, having talked with God.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

This again leads to the theory that God warned Laban about what he said to Jacob; but the intent was to stop Laban from physically harming Jacob or his family.

What Jacob has, which Laban cannot touch, is a future in the plan of God. Therefore, regardless of Laban’s human power, he cannot overrule God’s will (see Psalm 68:20 Matthew 10:28).

**Genesis 31:29b**

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong’s #        |
|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                                 | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #251 |
| ’Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]                      | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural construct  | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43  |
| ’âb (אָב) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]                          | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong’s #1 BDB #3        |
| ’emesh (עֵמֶשׁ) [pronounced <i>EH-mesh</i> ]                            | <i>yesterday, last night; figuratively recently; night, evening</i>                                   | adverb  | Strong’s #570<br>BDB #57  |

<sup>506</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 500); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>507</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 500–501); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>508</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 501); accessed October 18, 2017.

| Genesis 31:29b                     |  |  |                          |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #       |
| 'āmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR] | to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect   | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55 |
| 'el (אֵל) [pronounced eh]          | unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to                               | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39 |

**Translation:** ...but the Elohim of your father spoke to me yesterday,... Despite what Laban has said so far, he tells Jacob, "Your God spoke to me yesterday." The word for *yesterday* could mean *recently*. The context sounds very much like, the night that Laban sleeps before he caught up to Jacob. That leaves the actual time quite open. Let me suggest that, if Laban got himself and his fellows worked up, then God would have spoken to him early on. If, instead, Laban said to his men, "Just follow my lead," without attempting to get them worked up; then God would speak to Laban as soon before the encounter as possible.

John Gill: *but the God of your father spoke unto me yesternight; the night past, or the other night, some very little time ago.*<sup>509</sup>

The word used for *God* and for *deities* in this verse is Elohim, or, more properly, 'Elôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced *el-o-HEEM*] and it is a word which may be applied to any or all of the Trinity; but it may also apply to false gods (Exodus 18:11 22:19), governmental magistrates (Exodus 21:6 22:7–8) and to household deities (Genesis 31:30a), or idols (Genesis 31:30b Deut. 10:17). It is rather humorous that Laban, who has just been spoken to by the God of gods, the Creator of the Universe, is suddenly concerned about his household gods, his teraphim, who have not so much as even muttered or mumbled to him, let alone come to him in a dream and speak to him. We have examined the meaning of these household idols, but it does not eliminate the fact that this is paganism, pure and simple. This is why Abraham was told to separate many years ago from his family and why Jacob is told to return to the land of Canaan. There is the doctrine of separation which goes back all the way to the times of the Patriarchs. And here, as it is also given in the New Testament, separation is from fellow believers, not from unbelievers.

It is interesting that Laban speaks of God as *the God of your father*. At one time, I think that Laban believed in the same God. However, apparently Laban changed his allegiance? Or, perhaps Laban chose to have a more liberal view toward the gods of his area. This suggests that Laban accepts that there are other gods; but for Jacob, there is but One God (this is not to suggest that Jacob is in spiritual maturity).

E. W. Bullinger also notices that these words are significant: *In Genesis 30:27, Genesis 30:30, Laban had spoken of the LORD = Jehovah; now he has sunk so low as to say' your" God, and calls the teraphim "my gods".*<sup>510</sup>

Gill: *[T]hough he does not call him his God, he had some awe and reverence of him, and was influenced by his speech to him.*<sup>511</sup>

<sup>509</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

<sup>510</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

<sup>511</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

Benson: *Laban, whatever his disposition was, and how great soever his anger, paid regard to the heavenly vision. For though he supposed that he had both right and strength on his side, either to revenge the wrong or recover the right, yet he owns himself under the restraint of God's power; he durst not injure one whom he saw to be the particular care of Heaven. It seems probable that God, who can change the heart in a moment, effected a sudden alteration in his disposition toward Jacob.*<sup>512</sup>

Laban's exact religious leanings are not completely known. We know he has (had) idols in his home and that he will seem to distinguish between gods when he makes a covenant with Jacob. If I were to make a guess, it would be that Laban developed a more liberal and accepting view of the gods of his land—possibly thinking them even equal to the God of Abraham.

| Genesis 31:29c  |  |  |                             |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                      | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]                    | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]                        | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>  | Qal infinitive construct   | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55    |
| shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced shaw-MAR]                     | <i>be kept, be preserved; be careful; abstain yourself [from anything]; beware [of anything]; care [for something]; take heed</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperative                                 | Strong's #8104<br>BDB #1036 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]                    | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>  | directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| min (מִן) [pronounced min]                                | <i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>   | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577  |
| dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]        | <i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i> | Piel infinitive construct  | Strong's #1696<br>BDB #180  |
| 'îm (עִם) [pronounced geem]                               | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>  | preposition of nearness and vicinity   | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767  |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-ġuh-KOH <sup>b</sup> V] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>   | masculine proper noun  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784  |

<sup>512</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

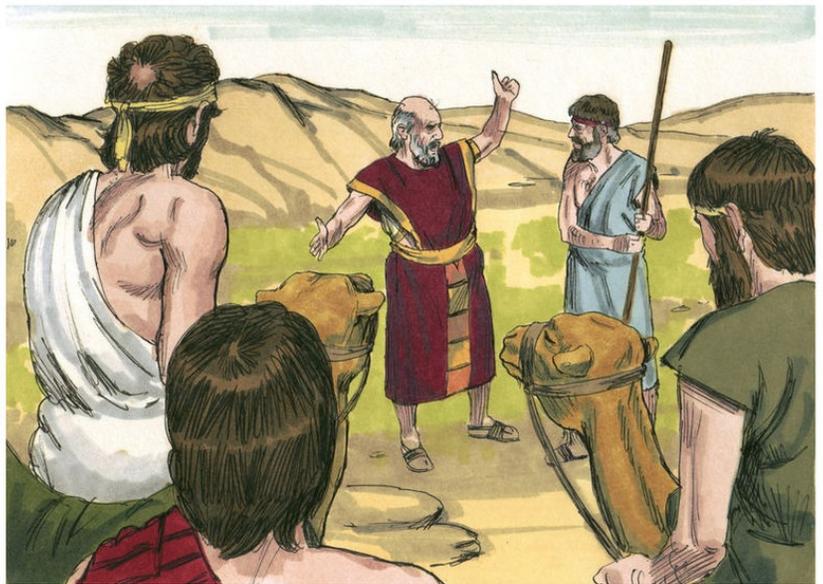
## Genesis 31:29c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]  | <i>from, off, out from, of, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>  | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| ṭôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced <i>tohbv</i> ]  | <i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better; approved</i>  | masculine feminine singular adjective which can act like a substantive | Strong's #2896<br>BDB #373 |
| As a noun, this can mean <i>the good thing, that which is good [pleasing, approved, kind, upright, right]; goodness, uprightness, kindness, right; that which is fair [beautiful]</i> . Owens translates this very well in 1Kings 2:18. |   |  |                            |
| ʿad (עַד) [pronounced <i>ghad</i> ]   | <i>as far as, even to, up to, until</i>   | preposition of duration or of limits                                   | Strong's #5704<br>BDB #723 |
| Together, min...wa ʿad (עַד ... מִן) mean <i>from...to</i> or <i>both...and</i> ; as in <i>from soup to nuts</i> or <i>both young and old</i> .   |   |  |                            |
| raʿ (עַר) [pronounced <i>rahg</i> ]   | <i>evil, bad, wicked; evil in appearance, deformed; misery, distress, injury; that which is displeasing [disagreeable, unhappy, unfortunate, sad]</i> | masculine singular adjective/noun; pausal form                         | Strong's #7451<br>BDB #948 |

**Translation:** ...saying, 'Take personal care from speaking to Jacob either good or bad.' This is interesting. God tells Laban not to speak to Jacob about good or bad. However, he has certainly been speaking some bad about Jacob.

**Laban Airs His Complaints to Jacob** (a graphic by Jim Padgett); from [Wikimedia](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

Dr. Bob Utley: *"It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night"* The phrase "in my power" (BDB 42) is related etymologically to the term *El* (BDB 42) or *Elohim* (BDB 43). This is the only verse that gives us the clue that the basic etymology of the word *El* may mean "to be strong." God warns Laban in a dream as He had earlier warned Pharaoh (through a plague, cf. Genesis 12:17, and some further revelation, but exactly how is not recorded) and Abimelech (cf. Genesis 20:3). YHWH is watching and protecting the covenant family from harm/attack.<sup>513</sup>



<sup>513</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:29.

Dr. Peter Pett: *Laban is not, of course, aware that Jacob left at God's command but he does know that Jacob had put himself in a dangerous position by deserting the tribe secretly, and that the confederacy leaders will have to be pacified. Then he explains why he is being so lenient. He has had a vivid experience of God which he must obey.*<sup>514</sup>

I do not believe that I even began to get below the surface on this remark; so I am anxious to see what other commentators thought of this order from God.

Genesis 31:29 I have the power to do harm to you; however, the God of your father spoke to me yesterday, saying, 'Do not speak to Jacob good or bad.'

### **“Do not speak to Jacob either for good or for bad” (Various Commentators)**

Arthur W. Pink: *To return to the narrative. It was not long after Jacob's stealthy departure that Laban heard of what had taken place, and gathering together what was, no doubt, a considerable force, he immediately set out in pursuit. But on the night before he overtook Jacob's party, God appeared to him in a dream, and warned him against even speaking to Jacob "good or bad." Thus did Jehovah, once again, make good His original promise to our patriarch and manifest His preserving Presence with Jacob. The measure in which Laban respected the word of God is seen in the charges he brought against Jacob when they met the next day.*<sup>515</sup>

The College Press Bible Study: *Josephus says that he reached the neighborhood of mount Gilead 'at eventide.' And having resolved not to disturb Jacob's encampment till the morning, it was during the intervening night that he had the warning dream, in which God told him, that if he (Laban) despised their small number, and attacked them in a hostile manner, He would Himself assist them (Antiquities, I, 19, 10).*<sup>516</sup>

The College Press Bible Study: *How striking and sudden a change! For several days he had been full of rage, and was now in eager anticipation that his vengeance would be fully wreaked, when lo! his hands are tied by invisible power (Psalm 76:10). He dared not touch Jacob, but there was a war of words" (CECG, 210). God's warning had been explicit: he was to speak to Jacob neither good or bad, that is, "nothing at all" (JB), "not pass from peaceful greetings to acrimonious" (Lange), "not say anything acrimonious or violent against Jacob" (Murphy). Or, perhaps the expression was simply a proverbial phrase for opposition or interference of any kind (Kalisch).*<sup>517</sup>

Gill: *saying, take heed that thou spake not to Jacob either good or bad: this, though greatly to Jacob's honour, and against Laban's interest, yet his conscience would not allow him to keep it a secret; though, doubtless, his view was to show his superior power to Jacob, had he not been restrained by Jacob's God.*<sup>518</sup>

One has to bear in mind that, even though Laban is a believer, he is heavily influenced by materialism and his contemporary culture.

The Cambridge Bible: *Laban's conscience smites him, as is implied by the vision recorded in Genesis 31:24.*<sup>519</sup>

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**Genesis 31:29** It is in the power of my hand to do you harm. But the God of your fathers spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed that you do not speak either good or bad to Jacob.'

<sup>514</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:28–30.

<sup>515</sup> From [http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings\\_Genesis/genesis\\_32.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_32.htm) accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>516</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26-42).

<sup>517</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26-42).

<sup>518</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29.

<sup>519</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:29.

Not speaking evil of Jacob included not doing anything evil to Jacob.

Laban is mad, with good reason; even though Jacob did not raid his flocks or possessions, but simply took what is his. However, Jacob's manner of leaving was disconcerting to Laban.

However, Laban admits that he has been warned by God. There is also one more thing Laban is concerned about:

| Genesis 31:30a   |   |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]  | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction                                   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251           |
| ʿattâh (עַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ḡah-t-AWH</i> ]   | <i>now, at this time, already</i>                                     | adverb of time   | Strong's #6258<br>BDB #773          |
| When followed by an imperative or an interrogative, w <sup>e</sup> + the adverb ʿattâh mean <i>and so, thus, things being so, therefore, now therefore, now then</i> . Sometimes, the concept of time is lost when this combination is used to incite another. |   |  |                                     |
| hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]  | <i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>                 | Qal infinitive absolute                                  | Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229 |
| hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]  | <i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>                 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229 |
| When a verb is doubled, this is the Hebrew mode of expressing intensity, repetition, or emphasis.  |   |  |                                     |
| The NET Bible: <i>The infinitive absolute appears before the perfect verbal form to emphasize the certainty of the action.</i> <sup>520</sup>  |   |  |                                     |

**Translation:** You left suddenly... When a verb is doubled, there is a great emphasis on the action of the verb. I think that the idea is, Jacob left suddenly and unexpectedly. His leaving took Laban by surprise, despite what Laban may have known about Jacob's ties to the Land of Promise.

I should also point out that, even though Laban was aware of Jacob's ties to Canaan, he did show up suddenly and without a good explanation. Jacob showed up and said, "I have been sent here to find a wife" (perhaps he said this; we don't know). But he has no dowry with him. He shows up broke. So, whatever story Jacob gave Laban (and parts or all of it could be accurate<sup>521</sup>); Laban has no idea whether Jacob will return to the land or not.

When Abraham's servant arrived in Paddan-aram in Genesis 24), he told Bethuel and Laban exactly why he was there, from nearly the first words out of his mouth. However, we do not have a record of what Jacob said. Did he say he was there to get married? Did he say he was on the run from his twin brother? We really do not know. However, a month later when Jacob proposed that he work seven years to marry Rachel (Genesis 29:18–19), that does not appear to be a great and sudden revelation.

<sup>520</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 17, 2016.

<sup>521</sup> He could have told Laban about the falling out that he had with Esau. It is not clear in Genesis 29 exactly what Jacob told Laban.

## Genesis 31:30b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]  | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>                                       | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition                                  | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| Qal imperfect of kâçap   | <i>to long [for]</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                          | Strong's #3700<br>BDB #493 |
| kâçaph (כֶּאֱחָפֵּי) [pronounced <i>kaw-SAHF</i> ]   | <i>to deeply long [for, after], to strongly yearn after</i>   | Niphal infinitive absolute  | Strong's #3700<br>BDB #493 |
| kâçaph (כֶּאֱחָפֵּי) [pronounced <i>kaw-SAHF</i> ]   | <i>to deeply long [for, after], to strongly yearn after</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal perfect                         | Strong's #3700<br>BDB #493 |
| The NET Bible: <i>The infinitive absolute appears before the perfect verbal form to emphasize the degree of emotion involved.</i> <sup>522</sup> |   |   |                            |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>       | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i> ]  | <i>house, residence; household, habitation as well as inward</i>                                      | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #1004<br>BDB #108 |
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced <i>aw<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]   | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |

**Translation:** ...because you have longed greatly for your father's house. Laban here recognizes that Jacob wanted very much to return to the home of his father. So, Laban is, to some degree, indicating that he understands Jacob's feelings. It is not necessary that he does.

Laban tells Jacob, "You're not returning to Canaan because of some vision that you had of God; you are just homesick and you want to go back home." By this statement, Laban is discounting Jacob's statement. "You're not leaving because God came to you in a dream and said, 'Leave, boy.'" This is much from the reception that Abraham's servant received. They accepted on its face that Abraham's servant was there to find a wife for Isaac and that this is God's will.

## Genesis 31:30c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                    | BDB and Strong's #         |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i> | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ] | <i>what, how, why</i>   | interrogative; exclamatory particle | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |

Lâmed + mâh together literally mean *for why*. They can be rendered *why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose*, indicating an interrogatory sentence. BDB also offers the rendering *lest*. Gesenius, perhaps for this passage alone (1Chronicles 15:13), offers the rendering *on account of [that] which, because that*.

<sup>522</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 17, 2016.

## Genesis 31:30c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                               | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| gânab (גָּנַב) [pronounced gaw-NAH <sup>BV</sup> ] | to steal, to take away by theft; to deceive  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                      | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]                       | me; untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally to me, toward me                      | sign of the direct object affixed to a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| 'Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]         | God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix         | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |

The NET Bible: *Yet why did you steal my gods? This last sentence is dropped into the speech rather suddenly. See C. Mabee, "Jacob and Laban: The Structure of Judicial Proceedings," VT 30 (1980): 192-207, and G. W. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," JBL 91 (1972): 90-92.*<sup>523</sup>

**Translation:** *But why did you steal my elohim [= gods]?"* Laban is confused by something which happened. "Why did you steal my gods?" This is a reference to the teraphim that Rachel has stolen from him (he does not know who stole them; but he knows that they are now missing).

This is the first time in the Bible that *elohim* is used for false gods (it is incorrectly translated *gods* back in Genesis 3:5; where it ought to be a reference to *God*). This noun is found quite a number of times (more than 230X) in the Old Testament and over 65X in the Pentateuch.

Laban tells Jacob, "Look, I can get how you want to return home because you hare homesick; and that, quite obviously, you want to take all of your family with you. I get that. But why did you steal my gods?"

Genesis 31:30 *You left suddenly because you greatly longed for your father's home. But why did you steal my gods?"*

### Laban's final charge leveled against Jacob (several commentators)

Gill: *[W]hat reason had he for that? if he took away himself, his wives, his children, his goods, what business had he with his gods?*<sup>524</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *"And now you are gone (for, if you are gone), because you longedst after your father's house, why have you stolen my gods?" The meaning is this: even if your secret departure can be explained, your stealing of my gods cannot.*<sup>525</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"but why did you steal my gods"...Apparently these household gods were superstitiously connected with inheritance and prosperity and Laban saw Jacob's leaving as a loss of prosperity as well as with the loss of inheritance and possibly spiritual direction from these household gods (i.e., teraphim).*<sup>526</sup>

<sup>523</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 17, 2016.

<sup>524</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:30.

<sup>525</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:30 (slightly edited).

<sup>526</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:30.

## Laban's final charge leveled against Jacob (several commentators)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[Laban's] second charge was a grave one - the carrying off his gods - Hebrew, "teraphim," small images of human figures, used not as idols or objects of worship, but as talismans, for superstitious purposes.*<sup>527</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *It is at this point that Laban mentions the stolen gods. That the gods were the last thing on Laban's mind comes out in that he has not mentioned them until now, but they provide a further grounds for complaint, a further means of blaming Jacob, and they were unquestionably important to him. Their theft is a flouting of his authority as well as being an insult to his family. And it would be seen by the confederacy leaders as a grave offence. Thus if he could get these back it might satisfy the confederacy leaders that their journey had not been in vain. Poor Laban. He now has to pacify his own supporters because of the change of mind produced in him by his dream.*<sup>528</sup>

I like Keil and Delitzsch's explanation: *"And now you are gone (for, if you are gone), because you longedst after your father's house, why have you stolen my gods?" The meaning is this: even if your secret departure can be explained, your stealing of my gods cannot.*<sup>529</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Laban's acknowledgement that God had intervened and warned him to not harm Jacob would have made Jacob relax for a moment thinking that Laban is through with his harangue. However, Laban is always full of surprises and saves the worst of all accusations for last, namely, that Jacob has stolen his household idols.*

Wenstrom continues: *Laban tries to justify his actions to some point and acknowledges to Jacob that he realizes that he wanted to return to Isaac and that this was a good enough reason to leave Paddan Aram. His third accusation, "why did you steal my gods?" is also without any evidence and slanders Jacob's character and accuses him of idolatry.*<sup>530</sup>

Benson: *Happy are they who have the Lord for their God. Enemies may steal our goods, but not our God.*<sup>531</sup>

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**Genesis 31:30** And now you have gone because you longed after your father's house. Why have you stolen my gods?"

Laban understands why Jacob is leaving. *To long after your father's house* means, Jacob simply wants to return to his family in the west. So Laban admits, "You want to return to your home in Canaan; I get that."

However, Laban brings up another legitimate concern, which is the fact that he had some small deity statues that were stolen from him. Jacob is not aware that his wife, Rachel, stole these small figures; and Laban has no idea who stole them.

This would suggest that these little deities might have been prominent in Laban's home, as he notices immediately that they are missing. When Laban left to pursue Jacob, he would have been in a hurry. If these figurines were expensive, he might have checked for them.

The College Press Bible Study on Laban's view of the confrontation: *When the two men came face to face the next morning, Laban, blustering and simulating righteous indignation, demands to know*

<sup>527</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:26–30.

<sup>528</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:28–30 (slightly edited).

<sup>529</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:30 (slightly edited).

<sup>530</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 501); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>531</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:30.

way Jacob has so deceived him, trying to present the latter's action in the most unfavorable light. "Laban is as much aware of the extent of his exaggeration as are all others who hear him. At the same time he himself knows best why Jacob fled secretly and without announcement" (EG, 845).<sup>532</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett's view of the Laban situation: *Laban arrives at his camp with other confederacy leaders, mainly his sons. But Jacob must have been very surprised at the way Laban approaches the matter. These words are very different from those Laban had originally planned and are not what Jacob was expecting. The armed force makes it clear that the intention had been to force Jacob back to Paddan-aram in ignominy, and Jacob knew it. And that is what he expects. But unknown to him Laban's awesome experience has made him wary. He no longer dares to demand that Jacob return, so instead he seeks to put Jacob in the wrong socially and personally, and to demonstrate the deep hurt that Jacob has made him suffer.*<sup>533</sup>

Laban showing up with excessive force does not mean that it was his attention to flaunt it. But that does not mean that he intended to use this excessive force. He may have had many men with him just in case (just in case things did not go the way that Laban wanted them to).

As we have seen and will see, both men approach their differences from a point of self-righteousness with some exaggeration thrown in. If either man attempts to view their disputations from the other man's side, it is not found in the text.

Gen. 31:26–30 And Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre? And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?" (ESV)

### Laban's Charges Against Jacob (Various Commentators)

The College Press Bible Study: *Laban plays the role of an outraged parent and grandparent. Smooth hypocrite that he is, he "offers a sentimental pretext for his warlike demonstration, that is, his slighted affection for his offspring and his desire to honor a parting guest" (Skinner). Incidentally, this manner of speeding a parting guest (i.e., with mirth, songs, tabret, and harp) is not mentioned elsewhere in the Old Testament; in New Testament terms it would be designated "revelings" (Galatians 5:21). Laban's recriminations are threefold: the secret flight, the carrying off of his daughters, and the theft of his gods. Obviously, the last-named charge was a very serious matter to Laban; hence it led to the chief scene of the altercation. We cannot avoid the impression that he was far more concerned about his "gods" than about the welfare of his daughters. "The meaning is this: even if thy secret departure can be explained, the stealing of my gods cannot."*<sup>534</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *I interpret this as Laban, the manipulator, making unfair accusations about Jacob. Many of the things that Laban accuses him of are not true to fact. Laban seems to be making his case publicly for the sake of his relatives (and Jacob's) who were listening and would ultimately act as judges.*<sup>535</sup>

Let me suggest that, in Laban's eyes, these were not trumped up charges. However, his list of complaints revealed a great deal of emotionalism.

<sup>532</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26-42).

<sup>533</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:26–28.

<sup>534</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).

<sup>535</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:26–30.

We have no idea how far Laban would have taken this, had God not spoken to him.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Gen. 31:26a, 29–30 And Laban said to Jacob, "It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?" (ESV)

### Laban and his gods (commentators/discussion)

Arthur W. Pink: *That Laban harbored in his home these "teraphim" shows that the idolatry of Babylonia still clung to his family, notwithstanding he had some knowledge of the true God. (See Genesis 31:53). Laban appears to have been a man much after the order of those of whom it is written: "They swore by the Lord and by Malehom" (a heathen god). (Zeph. 1:5).*

Pink then goes on a very interesting tangent: *This strange contradiction in Laban's religious life appears to throw light upon a passage and person that has long puzzled Bible students. We refer to Balaam. This mysterious prophet seems to have been a heathen soothsayer, and yet it is evident he also had some dealings with Jehovah. If Balaam was a descendant of Laban this would account for this religious anomaly. Now in Numbers 23:7 we learn that Balaam came from "Aram," which may possibly be identical with Padan-Aram where Laban dwelt. Balaam prophesied only some 280 years after Jacob's departure from Laban's home, and may then have been an old man, at any rate in those days 280 years covered only about two generations. The Targum of Jonathan on Numbers 27:5, and the Targum on 1 Chronicles 1:44 make Balaam to be Laban himself; and others say he was the son of Boor, the son of Laban. Bearing in mind that Laban employed the "teraphim" as his "gods," if Balaam were one of his descendants then it would explain why he did not utterly disown Jehovah while yet practicing the abominations of the heathen.*<sup>536</sup>

I personally doubt that we can tie Balaam in numbers somehow to Laban (they may or may not be related); but their sin of **syncretism** is similar.

Wesley: *Why have you stolen my gods? - Foolish man! to call those his gods that could be stolen! Could he expect protection from them that could neither resist nor discover their invaders? Happy are they who have the Lord for their God. Enemies may steal our goods, but not our God.*<sup>537</sup>

Matthew Poole: *Laban could not be so senseless as to take those for true gods which could be stolen away; but he called them gods, because they were the means or representations whereby he worshipped his gods.*<sup>538</sup>

John Gill makes the observation: *[Laban] could never think they were truly and really gods, that could not preserve themselves from being stolen away, and that must be a poor god that a man may be robbed of.*<sup>539</sup>

Even though I get the logic that Gill presents here, that does not mean that Gill thought this through, figuring, *obviously, Jacob worships the superior God.* Although people are certain capable of logic regarding their religion, that does not mean that logic is a part of their faith. Furthermore, what had the God of Jacob's father and grandfather done? That is, in the eyes of Laban.

Don't misunderstand me; I am certainly not saying that religion is irrational; I am saying that some people are irrational. People can be irrational regarding a great many things: religion, love, children, toys.

Hawker: *Observe the diligence with which Laban sought after his false gods. Reader! may it provoke you and me to a greater earnestness in seeking for the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.*<sup>540</sup>

<sup>536</sup> From [http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings\\_Genesis/genesis\\_32.htm](http://www.biblebelievers.com/Pink/Gleanings_Genesis/genesis_32.htm) accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>537</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:30 (slightly edited).

<sup>538</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:30.

<sup>539</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:30.

<sup>540</sup> Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Genesis 31:31–33.

## Laban and his gods (commentators/discussion)

We need to bear in mind that Laban was angry, emotional, and the missing gods were one of the few things which he could point to which, if stolen by Jacob, he could get his retribution. But, I think it would be a mistake to think that this is Laban's primary motive.

Wenstrom points out a very important fact: *Genesis 31:19 reveals that it was Rachel and not Jacob who was guilty of stealing Laban's idols. Laban's accusation is also ridiculous since Laban knew full well that Jacob would have nothing to do with his household idols since he worshiped Yahweh who prohibited household idols in his home. Jacob would have nothing to do with Laban's household idols since he did not place any value on them since he had a relationship and fellowship with the Living God who made promises to him and had fulfilled those promises.*<sup>541</sup>

Let me suggest that Laban has not really thought his accusation through at this point. Obviously his gods were stolen and they occurred at the same time that Jacob secretly left. Since Jacob himself would have no use for these gods, the guilt would have fallen on Laban's daughters or their servants. Did Laban really want to take this chance?

There will be more discussion of Laban's personal gods in the next section.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:26–30 Then Laban said to Jacob, "what have you done? You deceived me and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword?" Why did you flee secretly? You deceived me, and did not tell me, or I would have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and lyre. You did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly!!" "It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, (there exists in the power of my hand to manufacture with you evil--but Elohiym of your father spoke to me yesterday and said) 'Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.' And now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; why did you steal my gods?"

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:26–30

1. Laban is a self righteous jerk.
2. His motives for pursuing Jacob had nothing to do with what he states in these verses.
3. Had God not appeared to him and warned him to leave Jacob alone, there is no telling what he may have attempted.
4. It may have been as little as forcing him to return, kidnapping his family, or as much as violence.
5. In any case he confronts Jacob seeking to play the part of the poor wronged father and grandfather.
6. He accuses Jacob of deceiving him, a point in fact, yet he himself would be more aware than anyone why Jacob would have left in this way.
7. Jacob knew he could not trust Laban, and that there was no way to know what Laban may have attempted.
8. He accuses Jacob of mistreating his daughters, treating them like POW's instead of wives.
9. The hypocrisy of Laban is absolute, as he accuses Jacob of doing exactly what he has done to his daughters. vs 14-15
10. As a matter of fact, these two women have never had it so good.
11. For all Jacob's problems, he did not mistreat his wives.
12. Laban continues this harangue against Jacob sneaking away.
13. He states that if Jacob had only let him know that he was leaving, he would have personally thrown a good-bye party of great proportions.
14. He never would have done this, since it would have cost him money, and he would never have spent it on Jacob or his daughters.

<sup>541</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 501); accessed October 18, 2017.

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:26–30

15. Jacob could probably only smile as he considered the last time Laban threw him a party.
16. He continues to play the wounded parent, seeking to make Jacob feel guilty about Laban's lack of opportunity to kiss his relatives good-bye.
17. The fact is, that once a new family unit is formed through marriage the parents need to butt out of their lives anyway, and Laban has continually meddled with his son-in-law over the years.
18. While there is nothing wrong in having a good rapport with your in-laws, if it is possible, the married couple owes neither set of parents anything in the way of access to their family life. "leave father and mother and become one flesh"
19. He accuses Jacob of being stupid, although both he and Jacob know that is not the case.
20. He now takes up his boast, which has become empty after God appeared to him, that he had it well within his power to harm Jacob if he chose to do so.
21. This tone is more threatening than the tone he would have used as he played the grieving parent.
22. He seeks to intimidate Jacob with his supposed power to harm him, which he very likely might have done.
23. One reason for bringing his relatives was no doubt that he expected a fight, and would have Jacob outnumbered easily.
24. Laban acknowledges, probably unwillingly, that God had told him not to meddle with Jacob.
25. He calls God the "God of your father", a devious way of saying that he did not consider God to be Jacob's God.
26. The fact is that it was obvious to Laban that God was Jacob's God and had demonstrated that He was siding with Jacob; a fact Laban did not and would not appreciate.
27. For all his bravado and intimidation, his admission that God had warned him took all the teeth out of any threats Laban uttered.
28. Actually, his admission would have served to encourage Jacob during this encounter.
29. He states that he knew the only reason that Jacob left was because he was overwhelmingly homesick for Isaac.
30. This is not the case either, but it allows Laban to get off the hook before those who were listening.
31. After all, one would not expect this type of person to acknowledge the fact that Jacob left, and left deceitfully, because Laban could not be trusted.
32. He very quickly, with no warning, shifts to the subject of the missing idols, and accuses Jacob of stealing them.
33. While the circumstantial evidence was certainly pointing to the fact that Jacob had stolen them, Laban has no evidence to rightfully accuse or convict Jacob of such a crime.
34. Jacob has shown himself over the years to be nothing but honest with Laban, a fact he will point out later.
35. Laban states this in such a way as to say, "even if your departure can be understood, the stealing of my idols cannot."

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:26–30 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword ? "Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

"It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob "Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?"

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:26–30

### Laban the Plaintiff (vv. 26-30)

1. In the ensuing dispute between Laban and Jacob there is a rather lengthy exchange between the two men.
2. Laban represents the pater familias (family head) and Jacob during the time of his exile was under Laban's authority.
3. In this speech Laban arraigns his nephew and son-in-law.
4. By the end of this chapter the two men make a treaty that put them on an equal footing.
5. Laban logically begins with a twofold complaint: (1) Jacob did not adhere to the proper protocol for leaving his father-in-law, and (2) Jacob has stolen from him.
6. Laban's speech forms an interesting psychological portrait of a man sorely lacking in principled behavior.
7. In other words, a man who has a sorry track record in the proper treatment of even members of his own family.
8. Indignation permeates the whole including feigned indignation for having been taken in.
9. Part of Laban's anger is due to his being the victim of his own tricks rather than principled indignation.
10. The speech then, has rage and resignation, castigation and sweetness.
11. All these elements vie for supremacy, but in the end the whole is unbalanced.
12. The speech begins with a sharp, "What have you done?" (v.26).
13. These are the very words that Jacob spoke to Laban on the occasion of the substitute woman on his wedding night (29:25).
14. Laban accuses Jacob of taking his daughters from him like they were captives of war.
15. In other words, he is saying that they were taken away from their home against their will.
16. But the reader knows better, and what Rachel and Leah think of their father they have made abundantly clear (vv. 14-16).
17. If anyone did the detaining it was Laban who pressured Jacob and his wives for another six years.
18. Laban accuses Jacob of what he would like to do!
19. The words of Laban ooze hypocrisy.
20. He accuses Jacob of secretive and deceitful actions in the manner of his escape from Haran (v. 27a).
21. This coming from the arch deceiver.
22. This is immediately followed by sweetness of speech, which induces a large dose of skepticism on the part of anyone familiar with Laban's personality.
23. He says he would have loved to have thrown a festive going-away party which is designed to induce guilt (v. 27).
24. Especially the part of farewell kisses for his grandchildren and daughters.
25. Laban mixes sweet words with reproach.
26. He ends the guilt-trip statement with a harsh denunciation: "you have done foolishly."
27. Jacob in his defense will explain his secretive departure.
28. The closest Laban comes to a threat is seen in the opening phrase of v. 29: "It is in my power to do you harm..."
29. But he quickly adds that "the God of your father" intervened in a nocturnal intervention telling him not to do say anything with respect to Jacob and company returning to Haran.
30. Here we see Laban's resignation and he was facing deadly consequences if he in any fashion tried to persuade Jacob to turn around and travel back to Haran.
31. Laban was restricted in the nick of time not to say anything "good or bad to Jacob" in this regard.
32. To speak "good" would be to try and sweet-talk Jacob into returning, and to speak "bad" would be to threaten violence if Jacob resisted his overtures.
33. Laban didn't cross that line, in spite of his harsh accusations, and lived to see another day!
34. In v. 30a Laban further tries to resign himself to the inevitable by pretending to understand Jacob's desire to return to his father.
35. "Longed greatly" is a very strong construction in the Hebrew based both on the rare verb used here and only elsewhere in Psa. 84:2 ("My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God."), and based on the fact that we have the term repeated in the

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:26–30

infinitive absolute.

36. Laban saves the most serious charge for last: "Why did you steal my gods?"
37. This was a case of aggravated theft, stealing household gods.
38. Can gods be stolen, and if so what good are they?
39. This irony is not lost on those who eschew idolatry.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

**And so answers Jacob and so he says to Laban, "For I was afraid for I said lest you take by for your daughters from with me. With whom you find your elohim will not live before our brothers. Recognize [what is] to you—what [is] to me—and take to you." And did not know Jacob that Rachel had stolen them.**

Genesis  
31:31–32

**Jacob answered and said to Laban, "[I did this] because I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters from me. [Whoever it is] with whom you find your elohim [or, *your gods*], he will not live before our brothers. Point out [what is] yours—whatever [it is that] I have—and take [them]." Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen his idols [lit., *them*].**

**Jacob answered Laban, saying, "I did this because I was afraid. I thought that you would take your daughters from me. Listen, whoever it is who has taken your gods, he will not live before our brothers. Show me whatever is yours that I have and take it back." Jacob did not know that Rachel has stolen Laban's gods.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so answers Jacob and so he says to Laban, "For I was afraid for I said lest you take by for your daughters from with me. With whom you find your elohim will not live before our brothers. Recognize [what is] to you—what [is] to me—and take to you." And did not know Jacob that Rachel had stolen them.  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Jakob answered and said to Laban, Because I feared; for I said, Lest thou shouldst take away thy daughters from me. The place where thou shalt find thy religious things shall not abide: before our brethren ascertain thou what of thine is with me, and take to thee. But Jakob knew not that Rahel had carried them away.  |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Jakob answered and said to Laban, Because I feared, and said, Lest thou violently take away thy daughters from me. With whomsoever thou shalt find the images of thy idols, let him die before his time. Before all our brethren take knowledge of what with me is thine, and take it. But Jakob knew not that Rahel had stolen them.  |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | Jacob answered: That I departed unknown to you, it was for fear lest you would take away your daughters by force. But whereas you charge me with theft: with whomsoever you shall find your gods, let him be slain before our brethren. Search, and if you find any of your things with me, take them away. <u>Now when he said this</u> , he knew not that Rachel had stolen the idols. |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Ya'aqub answered Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you should take your daughters from me by force.' Anyone you find your deities with shall not live. Before our relatives, discern what is yours with me, and take it." For Ya'aqub did not know that Rachel had stolen them.  |

Peshitta (Syriac) And Jacob answered and said to Laban. Because I was afraid; for I said, Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force. With whomsoever you find your gods, he shall not live; moreover, in the presence of our brethren point out whatever I have that belongs to you, and take it for yourself. For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

Septuagint (Greek) And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid; for I said, Lest at any time you should take away your daughters from me, and all my possessions. And Jacob said, With whomsoever you shall find your gods, he shall not live in the presence of our brethren; take notice of what I have of your property, and take it; and he observed nothing with him, but Jacob knew not that his wife Rachel had stolen them.

Significant differences: The Latin leaves out *and said to Laban*. There are differences as to where *before our brothers* is placed, whether related to the killing of the thief or to notice what Laban has laid out that was stolen (i.e., nothing). This is a matter of interpretation.

The Latin adds in the phrase *Now when he said this*.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English And Jacob, in answer, said to Laban, My fear was that you might take your daughters from me by force. As for your gods, if anyone of us has them, let him be put to death: make search before us all for what is yours, and take it. For Jacob had no knowledge that Rachel had taken them.

Easy English Jacob replied, 'I was afraid. I thought that you would try to stop me. And I thought that you would try to take your daughters away from me. But if you find your gods with anyone here, that person will die. While our relatives watch, you may look for anything that belongs to you. If you find anything then take it.' Jacob did not know that Rachel had taken her father's gods.

Easy-to-Read Version–2006 Jacob answered, "I left without telling you, because I was afraid. I thought you would take your daughters away from me. But I did not steal your gods. If you find anyone here with me who has taken your gods, they will be killed. Your men will be my witnesses. You can look for anything that belongs to you. Take anything that is yours." (Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen Laban's gods.)

International Children's B. Jacob answered Laban, "I left without telling you, because I was afraid! I thought you would take your daughters away from me. If you find anyone here who has taken your idols, he will be killed! Your relatives will be my witnesses. You may look for anything that belongs to you. Take anything that is yours." (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen Laban's idols.)

*The Message* Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid. I thought you would take your daughters away from me by brute force. But as far as your gods are concerned, if you find that anybody here has them, that person dies. With all of us watching, look around. If you find anything here that belongs to you, take it." Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

New Simplified Bible Jacob answered Laban: »I was afraid you might take your daughters from me by force. »As for your gods, if anyone of us has them, let him be put to death. Make a search in front of us all for what is yours, and take it.« Jacob had no knowledge that Rachel had taken them.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible Jacob responded to Laban, "I was afraid and convinced myself that you would take your daughters away from me. Whomever you find with your divine images won't

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
|                         | live. Identify whatever I have that is yours, in front of your brothers, and take it.” Jacob didn’t know that Rachel had stolen them.   |
| Contemporary English V. | Jacob answered, "I left secretly because I was afraid you would take your daughters from me by force. If you find that any one of us has taken your idols, I'll have that person killed. Let your relatives be witnesses. Show me what belongs to you, and you can take it back." Jacob did not realize that Rachel had stolen the household idols.   |
| The Living Bible        | "I sneaked away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I said to myself, 'He'll take his daughters from me by force.' But as for your household idols, a curse upon anyone who took them. Let him die! If you find a single thing we've stolen from you, I swear before all these men, I'll give it back without question." For Jacob didn't know that Rachel had taken them.                              |
| New Berkeley Version    | Jacob answered Laban, "I fled because I feared you might forcibly take your daughters from me. With whom you find your gods, let him not live. Under supervision of our kinsmen make a search for what I have that is yours and take it"; for Jacob did not know that Rachel had purloined them.  |
| New Century Version     | Jacob answered Laban, "I left without telling you, because I was afraid you would take your daughters away from me. If you find anyone here who has taken your idols, that person will be killed! Your relatives will be my witnesses. You may look for anything that belongs to you and take anything that is yours." (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen Laban's idols.)                       |
| New Life Version        | Jacob answered Laban, "Because I was afraid you might take your daughters from me and make them stay. The one with whom you find your gods will not live. In front of those of our family, look for what I have that is yours, and take it." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.  |
| New Living Translation  | "I rushed away because I was afraid," Jacob answered. "I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. But as for your gods, see if you can find them, and let the person who has taken them die! And if you find anything else that belongs to you, identify it before all these relatives of ours, and I will give it back!" But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the household idols. |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | And Jacob replied to Laban: '[I left secretly] because I was afraid that you would take your daughters and all my possessions away from me!' Then Jacob went on to say: 'But whoever you find that has [stolen] your gods won't [be allowed to] live in the presence of our family. So, look around for anything I might have that's yours and take it!' [Well, Laban searched], but he couldn't find anything (Jacob didn't realize that his woman Rachel had stolen [the idols]). |
| Beck's American Translation | "I was afraid," Jacob answered Laban. "I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. If you find anyone who has your gods, he must not live. In the presence of our relatives search and see if I have anything that's yours and take it." Jacob didn't know Rachel had stolen them.   |
| International Standard V    | <b>Laban Searches for His Idols</b><br>"I was afraid," Jacob replied. "I thought you might take your daughters from me. Now as to your gods, if you find someone has them in their possession, he's a dead man [Lit. <i>he is not to live</i> ]. Take our relatives as witnesses, search through our belongings, and take whatever belongs to you that's in my possession." But Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the idols [Lit. <i>them</i> ].                             |
| Revised Knox Bible          | To this Jacob answered, If I left you unawares, it was because I was afraid you would rob me of your daughters by violence. But as for your charge of theft, whoever is found with these gods of yours in his possession shall pay for it with his life. Make search in the presence of your kinsmen and mine, and take away with   |

you all you find here that belongs to you. Of Rachel's carrying off the images, Jacob knew nothing.

Translation for Translators Jacob replied to Laban, saying, "I did not tell you that we were planning to leave, because I was afraid. I thought that *if I told you*, you would forcefully take your daughters away from me. But if you find anyone here who has your wooden idols, we will execute that person. While our relatives are watching, search for yourself to see if there is anything that belongs to you that is here with me. If you find anything, you can take it!" When Jacob said that, he did not know that Rachel had stolen the wooden idols.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | Jacob was to answer, and was to say to Laban: I am to have been afraid, for I am to have said: Lest you was to tear away from me your daughters. That which you was to find of they he of mighty ones of yours - was he to live before our brothers? - Be discerning, indeed be taking it back - is Jacob to have known that Rachel is to have stolen them? -  |
| Conservapedia           | Jacob said to Laban in answer, "Well, I was afraid that you'd snatch your daughters back from me [A ridiculous excuse.]. And if you find your gods in the hands of anyone in my camp, you have my permission to execute him. You may identify for yourself, in front of our kinfolk, whatever belongs to you that is in my camp, and take it back!" Jacob said this because he did not know that Rachel had stolen them. |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible     | Then Jacob replied, " Because I was afraid ; for I said he will certainly steal his daughters from me. If, however, you find your Gods, it is not known to me. Go round what is with me, and take your own." (For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.)   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Jacob answered and said to Laban: because I was afraid, and thought that you would have taken away your daughters from me. But with whomsoever you find your gods, let him die here before our brethren. Seek that your is by me, and take it to you: for Jacob knew not that Rahel had stolen them.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | Jacob answered and said to Laban: Because I was afraid—because I said— that thou wouldest take thy daughters from me by force. With whomsoever thy gods be found, that one shall not live. In the presence of our kinsmen make a search for thyself what of thine I have and take it for thyself. For Jacob knew nothing of the fact that Rachel had stolen them.  |
| Tree of Life Version    | In response, Jacob said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought, 'Suppose you snatch your daughters away from me.' Anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In front of our relatives, identify whatever is yours that is with me, and take it back." (But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.)  |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid and thought that you would take your daughters from me by force I left secretly. Whoever has stolen your gods will not continue to live. In the presence of our relatives, identify whatever with me is yours and take it." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, because I was afraid when I thought perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force. But regarding your elohim, if anyone of us has them let him be put to death, make a search here in our presence now for what is yours, and take it. Because Jacob had no knowledge that Rachel had taken them.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Jacob answered, and said to Laban: "because I was afraid, because I said, lest you strip your daughters from my side. With whoever you shall find your gods will not live, against my brother, In sight of our kin come to see what is my lot, and take what is yours", and Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.  |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Christian Community (1988) | Jacob replied to Laban, "It was because I was afraid you would take your daughters from me! But whoever is found in possession of your gods will not live. In the presence of our relatives see for yourself if anything that belongs to you is here with me and, if so, take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.        |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Jacob spoke, and said to Laban, Because I was afraid; because I said, Perhaps you would pluck off your daughters from me. With whomever are your gods, let him not live; recognize for yourself in front of our brothers what is with me, and take it to yourself. And Jacob did not know by seeing that Rachel had stolen them.              |
| New American Bible (2011)  | Jacob replied to Laban, "I was frightened at the thought that you might take your daughters away from me by force. As for your gods, the one you find them with shall not remain alive! If, with our kinsmen looking on, you identify anything here as belonging to you, take it." Jacob had no idea that Rachel had stolen the household images. |
| New Jerusalem Bible        | Jacob answered Laban, 'I was afraid, thinking you were going to snatch your daughters from me. But whoever is found in possession of your gods shall not remain alive. In the presence of our brothers, examine for yourself what I have, and take what is yours.' Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had appropriated them.                      |
| Revised English Bible      | Jacob answered, "I was afraid; I thought you would take your daughters from me by force. Whoever is found in possession of your gods shall die for it. In the presence of our kinsmen as witnesses, identify anything I have that is yours, and take it back." Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.                                |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Complete Jewish Bible | Ya'akov answered Lavan, "Because I was afraid. I said, 'Suppose you take your daughters away from me by force?' But if you find your gods with someone, that person will not remain alive. So with our kinsmen to witness, if you spot anything that I have which belongs to you, take it back." Ya'akov did not know that Rachel had stolen them. |
| The Complete Tanach   | And Jacob replied, and he said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, because I said, 'Lest you steal your daughters from me.'   |

**Because I was afraid, etc:** He answered him the first [question] first, that he said to him (verse 26), "and you led away my daughters, etc." - [from Avoth d'Rabbi Nathan , 37:11-13]

The one with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our brothers, recognize for yourself what is with me, and take [it] for yourself." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

**shall not live:** And from that curse, Rachel died on the way (Gen. Rabbah 74:4).

**what is with me:** of yours. — [from Targum Jonathan]

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| exeGesés companion Bible | And Yaaqov answers and says to Laban,<br>Because I awe: for I say,<br>Lest you strip your daughters from me.<br>With whomever you find your elohim, lives not!<br>At the face of our brothers<br>recognize what is with me<br>and take it to yourself.<br>- for Yaaqov discerns not that Rachel stole them. |
| Kaplan Translation       | Jacob spoke up. '[I left this way] because I was afraid,' he said. 'I thought that you might take your daughters away from me by force. If you find your gods with anyone here, let him not live! Let all our close relatives here be witnesses. See if   |

there is anything belonging to you and take it back.' Jacob did not realize that Rachel had stolen them. Jacob's curse came true (Genesis 35:18).  
 Orthodox Jewish Bible And Ya'akov answered and said to Lavan, Because I was afraid; for I said, Thou wouldest take by force thy banot from me.  
 With whomsoever thou findest eloheicha, let him not live; before acheinu discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Ya'akov knew not that Rachel had played the ganav with them.  
 The Scriptures 1998 And Ya'aqob answered and said to Lavan, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you tear your daughters away from me.' "With whomever you find your mighty ones, do not let him live. In the presence of our brothers, see for yourself what is with me and take it with you." For Ya'aqob did not know that Raḥēl had stolen them.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

The Amplified Bible Jacob answered Laban, "[I left secretly] because I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our relatives [search my possessions and] point out whatever you find that belongs to you and take it." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the idols.

The Expanded Bible Jacob answered [and said to] Laban, "I left without telling you, because I was afraid you would take [forcibly remove] your daughters away from me. If you find anyone here who has taken your idols [gods], that person will be killed [not live]! Your [Our] relatives [brothers] will be my witnesses. You may look for anything that belongs to you and take anything that is yours." (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen Laban's idols.)

Kretzmann's Commentary And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid; for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me. That was answering the first question of Laban, as to why Jacob had left Mesopotamia in the manner he did, and it did not reveal the most flattering opinion of Laban. And so far as the accusation was concerned: 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. The statement shows the emphasis with which Jacob resented the suspicion of thieving which was raised against him. He boldly invited Laban to institute a search in the presence of their kinsmen and declares that the person with whom the images should be found had merited death. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

NET Bible® "I left secretly because I was afraid!" [Heb "and Jacob answered and said to Laban, 'Because I was afraid.'" This statement is a not a response to the question about Laban's household gods that immediately precedes, but to the earlier question about Jacob's motivation for leaving so quickly and secretly (see v. 27). For this reason the words "I left secretly" are supplied in the translation to indicate the connection to Laban's earlier question in v. 27. Additionally the order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse have been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.] Jacob replied to Laban. "I thought [Heb "for I said."] you might take your daughters away from me by force [Heb "lest you steal your daughters from with me."]. Whoever has taken your gods will be put to death [Heb "With whomever you find your gods, he will not live."]! In the presence of our relatives [Heb "brothers."] identify whatever is yours and take it [Heb "recognize for yourself what is with me and take for yourself."]." (Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.) [The disjunctive clause (introduced here by a vav [i] conjunction) provides supplemental material that is important to the story. Since this material is parenthetical in nature, it has been placed in parentheses in the translation.]

The Pulpit Commentary And Jacob answered—"in an able and powerful speech" (Kalisch)—and said to Laban (replying to his first interrogation as to why Jacob had stolen away

unawares), **Because I was afraid: for I said** (sc. to myself), **Peradventure** (literally, lest, i.e. I must depart without informing thee lest) **thou wouldest** (or shoudest) **take by force**—the verb signifies to strip off as skin from flesh (vide Mic. 3:2), and hence to forcibly remove—**thy daughters from me** (after which, in response to Laban's question about his stolen gods, he proceeds). **With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live.** If Jacob meant he shall not live, but I will slay him with mine own hand (Aben Ezra), let God destroy him (Abarbanel), I give him up to thee to put to death (Rosenmüller), let him instantly die (Drusius), he was guilty of great unadvisedness in speech. Accordingly, the import of his words has been mollified by regarding them simply as a prediction, "he will not live," i.e. he will die before his time (Jonathan), a prediction which, the Rabbins note, was fulfilled in Rachel (vide Genesis 35:16, Genesis 35:18); or by connecting them with clause following, "he will not live before our brethren," i.e. let him be henceforth cut off from the society of his kinsmen (LXX; Bush). Yet, even as thus explained, the language of Jacob was precipitate, since he ought first to have inquired at his wives and children before pronouncing so emphatically on a matter of which he was entirely ignorant (Calvin). **Before our brethren**—not Jacob's sons, but Laban's kinsmen (Genesis 31:23)—**discern thou**—literally, examine closely for thyself, the hiph. of רָכַן (to be strange) meaning to press strongly into a thing, i.e. to perceive it by finding out its distinguishing characteristics (vide Furst, sub voce)—**what is thine with me, and take it to thee.** **For** (literally, and) **Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them**—otherwise he would have spoken with less heat and more caution.

The Voice

**Jacob** (*answering Laban*): *I left because I was afraid, and because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. But I pledge to you that anyone who stole your gods will not live. I certainly did not take them.* Here in the presence of all of our relatives, *search the camp* and let's see if anything I have is yours. If there is, you can take it back!

Of course, Jacob had no idea Rachel had stolen the idols.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> answered and he said to Lavan <sup>[White]</sup>, given that I feared, given that I said, otherwise you will pluck away your daughters from me, whoever you find with your powers, he will not live, in the face of our brothers recognize what belongs to you by me and take to you and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> did not know that Rahhel <sup>[Ewe]</sup> stole them,...

Concordant Literal Version And answering is Jacob and saying to Laban, "For I feared, for I said, lest you may be snatching your daughters from me, and all that is mine. With whom you are finding your elohim, not live shall he. In front of our brethren, identify what is yours, withal, and take it to you. Yet not know did Jacob that Rachel, his wife, had stolen them.

NASB Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take it for yourself." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

New King James Version Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.' With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take it with you." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

New European Version Jacob answered Laban, Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you should take your daughters from me by force'. Anyone you find your gods with shall not live. Before our relatives, discern what is yours with me, and take it. For Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen them.

Young's Updated LT

And Jacob answers and says to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, Lest you take violently away your daughters from me. With whomever you find your gods—he does not live; before our brothers discern for yourself what is with me, and take to yourself:" and Jacob has not known that Rachel has stolen them.

**The gist of this passage:**

Jacob says he took his wives away secretly because he was worried that Laban might take them from him. He suggests the death penalty for anyone who is found with the household gods, not knowing the Rachel was the one who stole them.

31-32

How we understand this verse is dependent upon whether or not we believe Jacob.

| Genesis 31:31a  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| ʿânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced <i>gaw-NAWH</i> ]                     | <i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #6030<br>BDB #772 |
| Yaʿăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-guh-KOH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]                      | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]                    | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition                       | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]         | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                 | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |

**Translation:** *Jacob answered and said to Laban,...* Jacob possibly has thought about what he would say to Laban. No doubt he notices just how slowly he is moving. Besides, in such a situation, Jacob would be thinking about Laban and what he might say to him, moving slowly or no.

## Genesis 31:31b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                 | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|
| kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]            | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>  | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition                                      | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| yârê' (יָרֵא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]   | <i>to fear, to be afraid; to fear-respect, to reverence, to have a reverential respect</i>   | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect  | Strong's #3372<br>BDB #431 |
| kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]            | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>  | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition                                      | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]   | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect  | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| pen (פֶּן) [pronounced pen]          | <i>lest, peradventure, or else, in order to prevent, or, so that [plus a negative]</i>   | conjunction   | Strong's #6435<br>BDB #814 |
| gâzal (גָּזַל) [pronounced gaw-ZAHL] | <i>to flay [skin off another's body]; to remove, to take [carry] away from; to pluck off [away from]; to absorb, to drink up; takes to oneself, claims for oneself; to despoil [with fraud, injustice]</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                              | Strong's #1497<br>BDB #159 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]         | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                           | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced bahth]       | <i>daughter; village</i>   | feminine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix        | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |
| min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]          | <i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of</i>  | preposition of separation   | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| 'im (עִם) [pronounced geem]          | <i>with, at, by, near</i>  | preposition of nearness and vicinity; with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

Together, these prepositions mean: *from with, beside, from being with, away from, far from, from among, from the possession of, from the custody of, from the house of, from the vicinity of, out of the power of, from the mind of.*

**Translation:**...“[I did this] because I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters from me. Jacob sounds concerned that Laban might take his daughters from him. Whether this is a real concern of his or not is the true question.

At least one commentator believes this to be a phony excuse. Obviously, Jacob had no idea what Laban might do. My guess is, he worried more about Laban taking back his sheep and goats than his wives (who would have been worthless to Laban at this point).

Jacob is at least partially truthful with Laban at this point. He high-tailed it out of Haran because he was afraid of Laban and what Laban might do. Jacob feels as though he can be honest at this point; since he tried to outsmart and to circumvent what would have been proper behavior and that didn't work.

Genesis 31:31 Jacob answered Laban, saying, "I did this because I was afraid. I thought that you would take your daughters from me."

### Jacob's fears regarding Laban (commentators/discussion)

Trapp believes Jacob's words implicitly: *Because I was afraid.*] Note the patriarch's simplicity and veracity, without cunning or colouring.<sup>542</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Jacob...even anticipated that Laban might use his power as patriarch of his tribe and take from Jacob by force the wives whom he had grown to love.*<sup>543</sup>

What might have Laban done? Chuck Smith suggests: *And Jacob had a right to be afraid. The guy probably would have taken the daughters and all of the animals.*<sup>544</sup>

Matthew Henry: *If Laban deceive Jacob in his wages, it is likely he will make no conscience of robbing him of his wives...What may not be feared from men that have no principle of honesty?*<sup>545</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *[Jacob] fled because he could not trust Laban, who, he thought, would keep his daughters by force.*<sup>546</sup>

Whedon presents Jacob's fears in a more general way: *[Jacob] feared that the man who forced him to marry, contrary to his desire and agreement, would be as likely to add other high-handed acts of wrong.*<sup>547</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In response to Laban's question as to why Jacob left secretly, Jacob replies in Genesis 31:31, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force." Therefore, Jacob's sin in this matter was a lack of faith in the Lord to protect him from Laban. Jacob should have left openly, trusting that the Lord would protect from Laban as He said He would in Genesis 28:15 in the phrase "I will keep you."*<sup>548</sup>

My educated guess is, even though Jacob said, "I was afraid you would take my wives from me;" he was probably more afraid that Laban would take some of his livestock back. That is where the money is.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *This statement reveals that Jacob's sin was not that he left Laban secretly but that he left secretly out fear of Laban, and which fear was a sin because it was due to a lack of faith in God's promise to him that he would protect him (See Genesis 28:15) and would be with him (See Genesis 28:15 31:3).*

Wenstrom continues: *If Laban attempted to take back his daughters and his grandchildren, Jacob would have fought. Undoubtedly, the Lord also would have fought for him as well and given him the victory over Laban and his men since Jacob's boys were the progenitors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Therefore, we see that Jacob answers Laban's first two accusations by revealing that he left secretly out of fear of Laban, and which fear was due to a lack of faith in the Lord's promise to protect him.*<sup>549</sup>

<sup>542</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:31.

<sup>543</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>544</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:29–31.

<sup>545</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:25–35.

<sup>546</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:31.

<sup>547</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:31.

<sup>548</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 494); accessed October 16, 2017.

<sup>549</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 497); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Jacob's fears regarding Laban (commentators/discussion)

L. M. Grant: *Jacob answers his first question first, excusing himself for his secret departure on the ground of his being afraid that Laban might take Leah and Rachel from him by force. This was not sensible, for it is not likely that Laban would want two daughters back under his roof to care for, with their children, without any prospect of their having husbands. Besides, Laban had sold his daughters at a high monetary price.*<sup>550</sup>

Personally, I cannot see Laban taking his daughters back. That would be illogical. They were valuable to him as virginal women; he got what they were worth. If Laban took them by force, this would have involved a whole new level of cost and control from that point forward. Taking his daughters back would mean that Laban would have inherited a whole new set of costs—paying for his daughters and grandchildren for the rest of his life (as the daughters would not be able to get married again<sup>551</sup>).

Let me suggest that Laban was quite angry and did not fully reason out what he would say and do when he caught up with Jacob. At best, he could complain that Jacob just up and left; and at worst, Laban knows that his idolatrous statues were taken. The people in the Bible are real people, and they act like real people. Therefore, sometimes, people in the Bible act irrationally (or, say, not completely rationally). I think that, had Laban been rational, he would have reconsidered this hasty pursuit of Jacob and his family, recognizing that he and his sons wanted Jacob gone, and now they were gone. There is certainly the value of the idols to consider; but were they worth a 7-day pursuit with a half-dozen or more of his men?

The idols add an interesting dimension. Were they valuable and were they wrong and idolatrous? It seems logical to me that they were valuable and they were wrong and idolatrous as well. Who would the likely thief (thieves) be? That would have depended upon Laban's treatment of these gods. Were they placed around the house out in the open for protection or religious reasons? Did everyone know about them or a limited few know that Laban had them?

Most importantly, did Laban ever consider that, having these gods when he is related to men with a special connection to the God of the Universe—did he ever consider his collection of gods to be wrong? Like many men, let me suggest that Laban was not in the habit of considering the error of his own ways.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Genesis 31:31** And Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters away from me by force.'

Laban began with a set of questions, and then ended with a question: "Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and did not tell me so that I might have sent you away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and with harp? And why have you not allowed me to kiss my sons and my daughters? You have done foolishly in so doing. Why have you stolen my gods?" (Vv. 27–28, 30b) Jacob answers the first set of questions with, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Perhaps you would take your daughters away from me by force.' "

I don't know this to be a legitimate concern that Jacob had. He has been with Laban for 20 years and Laban has cheated him on many occasions during that period of time. Therefore, Jacob does not know what Laban is capable of doing. Jacob may be exaggerating Laban's actions a bit. However, no matter what Laban has done to Jacob, God has always overruled him.

God has given Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a series of promises. If Jacob were to review these promises and trust God, then doing the right thing would be appropriate.

<sup>550</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>551</sup> It is quite rare for non-virgins to marry in the ancient world; and even more rare for women with children to marry. My point being, Laban received all the financial gain that he could have possibly gotten from his daughters.

Jacob has continually tried to overcome evil with evil. Whatever Laban did to him, Jacob tried to overcome using the wrong approach. When Laban tried to limit Jacob's pay, Jacob used some goofy voodoo thing to try to compensate for being cheated. Even as Jacob told his wives, "Your father has changed my wages 10 times," he still had a boatload of livestock.

Next, Jacob addresses Laban's second concern:

| Genesis 31:32a  |  |   |                                    |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                 |
| ‘îm (עִם) [pronounced <i>geem</i> ]   | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>  | preposition of nearness and vicinity  | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767         |
| ’ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>ash-ER</i> ]   | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>   | relative pronoun  | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81           |
| Literally translated, <i>with whom</i> ; translated here <i>anyone with whom, with whomever</i> . |  |   |                                    |
| mâtsâ’ (מָצָא) [pronounced <i>maw-TSAW</i> ]  | <i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover; to meet (encounter)</i>                                    | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                        | Strong's #4672<br>BDB #592         |
| ’êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                     | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84           |
| ’Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]  | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>  | masculine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43           |
| lô’ (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]  | <i>not, no</i>   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation                  | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518         |
| châyâh (חַיָּה) [pronounced <i>khaw-YAW</i> ]   | <i>to live, to have life, to revive, to recover health, to be healed, to be refreshed</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                        | Strong's #2421 & #2425<br>BDB #310 |
| neged (נֶגַד) [pronounced <i>NEH-ged</i> ]  | <i>what is conspicuous when it is a substantive and, as a preposition, in front of, in the sight of, opposite to, before (in the sense of being in front of)</i> | preposition   | Strong's #5048<br>BDB #617         |
| ’achîym (אֲחֵים) [pronounced <i>awhk-EEM</i> ]  | <i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>  | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix             | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26           |

**Translation:** [Whomever it is] with whom you find your elohim [or, your gods], he will not live before our brothers. Jacob suggests capital punishment for whomever has stolen the gods.

Jacob opens up judgment to be made by *our brothers*, which would have simply referred to the men who were there with Jacob and Laban.

This narrative about the gods is quite interesting. They appear to have been valuable. I don't know that they were so valuable as to motivate Laban to chase Jacob down, but they were at least a contributing factor (obviously, Laban wanted to give Jacob a piece of his mind to take with him to Canaan). The missing gods—which Laban logically figured had to have been taken by someone in Jacob's crew—gave him one solid, actionable crime.

That Jacob calls for the death of the one stealing the idols—this turns out to be somewhat prophetic, as Rachel will die in Genesis 35. Does his curse carry weight? I am not prepared to answer that. Leah, however, will die much later and without any details given (Genesis 49:31).

Jacob has so much faith in those with him, and I would guess that it would never occur to him that one with him had stolen Laban's gods.

Genesis 31:31–32 *Jacob answered Laban, saying, "I did this because I was afraid. I thought that you would take your daughters from me. Listen, whoever it is who has taken your gods, he will not live before our brothers. Show me whatever is yours that I have and take it back." Jacob did not know that Rachel has stolen Laban's gods.*

### Jacob's response to Laban (several commentators)

David Guzik: *Jacob, not knowing his beloved wife Rachel stole the household idols, proclaimed his innocence and pronounced a harsh curse on the thief, not knowing actually put a curse on his own wife.*<sup>552</sup>

Matthew Henry: *As to the charge of stealing Laban's gods Jacob pleads not guilty, Genesis 31:32. He not only did not take them himself (he was not so fond of them), but he did not know that they were taken. Yet perhaps he spoke too hastily and inconsiderately when he said, "Whoever had taken them, let him not live;" upon this he might reflect with some bitterness when, not long after, Rachel who had taken them died suddenly in travail.*<sup>553</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob responds to Laban's first two accusations: (1) Genesis 31:26: "Why did you flee secretly and steal away from me?" (2) Genesis 31:27: "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?"*

Wenstrom continues: *He does not respond immediately to Laban's third accusation that appears in Genesis 31:30, "Why did you steal my gods?" Jacob does not immediately answer Laban's charge of stealing his household idols in order that he might set the record straight before both Laban's men and his own household exactly why he had left suddenly and secretly. He states to everyone that if he had attempted to leave openly that he was afraid and for good reason that Laban would have tried to take his daughters and their children back from him by force.*

Wenstrom concludes: *This statement reveals that Jacob's sin was not that he left Laban secretly but that he left secretly out fear of Laban, and which fear was a sin because it was due to a lack of faith in God's promise to him that he would protect him (See Genesis 28:15) and would be with him (See Genesis 28:15 31:3).*<sup>554</sup>

In Jacob's response to Laban there is one thing he never mentions—God's orders for him to leave.<sup>555</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Dr. Robert Dean: *Here we see how God protects Rachel and the seed, even though she is wrong. Laban goes looking for his gods and three times the text indicates that he can't find them.*<sup>556</sup>

<sup>552</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:30–35.

<sup>553</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:25–35 (slightly edited).

<sup>554</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 501); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>555</sup> Leupold points that out.

<sup>556</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

| Genesis 31:32b  |  |  |                            |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| nâkar (נָכַר) [pronounced naw-KAHR]                             | <i>regard, observe, pay attention to, pay regard to, notice, recognise (as formerly known), perceive, be willing to recognize or acknowledge, acknowledge with honour, be acquainted with, contemplate, behold, recognize, know, know how, care for; point out</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperative                                 | Strong's #5234<br>BDB #647 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]                                      | <i>what, how, why</i>  | interrogative; exclamatory particle  | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |
| ‘îm (עִם) [pronounced ġeem]                                     | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>  | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix         | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]                           | <i>take, seize, take away, take in marriage; send for, fetch, bring, receive</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative                                    | Strong's #3947<br>BDB #542 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                          | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** Point out [what is] yours—whatever [it is that] I have—and take [them].” Jacob pretty much invites Laban to check out anything, to go through his stuff and anyone else’s stuff, and take whatever belongs to him. Jacob figured that this stack of things would amount to nothing.

**Genesis 31:32a-b** With whomever you find your gods, let him not live. Before our brothers, choose what is yours with me, and take it to you.”

Jacob makes a very bold statement here that, whomever has Laban’s gods should die. This suggests that there is the understood principle that (1) stealing is wrong and (2) death for stealing is the accepted punishment. Both men appear to agree to this.

*Clarke: It appears that anciently theft was punished by death; and we know that the patriarchs had the power of life and death in their hands.*<sup>557</sup>

<sup>557</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:32.

Genesis 31:31a, 32 Jacob answered Laban, saying, "Listen, whoever it is who has taken your gods, he will not live before our brothers. Show me whatever is yours that I have and take it back." Jacob did not know that Rachel has stolen Laban's gods.

### Jacob's Defiant Response to Laban's Charges (Various Commentators)

John Gill: *With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live*,.... This is the answer to his last question, as what goes before is to his first: Jacob knew nothing of their being taken away by any, and thought himself safe in saying what he did, being confident that no one with him could ever take them; but it was too rashly spoken by him, giving leave to Laban to put to death the person with whom they should be found, or imprecating death on him by the hand of God; "may he not live", but die, die immediately or before his time.<sup>558</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *Jacob knew nothing of the theft; hence he declared, that with whomsoever he might find the gods he should be put to death, and told Laban to make the strictest search among all the things that he had with him.*<sup>559</sup>

The College Press Bible Study: *To Laban's hypocritical approach, Jacob replied with bluntness, specifying the hardships of his twenty years' service and the attempts to defraud him of his hire. Knowing nothing of Rachel's theft of the teraphim, Jacob proved to be so sure of the innocence of his household that he offered to give up the culprit to death if the theft could be proved. (As we have noted heretofore, for Laban these "gods" had more legal than religious import: according to Nuzi law, a son-in-law who possessed the household idols might claim the family inheritance in court. Laban intended to have nothing of that kind to happen.) Jacob admitted bluntly that he had resorted to flight because he feared that his father-in-law would take the daughters away from him by force.*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *"Since Jacob's cause was just and since he had just been charged with theft, Jacob feels the necessity of answering the last question or charge. He is so sure that no one would have been guilty of such a deed that he boldly asserts that the thief shall die, should he be found. Such a punishment for such a crime may have been suggested by the prevalent attitude of the times reflected in the Code of Hammurabi—a few centuries old by this time—that they who stole the property of a god (or temple) should die. Yet, though in himself entirely certain of his ground, Jacob ought never to have made such an assertion. Seemingly Jacob feels this, for as he invites the search, he merely asks Laban to take whatever he thinks Jacob or his retinue have taken wrongfully; he does not again threaten the death of the idol thief. That nothing be covered up Jacob asks that the search be made 'in the presence of our kinsmen.' Finally the necessary explanation that Jacob had never for a moment thought Rachel capable of such a deed" (EG, 848).*<sup>560</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Conscious of his own innocence and little suspecting the misdeed of his favorite wife, Jacob boldly challenged a search and denounced the heaviest penalty on the culprit. A personal scrutiny was made by Laban, who examined every tent [Genesis 31:33]; and having entered Rachel's last, he would have infallibly discovered the stolen images had not Rachel made an appeal to him which prevented further search [Genesis 31:34, Genesis 31:35].*<sup>561</sup>

Matthew Poole: *Let him not live; I give my consent that he shall die by the hands of justice. A rash and inconsiderate sentence.*<sup>562</sup>

<sup>558</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:32.

<sup>559</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:31–32.

<sup>560</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).

<sup>561</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:31–32.

<sup>562</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:32.

## Jacob's Defiant Response to Laban's Charges (Various Commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *On the other hand he asserts his innocency on the charge of the theft of the gods, and gives permission for a search and agrees that any thief will suffer the death sentence. Let the confederacy leaders be witness to what happens. The hearer and reader, who are aware of what Rachel has done, now feel a mounting in tension. The death sentence has been passed on Rachel! But Jacob does not know what Rachel has done.*<sup>563</sup>

Wesley: *As to the charge of stealing Laban's gods, he pleads not guilty. He not only did not take them himself, but he did not know that they were taken.*<sup>564</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *In v.31 Jacob gives a truthful, if a bit pathetic, excuse for his surreptitious departure: He was afraid that Laban wouldn't allow Jacob to leave with Laban's daughters. Perhaps this is true, and Laban was certainly capable of such things. Nevertheless, Jacob is confessing his own lack of faith in God's power to solve these problems.*<sup>565</sup>

We should bear in mind that Jacob has full rights to his wives; and that Laban has no rights to his daughters. Furthermore, it would be illogical for Laban to try to take his daughters back, as he would have to support them for the rest of his life.

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Trapp severely berates<sup>566</sup> Jacob for making such a rash vow (and he should have included Laban, who seemingly accepted this vow without thinking it through). What would they had done, had Rachel been discovered with the idolatrous statues? Trapp reasonably compares this to Jephthah, who vowed to sacrifice the first thing that he saw to the Lord on behalf of God's overarching protection and victory afforded him. His daughter is the one who first appears to him, and she is *sacrificed* (or, *dedicated to God*) by not knowing a man and not being married. See **Judges 11** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) for an examination of Jephthah's hasty words and the end result.<sup>567</sup>

Trapp concludes his observations with: *It should seem by that of our Saviour {Matthew 12:37} that a man's most and worst sins are his words. And St Paul, making the anatomy of a natural man, stands more upon the organ of speaking than on all the other members: {Romans 3:9–18} Let therefore your words be few, true, and ponderous. An open mouth is a purgatory to the master. Carry a pair of balances between your lips.*<sup>568</sup>

Regarding Jacob's statement, Scott writes (in Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge): *This was rash, and might have produced fatal effects; but Jacob was partial to Rachel, and did not suspect her; and he was indignant at being accused of a crime which he deeply abhorred.*<sup>569</sup>

Throughout the book of Genesis, before we come to the Law of Moses, there are specific standards by which men lived (or believed they should live); and these were universally agreed to.

## Standards of Behavior Agreed to before the Mosaic Law

<sup>563</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:32.

<sup>564</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:31.

<sup>565</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>566</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:32.

<sup>567</sup> This is also a chapter used by those who hate the Scriptures to claim that the Hebrews believed in human sacrifice.

<sup>568</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:32 (slightly edited).

<sup>569</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:32.

1. Murder was wrong and punishable by death. Genesis 9:6
2. Lying is wrong. Genesis 12:18–19 20:9
3. Adultery is wrong. Genesis 20:3 26:11
4. Stealing is wrong; and death was a reasonable punishment for stealing. Genesis 31:32
5. Envy leads to bad behavior. Genesis 26:12–15

These standards of behavior in ancient society make up the final 5 commandments, which were a social contract between men to preserve individual freedom.

There was no one society that believed that stealing was right; and another society that believed that stealing was wrong. These are fundamental laws written upon our hearts (Romans 2:15). Whether God placed this on the hearts of men or whether this was communicated to mankind, we do not know. The Bible has no indication that God communicated any of this, apart from a commandment about murder, until the Ten Commandments.

Interestingly enough, there were a number of codes developed in various governments around the time of Abraham (give or take a few hundred years); and these things appear to be a part of these codes (but not as clearly defined or set apart as the Ten Commandments).

Our society has developed a wrinkle with regards to stealing. Let's say that A and B both decide that C really needs financial help and D has financial resources. So A and B vote to have the government take D's money in order to provide C with some wherewithal.<sup>570</sup> For all intents and purposes, that is legal stealing (although the Bible does allow for taxation by a governing entity).

We may want to consider the first 5 commandments and see if they are found in nascent form in Genesis.

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### When Societal Norms Change:

This does not mean that societies do not try to turn things around. Today, in the United States, homosexual acts are being sold as natural and good; and that those who do not approve are not just judging the homosexual but they are classified as *haters*. There is even societal approval for those who think that they might be gay so they experiment to see if they like it. This is such a perversion in so many ways.

The sin of homosexual actions is like any other addictive sin—it is no better or worse than an alcoholic drinking to excess or a drug addict doing drugs. However, when homosexual present this as normal behavior which should be accepted and taught in the schools, that is a different thing. We ought to resist evil. Teaching homosexuality is normal in grammar school would be akin to teaching children of that age group that taking drugs and drinking is a good thing. We studied back in Genesis 19 how unhealthy a lifestyle of homosexuality is. This literally reduces a person's life by 20 years.

So, as of late, our society has not only proclaimed homosexual acts as good and natural, but then has taken this a step further to misapply the concept of judgment and hatred to those who disapprove of homosexual acts. If you indicate that you believe that homosexual acts are wrong, you are considered to be judgmental and a hater—whereas, you are neither. Proponents of homosexuality are simply calling good evil and evil good. This is the warning found in Isa. 5:20 **Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!** (ESV)

### What about Jesus' warning not to judge?

The Bible clearly teaches that homosexual actions are wrong, which we have already studied back in Genesis 19. However, what about *judging*? *Doesn't the Bible tell us that judging is wrong? Aren't we wrong to "judge" homosexual acts as being wrong?*

<sup>570</sup> I forget who I first heard this illustration from. Possibly Thomas Sowell or Walter Williams.

There are specific circumstances in which we are not to judge. We are not to impute this or that sin to Charley Brown. Nor are we to judge Charley Brown as being more sinful than we are. This does not mean that we cannot determine whether this or that action is wrong. If the Bible tells us that something is wrong, then it is wrong. It is not *judging* to state that homosexual acts are wrong; it is not some violation of the Christian life to recognize that homosexual relationships are all about sin. It is not judging to guide your children away from the homosexual lifestyle.

Furthermore, it is not wrong to judge when this is a part of your occupation. A judge, an official position in pretty much every society, has to make a judgment based upon the preponderance of the evidence. A judge does not get to declare, “God says that I should not judge, so I am dismissing this case based upon that.”

Similarly, those who employ individuals need to make logical judgments about who they should hire and fire. This does not violate God’s mandate not to judge. When writing an employee reference, that is not judging either.

It is very important that you evaluate the children that your child hangs out with; that is also a normal, non-sinful activity. When you choose to marry, this involves careful evaluation of your partner-to-be (ideally speaking).

When you rent a house to someone, when you lend money (or your possessions) to someone, you are making a judgment call—and a legitimate one.

#### When the most fundamental laws are changed:

Even these fundamental laws are challenged in society today. The government, for all intents and purposes, is stealing from businesses and individuals. Our tax rate is far too high for some individuals; and far too low for others. It is not impossible for a well-off person to be required to pay 50–60% (and higher) of his real income to federal and local governments in the United States. If some liberals had their way, this would be higher (so many years for the days of FDR, when 90% was the tax rate for the richest<sup>571</sup>). However, our **real tax rate today** is actually higher than it was back in the 1950's.

This is, in effect, stealing. If liberals were personally subject to this rate, they would understand that it is stealing. However, there are so many friends of the government who receive special breaks (I write this in 2015<sup>572</sup>, where GE, a very financially successful organization, is paying **little or no taxes**<sup>573</sup>). My point being is, the government takes from one group of people and gives this to another group of people. This is common and this is, in effect, stealing (although the Bible does tell us to pay our taxes). So, in some societies, in some ways, stealing is authorized.

Dove-tailing with the homosexual angle, one business was **sued out of business** for not wanting to participate in a gay wedding by baking a cake for the gay couple. That is stealing as well. His business was taken away from him through legal maneuvers.

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Back to Genesis 31:

God has told Jacob to return to the Land of Promise, but God has not given Jacob a specific set of directions. God leaves that approach up to Jacob. Jacob has chosen to quietly slip away from Laban. He has spoken to his wives, and they are on board with this.

<sup>571</sup> This was not the real tax rate for the rich. Those favored by the government received all kinds of loopholes which lowered their tax liability. The real tax rate of the 1950's was around **25%**.

<sup>572</sup> All told, I might spend 2–3 months on the typical chapter of the Bible. However, this may be spread out over a fairly long period of time. I began writing this chapter in 2013 and will complete it in 2017.

<sup>573</sup> What GE actually pays is **disputed**. Some **claim** that GE gets money back from the government; some **question** this.

Jacob waits until the day that Laban is shearing sheep, which should afford him the longest head start.

**A Short Review of Genesis 31:26–31:** Jacob, who worked for Laban for 20 years, slipped away quietly without telling anyone, taking his wives and children with him. Laban found out and pursued Jacob and caught up with him, while Jacob was east of the Jordan. Laban first asked a series of questions which Jacob then answered.

**Genesis 31:26–30** And Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done, that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword? Why did you flee secretly and trick me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre? And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly. It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' And now you have gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?" (ESV)

Laban asks Jacob, "Why did you leave secretly like that, not allowing me to say goodbye to my children and grandchildren; and why did you steal my gods?" Laban also reveals that God spoke to him in a dream and warned him not to rag on Jacob.

**Genesis 31:31** Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. (ESV)

This was Jacob's answer to the first set of questions. Both men have legitimate beefs with one another. Laban would like to have had a proper goodbye with his daughters and grandchildren; but Jacob did not trust Laban (and Laban had given him little reason to).

On a personal level, Jacob certainly has reason to be suspicious of Laban and about what Laban might do; but Jacob is forgetting the promises of God, to his father, his grandfather and to him. Whatever Laban threatens to do or does, is overruled by God. God will keep His promises. He spoke these words directly to Jacob:

**Gen. 28:13–15** And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

So, it came down to this—who does Jacob actually fear? God or Laban?

Jacob continues:

| Genesis 31:32c   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or וי)<br>[pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wāw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lō' (לא or לוֹא)<br>[pronounced <i>low</i> ]                               | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |

| Genesis 31:32c                        |  |   |                            |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| yâda' (יָדָעַ) [pronounced yaw-DAHG]  | to know, to perceive, to acquire knowledge, to become acquainted with, to know by experience, to have a knowledge of something; to see; to learn; to recognize [admit, acknowledge, confess] | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect  | Strong's #3045<br>BDB #393 |
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]           | for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time   | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition  | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| Râchêl (רָחֵל) [pronounced raw-KHALE] | ewe and is transliterated Rachel   | feminine proper noun  | Strong's #7354<br>BDB #932 |
| gânab (גָּנַב) [pronounced gaw-NAHV]  | to steal, to take away by theft; to deceive  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |

**Translation:** Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen his idols [lit., them]. Jacob never suspected that Rachel stole the teraphim that belonged to Laban.

James Burton Coffman: *This paragraph dramatically sets up the search for the stolen gods which is next related. A certain intensity rises in the reader's mind in the contemplation of what might have happened, if Laban had found his gods. Would Jacob have actually handed the beloved Rachel over to her father to be put to death? And would Laban have executed such a penalty upon her? Again, God over-ruled what men might have done by means of a deception.*<sup>574</sup>

This is quite fascinating for the narrative to be presented in such a way that, first the first-time reader, the tension increases with each verse.

Genesis 31:31a, 32 Jacob answered Laban, saying, "Listen, whoever it is who has taken your gods, he will not live before our brothers. Show me whatever is yours that I have and take it back." Jacob did not know that Rachel has stolen Laban's gods.

### Rachel and the Idols (commentators/discussion)

Jacob had no intention of stealing anything from Laban; nor was he concerned with inheriting anything that was Laban's. He did not know a lot about God's plan, but he did realize that God has prospered him greatly at Laban's expense (Genesis 31:9); so there was no reason for him to take anything that was Laban's or anything that would entitle him to inherit that which was Laban's at a later date. Because of this, Jacob did not steal the idols, nor would he have expected anyone else to. Jacob's statement, however, had Rachel any thought to speaking up and returning the idols, suddenly quieted her down. She had made a fairly significant mistake and decided not to say a word.<sup>575</sup>

<sup>574</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>575</sup> We do not know what was on her mind or how she felt; and you will recall that we, at best, we only able to hypothesize her reasons for stealing the idols.

## Rachel and the Idols (commentators/discussion)

It is interesting whether Jacob's curse upon the one who stole the gods is effective. Of all the women, she died the earliest, and only her death is recorded in the Word of God.

Clarke: *The rabbins consider that this was an imprecation used by Jacob, as if he had said, Let God take away the life of the person who has stolen them! And that this was answered shortly after in the death of Rachel, Genesis 35:16–19.*<sup>576</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *Genesis 31:32 reflects the Code of Hammurabi in connection with someone stealing, either from a temple, or someone's household gods. The rabbis say (cf. Gen. Rab. 74.4) that Rachel's death, recorded in Genesis 35:16–18, while giving birth to Benjamin, is related to Jacob's words recorded in this verse.*<sup>577</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob makes the statement “the one with whom you find your gods shall not live” because he could not believe that anyone in his family would do such a thing, much less his wife Rachel. The fact that his wife Rachel was guilty would have greatly embarrassed Jacob and would have made Laban look justified before everyone in chasing down Jacob.*

Wenstrom continues: *In the days of Laban and Jacob, the theft of household idols was a capital crime and guilty of death, which is indicated by Jacob's statement that the one found with the stolen household gods would be put to death. So unknowingly, Jacob pronounces a death sentence upon Rachel his wife. So the suspense heightens for the reader since unlike Jacob, the reader knows that Rachel is the thief in the family.*<sup>578</sup>

3 people act irrationally here. Rachel acts irrationally by stealing the statues, not giving any thought to what might be the outcome of doing this. Laban acts irrationally by chasing Jacob down—his only actual reason for doing so is the missing idol statues. Laban has wrongly concluded that these little statues have added value to his life. The third person to act irrationally is Jacob, calling for the death penalty for the one stealing the statues. Note the final thought: **Jacob did not know that Rachel has stolen Laban's gods.** Jacob did not necessarily rule out that someone from his group stole these statues—he just assumed that it was not a person that he cared about.

Let me define *acting irrationally* as acting without careful consideration being given to the eventual results of a matter. Neither Laban nor Jacob consider, *what if Leah or Rachel stole the idols?*

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**Genesis 31:32** With whomever you find your gods, let him not live. Before our brothers, choose what is yours with me, and take it to you.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

**Rachel and the Idols Part II:** Rachel knew where her father kept these deity statues and she slipped into his tent, while everyone was getting ready, and stole them from her father. Remember that she only has one child to prepare for this trip; and she has a maidservant who can assist in that. Her sister had a passel of children. So Leah has all kinds of preparation to do; Rachel had a lot less, which allowed her the time to slip away and to steal these statuettes.

These statues no doubt have both some religious value and likely some inherent monetary value (they may be crafted from gold and silver and contain some jewels or precious stones). I am assuming that they are made out of precious metal because they are fairly small—they will fit in the saddlebag of Rachel's camel, and she will cover them up by sitting over them.

<sup>576</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:32.

<sup>577</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:32.

<sup>578</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 502); accessed October 18, 2017.

We have no idea her reason for stealing them. If I were to speculate, it would be that she expected an inheritance—previously spoken of as silver—and that her father clearly cut her out of this inheritance—so she grabbed whatever she could. These were small enough that she could take them without anyone realizing it (other than her father when he returned home).

We don't know what is going to happen to her if she is found out. Jacob is brazen enough to say, "If someone stole from you, that person should die." It never occurred to him (or to Laban) that the thief is Rachel (or anyone else from Laban's own family). If either man even slightly suspected Rachel, then Jacob would have never made such a statement.

As an aside, we never find out what happened to those small statues (it appears that they will be gotten rid of in Genesis 35—but they are not identified specifically). Someone had to have discovered them at some point, unless Rachel carefully buried them weeks, months or years later.

And so goes Laban in a tent of Jacob and in a tent of Leah and in a tent of two of the maidservants and he did not find [them]. And so he goes out from a tent of Leah and so he goes in a tent of Rachel. And had taken Rachel the teraphim and so she places them in a saddle bag of the camel and so she sits upon them. And so feels Laban all the tent and he did not find [them]. And so she says unto her father, "Do not become angry in [two] eyes of my adonai, for I am unable to rise from your faces for a way of women [is] to me." And so he searches and he has not found the teraphim.

Genesis  
31:33–35

Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find [them]. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the teraphim and placed them in the camel's saddle bag, and then she sat on them. At the same time, Laban [carefully] feels all around [Rachel's] tent but he did not find [them]. She said to her father, "Do not allow the eyes of my adonai to become angry, for I am unable to rise up before you for the way of women [is] to me." So he continued to search, but he did not find the teraphim.

Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them inside the camel's saddle bag, and then sat down upon them. All the while, Laban is carefully feeling all around the tent, but without finding them. She said to her father, "Do not allow the eyes of my lord to become angry with me. I am unable to rise up because I am having my period." So Laban continued to search for the idols, but he could not find them.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so goes Laban in a tent of Jacob and in a tent of Leah and in a tent of two of the maidservants and he did not find [them]. And so he goes out from a tent of Leah and so he goes in a tent of Rachel. And had taken Rachel the teraphim and so she places them in a saddle bag of the camel and so she sits upon them. And so feels Laban all the tent and he did not find [them]. And so she says unto her father, "Do not become angry in [two] eyes of my adonai, for I am unable to rise from your faces for a way of women [is] to me." And so he searches and he has not found the teraphim.

Targum (Onkelos)

And Laban entered into the tent of Leah [Sam. Vers. "and diligently searched."], and into the tent of the two concubines, but found not; and he went forth from the tent of Leah, and entered the tent of Rahel. But Rahel had taken the images, and laid

them in the panniers [The Hebrew *kar* answers to the Arabic *kuron*, "a pannier, cradle, or chair, placed on each side the camel."] of the camels, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found not. And she said to her father, Let it not be displeasing in the eyes of my lord, that I am not able to rise before thee; for the way of women is upon me. And he scrutinized, but found not the images.

Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) And Laban went into the tent of Jakob, and into the tent of Leah, and into the tent of the two concubines, but found not. And he went out from the tent of Leah, and entered the tent of Rahel. But Rahel had taken the images, and laid them in the paniers of the camels, and sat upon them. And he searched all the tent, but found not. And she said, Let it not be displeasing in my lord's eyes that I am not able to arise before thee, because I have the way of women. And he searched, but found not the images.

Revised Douay-Rheims So Laban went into the tent of Jacob, and of Lia, and of both the handmaids, and found them not. And when he was entered into Rachel's tent, She in haste hid the idols under the camel's furniture, and sat upon them: and when he had searched all the tent, and found nothing, She said: Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise up before you, because it has now happened to me, according to the custom of women, So his careful search was in vain.

Aramaic ESV of Peshitta Laban went into Ya'aqub's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two female servants; but he did not find them. He went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt about the entire tent, but did not find them. She said to her father, "Do not let my lord be angry that I cannot rise up before you; for the manner of women is on me." He searched, but did not find the teraphim.

Peshitta (Syriac) And Laban went into Jacobs tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants; but he did not find the gods. So he went out of Leah's tent into Rachels tent. Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's saddle bag, and sat upon them. And Laban had searched all the tent, but did not find them. And Rachel said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before you; for I am with child. Nevertheless he searched, but did not find the images.

Septuagint (Greek) And Laban went in and searched in the house of Lea, and found them not; and he went out of the house of Lea, and searched in the house of Jacob, and in the house of the two maid-servants, and found them not; and he went also into the house of Rachel. And Rachel took the idols, and cast them among the camel's packs, and sat upon them. And she said to her father, Be not indignant, Sir; I cannot rise up before you, for it is with me according to the manner of women. Laban searched in all the house, and found not the images.

Significant differences: One targum switches the order of what is searched. In the Syriac Peshitta, we have *the gods* rather than *them*; but that is probably a translation quirk. The Latin and Greek lack *went out of the tent of Leah*. The Greek lacks that Laban *searched, felt around the tent of Rachel*. The Samaritan version has Laban *searching* (a verb not found in the Hebrew text). The targums and the Latin have *search* rather than *feel around*. The difference here may be academic.

The Syriac Peshitta appears to have Rachel claiming to be pregnant; everywhere else, *the manner of women is with her*.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

Bible in Basic English So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent, and into the tents of the two servant-women, but they were not there; and he came out of Leah's tent and went into Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken the images, and had put them in the camels'

basket, and was seated on them. And Laban, searching through all the tent, did not come across them. And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry because I do not get up before you, for I am in the common condition of women. And with all his searching, he did not come across the images.

Easy English

So Laban went into Jacob's tent. Then he went into Leah's tent. He also went into the female servants' tent. But he did not find anything. When he left Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household gods. She put them inside the seat that she sat on to ride her camel. Then she sat on them. Laban looked through everything in the tent. But he did not find the gods. When he went into Rachel's tent, she said, 'Do not be angry with me my lord. I cannot stand up in front of you. It is the time of my monthly blood loss.' So, Laban looked for the gods, but he did not find them.

In Old Testament times, when a woman had her monthly blood loss, she was 'unclean'. And anything that she sat on was unclean. (It tells us this in Leviticus 15:20.)

Rachel was lying about the household gods. She had stolen them.

Easy-to-Read Version—2006

So Laban went and looked through Jacob's camp. He looked in Jacob's tent and then in Leah's tent. Then he looked in the tent where the two slave women stayed, but he did not find the gods from his house. Then he went into Rachel's tent. Rachel had hidden the gods inside her camel's saddle, and she was sitting on them. Laban looked through the whole tent, but he did not find the gods.

And Rachel said to her father, "Father, don't be angry with me. I am not able to stand up before you. I am having my monthly time of bleeding." So Laban looked through the camp, but he did not find the gods from his house.

God's Word™

So Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two slaves. But he found nothing. He came out of Leah's tent and went into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the idols and had put them in her camel's saddle-bag and was sitting on them. Laban rummaged through the whole tent but found nothing. Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry, Father, but I can't get up to greet you; I'm having my period." So even though Laban had made a thorough search, he didn't find the idols.

The Message

Laban went through Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the tents of the two maids but didn't find them. He went from Leah's tent to Rachel's. But Rachel had taken the household gods, put them inside a camel cushion, and was sitting on them. When Laban had gone through the tent, searching high and low without finding a thing, Rachel said to her father, "Don't think I'm being disrespectful, my master, that I can't stand before you, but I'm having my period." So even though he turned the place upside down in his search, he didn't find the household gods.

NIRV

So Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent. He went into the tent of their two female servants. But he didn't find anything. After he came out of Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent. Rachel was the one who had taken the statues of Laban's family gods. She had put them inside her camel's saddle. She was sitting on them. Laban searched the whole tent. But he didn't find anything.

Rachel said to her father, "I'm sorry, sir. I can't get up for you right now. But don't be angry with me. I'm having my monthly period." So he searched everywhere but couldn't find the statues of his gods.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible

Laban went into Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and her two servants' tent and didn't find them.

So he left Leah's tent and went into Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken the divine images and put them into the camel's saddlebag and sat on them. Laban felt around in the whole tent but couldn't find them. Rachel said to her father, "Sir, don't

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| Contemporary English V. | <p>be angry with me because I can't get up for you; I'm having my period." He searched but couldn't find the divine images.</p> <p>Laban searched the tents of Jacob, Leah, and the two servant women, but did not find the idols. Then he started for Rachel's tent. She had already hidden them in the cushion she used as a saddle and was sitting on it. Laban searched everywhere and did not find them. Rachel said, "Father, please don't be angry with me for not getting up; I am having my period." Laban kept on searching, but still did not find the idols.</p>   |
| The Living Bible        | <p>Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then searched the two tents of the concubines, but didn't find them. Finally he went into Rachel's tent. Rachel, remember, was the one who had stolen the idols; she had stuffed them into her camel saddle and now was sitting on them! So although Laban searched the tents thoroughly, he didn't find them.</p> <p>"Forgive my not getting up, Father," Rachel explained, "but I'm having my monthly period." So Laban didn't find them.</p>   |
| New Berkeley Version    | <p>Laban then entered Jacob's tent and Leah's, the tents of the two maids, too, but did not find them. Coming out of Leah's tent he entered Rachel's tent.</p> <p>Now Rachel had gotten hold of the household gods and had put them inside her camel's saddle, on which she was sitting. Laban searched through the whole tent without finding them, and she said to her father, "I hope my master does not object to my being unable to get up in front of you, for I am meeting with the indisposition of women." So, for all his searching, he did not find the images.</p> |
| New Life Version        | <p>So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two women who served Rachel and Leah. But he did not find his gods. Then he went from Leah's tent into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the gods of Laban's house and put them in the seat that was used on the camel's back. And she sat upon them. Laban looked through the whole tent, but did not find them. She said to her father, "My lord, do not be angry that I cannot rise in front of you. For the way of women is upon me." So he looked, but could not find the gods.</p>  |
| New Living Translation  | <p>Laban went first into Jacob's tent to search there, then into Leah's, and then the tents of the two servant wives—but he found nothing. Finally, he went into Rachel's tent. But Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them in her camel saddle, and now she was sitting on them. When Laban had thoroughly searched her tent without finding them, she said to her father, "Please, sir, forgive me if I don't get up for you. I'm having my monthly period." So Laban continued his search, but he could not find the household idols.</p>                      |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

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| American English Bible   | <p>Laban went in and searched Leah's tent, then Jacob's tent, and then the tent of the two female servants, and he found nothing. Lastly, he entered Rachel's tent. However, Rachel had hidden the idols among the camel's packs and she was sitting on them, as she told her father: 'Don't be impudent, sir! I can't get up and stand before you, because it isn't my way and it isn't customary for women!'</p> <p>Well, Laban searched throughout the [camp] and he couldn't find the idols.</p>  |
| International Standard V | <p>So Laban entered Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the tents of the two maid servants, but he didn't find them [The Heb. lacks <i>them</i>]. Then he left Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rachel had taken the idols [Lit. <i>teraphim</i>; i.e. personal idols typically stored inside a small household shrine], placed them inside the saddle of her camel, and sat on them. Laban searched through the whole tent, but found nothing. Then Rachel told her father, "Sir, please don't be angry that I cannot stand up in your presence. It's that time of the month [Lit. <i>that manner of women for me</i>]." So Laban</p> |

[Lit. *he*] searched for the idols [Lit. *teraphim*; i.e. personal idols typically stored inside a small household shrine], but never did find them.

New Advent (Knox) Bible

So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and Lia's, and the tents of both the serving-women, but found nothing. At last he came to Rachel's tent; and Rachel, who had quickly hidden the images among the harness of her camel, now sat down upon the harness. As her father looked in vain all through the tent, she said, Forgive me, sir, if I do not rise to greet thee; the common lot of women has come upon me; and so the anxious search came to nothing.

Translation for Translators

Laban went into Jacob's tent, and then into Leah's tent, and then into the tents of the two female slaves and searched for the idols, but he did not find them. After he left their tents, he entered Rachel's tent. But Rachel had previously taken the idols and put them in the saddle of a camel, and she was sitting on the saddle. So when Laban searched all over for them inside Rachel's tent, he did not find them. Rachel said to her father, "Do not be angry with me, sir, but I cannot stand up in your presence to show respect for you, because I am having my monthly menstrual period. [EUP]" So when Laban searched some more, he did not find the wooden idols.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible

Laban was to go into Jacob's tent, Leah's tent, and the tent of the two maid servants - is he to have found them? - He was to come out of Leah's tent, and was to come into Rachel's tent. Rachel is to have taken the teraphim, and was to place it in the camel's pannier, even was she to sit on it. Laban was to scabble for them in the tent - is he to have found them? - She was to say to her father: Was there to be fury in the eye of my lord? - was I able to rise up turned before you? - For I am to have the manner of women. He was to explore for them - is he to have come upon the teraphim? -

Conservapedia

Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents, and didn't find them. Then he was coming out of Leah's tent and into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the theraphim and placed them in the camel's saddle-basket, and was sitting on them. Laban felt around everything in the tent and didn't find them. She said to her father, "Please don't be angry that I cannot rise up in your presence. The way of women is on me." And he searched, and didn't find the theraphim. That "way of women" is menstruation. There is no real way to tell whether Rachel was actually menstruating or not.

Ferrar-Fenton Bible

Laban, therefore, went round the tent of Jacob, and the tent of Leah, and to the tents of the two mothers, and did not find them ; consequently he left the tent of Leah and went to the tent of Rachel. But Rachel had taken the Teraphim and placed them under the camel-saddle, and sat upon them, so Laban searched all the tent and could not find. And she said to her father " Let it not grieve your eyes my Lord that I am not able to rise before you, for the way of women is on me." So he searched and did not find the Teraphim.

God's Truth (Tyndale)

Then went Laban into Jacobs tent, and into Leas tent, and into two maidens tents: but found them not. Then went he out of Leas tent, and entered into Rahels tent. And Rahel took the images, and put them in the camels straw, and sat down upon them. And Laban searched all the tent: but found them not. Then said she to her father: my lord, be not angry that I cannot rise up before you, for the disease of women is come upon me. So searched he, but found them not.

HCSB

So Laban went into Jacob's tent, then Leah's tent, and then the tents of the two female slaves, but he found nothing. Then he left Leah's tent and entered Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken Laban's household idols, put them in the saddlebag of the camel, and sat on them. Laban searched the whole tent but found nothing.

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| H. C. Leupold           | She said to her father, "Sir, don't be angry that I cannot stand up in your presence; I am having my period." So Laban searched, but could not find the household idols. So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's (also into the tent of the two handmaidens) and found nothing; and he came forth from Leah's tent and went into the tent of Rachel. But Rachel had taken the teraphim and put them into the camel's litter and sat upon them. And Laban felt all over the tent and found nothing. And she said: Let it not vex my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the manner of women is upon me. So he searched and did not find the teraphim. |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, then into the two female slaves' tents, but found nothing. Then he left Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the teraphim and put them with the camel's furniture and sat on them. But Laban searched the whole tent, but found nothing.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Laban came to Jacob's tent and Leah's tent, and in the tent of the two nurses, but he didn't find them; and he left Leah's tent, and went to Rachel's tent. And Rachel had taken the household gods, and put them on the camel's hump, and sat upon them; and Laban felt through the entire tent, and did not find them.   |

### **Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

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| Christian Community (1988) | Laban entered Jacob's tent, then Leah's and then the tent of the two maidservants, but he found nothing. When Laban came out of Leah's tent, he entered the tent of Rachel. Rachel had taken the gods, but put them into the camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt all about the tent but did not find them. Rachel said to her father, "Do not be angry with me, my lord, if I do not stand in your presence, for I am having my period." So he searched but did not find the gods.  |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents, and they did not appear. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. And Rachel had taken the family healing images, and put them in the saddle of the camel, and sat on them. And Laban felt around all the tent, and they did not appear. And she said to her father, Let there not be a burning in the eyes of my lord that I am not able to rise before your face, because the way of women is upon me. And he searched, and the family healing images did not appear.  |
| New American Bible (2011)  | Laban then went in and searched Jacob's tent and Leah's tent, as well as the tents of the two maidservants; but he did not find them. Leaving Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's. Meanwhile Rachel had taken the household images, put them inside the camel's saddlebag, and seated herself upon them [As in chap. 27, a younger child (Rachel) deceives her father to gain what belongs to him.]. When Laban had rummaged through her whole tent without finding them [Gn 31:19], she said to her father, "Do not let my lord be angry that I cannot rise in your presence; I am having my period." So, despite his search, he did not find the household images. |
| New English Bible          | So Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and that of the two slave-girls, but he found nothing. When he came out of Leah's tent he went into Rachel's. Now she had taken the household gods and put them in the camel-bag and was sitting on them. Laban went through everything in the tent and found nothing. Rachel said to her father, 'Do not take it amiss, sir, that I cannot rise in your presence: the common lot of woman is upon me.' So for all his search Laban did not and his household gods.   |
| New Jerusalem Bible        | Laban went into Jacob's tent, and then into Leah's tent and the tent of the two slave-girls, but he found nothing. He came out of Leah's tent and went into Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them inside a camel cushion, and was sitting on them. Laban went through everything in the tent but found nothing. Then Rachel said to her father, 'Do not look angry, my lord, because  |

I cannot rise in your presence, for I am as women are from time to time.' Laban searched but did not find the idols.

Revised English Bible Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and that of the two slave-girls, but he found nothing. After coming from Leah's tent he went into Rachel's. In the mean time Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel-bag and was sitting on them. Laban went through the whole tent but found nothing. Rachel said, "Do not take it amiss, father, that I cannot rise in your presence: the common lot of woman is upon me." So for all his searching, Laban did not find the household gods.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible Lavan went into Ya'akov's tent, then into Le'ah's tent and into the tent of the two slave-girls; but he did not find them. He left Le'ah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household gods, put them in the saddle of the camel and was sitting on them. Lavan felt all around the tent but did not find them. She said to her father, "Please don't be angry that I'm not getting up in your presence, but it's the time of my period." So he searched, but he didn't find the household gods.

The Complete Tanach So Laban entered Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and the tent[s] of the two handmaids, but he did not find [them]; and he had come out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

**Jacob's tent:** That is, Rachel's tent, for Jacob was usually with her, and so Scripture states: (below, 46:19): "The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife." In reference to all of them, however, it does not say, "Jacob's wife." - [from Gen. Rabbah 74:9]

**and entered Rachel's tent:** when he came out of Leah's tent, he went back into Rachel's tent before he searched the tent[s] of the handmaids. Why [did he bother to do] all this? Because he was aware that she was one who touches everything. — [from Gen. Rabbah 74:9]

But Rachel had taken the teraphim and placed them into the camel saddle and sat upon them; so Laban felt about the entire tent but did not find [them].

**into the camel saddle:** Heb. רֶכֶב, an expression of pillows (מִיָּכָה) and cushions תּוֹתָסִנוּ, as the Targum renders: אֶלְמִגְד אֶטִיבֵעַב, which is a saddle, made like a pillow, and in Eruvin 15b, 16a) we learned: "If they encircled it with pillows (אֶטִיבֵעַב)." These are the pack-saddles of the camels, bastel in French, pack-saddle.

And she said to her father, "Let my lord not be annoyed, for I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." So he searched, but did not find the teraphim.

exeGeses companion Bible And Laban goes into the tent of Yaaqov and into the tent of Leah and into the tent of the two maids; but he finds them not: then he goes from the tent of Leah and enters into the tent of Rachel. And Rachel takes the teraphim and puts them in the saddle of the camel and sits on them: and Laban gropes all the tent, but finds them not. And she says to her father, So be it that the eyes of my adoni not inflame because I cannot rise at your face; for the way of women is on me.

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| JPS (Tanakh—1985)          | And he searches, but finds not the teraphim: .<br>So Laban went into Jacob's tent and Leah's tent and the tents of the two maidservants; but he did not find them. Leaving Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent. Rachel, meanwhile, had taken the idols and placed them in the camel cushion and sat on them; and Laban rummaged through the tent without finding them. For she said to her father, "Let not my lord take it amiss that I cannot rise before you, for the period of women is upon me." Thus he searched, but could not find the household idols. |
| Israeli Authorized Version | And Laban went into Yaakov'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. 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. And she said to her father, Let it not displease my YY that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women is upon me. And he searched but found not the images.  |
| Kaplan Translation         | Laban went into the tents of Jacob, Leah, and the two handmaids, but he found nothing. When he left Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's. Rachel had taken the fetishes and placed them inside a camel cushion, sitting down on them. Laban inspected the entire tent, and found nothing. [Rachel] said to her father, 'Do not be angry, my lord, but I cannot get up for you. I have my female period.' Laban searched, but he did not find the fetishes.  |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible      | And Lavan went into the ohel Ya'akov, and into the ohel Leah and into the ohel shtei ha'amahot; but he found them not. Then went he out of the ohel Leah, and entered into the ohel Rachel.<br>Now Rachel had taken the terafim, and put them in the saddle of the gamal, and sat upon them. And Lavan searched all the ohel, but found them not.<br>And she said to her av, Let it not displease adoni that I cannot rise up in thy presence; for the derech nashim is upon me. And he searched but found not the terafim.                                       |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

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| The Expanded Bible     | So Laban ·looked [·went] in Jacob's tent, in Leah's tent, and in the tent where the two slave women stayed, but he did not find his idols. When he left Leah's tent, he went into Rachel's tent. Rachel had hidden the ·idols [teraphim; 31:19] inside her camel's saddle and was sitting on them. Although Laban looked through the whole tent, he did not find them.<br>Rachel said to her father, "Father, don't be angry with me. I am not able to stand up before you because ·I am having my monthly period [·the way of women is on me]." So Laban ·looked through the camp [·searched], but he did not find ·his idols [·the teraphim].  |
| Kretzmann's Commentary | And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid-servants tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. So sure was Laban of his ground that he made his search very thorough. There is an irony in the fact that the idolater searches for his gods and cannot find them. Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, under the large saddle with its heavy hangings and deep basket, and sat upon them. And Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. He went over everything in the tent very thoroughly, not only peering around, but even feeling with his hands. And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee, as filial respect would have demanded; for the custom of women is upon me. Whether this was actually true or not, she proved herself a worthy daughter of a cunning father, for the ruse served to keep Laban from looking under the saddle which Rachel was using as a couch. At a later period this matter |

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was regulated by law, Leviticus 15:19 ff. Thus the Lord did not permit Jacob, who knew nothing of Rachel's trick, to be put to shame.

So Laban entered Jacob's tent, and Leah's tent, and the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find the idols [No direct object is specified for the verb "find" in the Hebrew text. The words "the idols" have been supplied in the translation for clarification.]. Then he left Leah's tent and entered Rachel's [Heb "and he went out from the tent of Leah and went into the tent of Rachel."]. (Now Rachel had taken the idols and put them inside her camel's saddle and sat on them.) [The disjunctive clause (introduced by a vav [ו] conjunction) provides another parenthetical statement necessary to the storyline.] Laban searched the whole tent, but did not find them [The word "them" has been supplied in the translation for clarification.]. Rachel [Heb "she"; the referent (Rachel) has been specified in the translation for clarity.] said to her father, "Don't be angry [Heb "let it not be hot in the eyes of my lord." This idiom refers to anger, in this case as a result of Rachel's failure to stand in the presence of her father as a sign of respect.], my lord. I cannot stand up [Heb "I am unable to rise."] in your presence because I am having my period [Heb "the way of women is to me." This idiom refers to a woman's menstrual period.]. So he searched thoroughly,<sup>76</sup> but did not find the idols.

The Pulpit Commentary

And Laban went into Jacob's taut, and into Leah's tent, and into the two maid-servants' tents;—the clause affords an interesting glimpse into the manners of the times, showing that not only husbands and wives, but also wives among themselves, possessed separate establishments)—but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent (he probably commenced with Jacob's and those of the hand-maids, and afterwards passed into Leah's), and entered into Rachel's tent—last, because she was the favorite. Cf. Genesis 33:2, in which a similar partiality towards Rachel is exhibited by Jacob.

Now Rachel had taken the images (teraphim), and put them in the camel's furniture,—the camel's furniture was not stramenta cameli (Vulgate), "the camel's straw" (Luther), but the camel's saddle (LXX; Onkelos, Syriac, Calvin, Rosenmüller, Keil, and others), here called רֶכֶּס, from רָכַס, an unused root signifying either to go round in a circle, hence to run (Gesenius), or to be firmly wound together, hence to be puffed up as a bolster (Furst). The woman's riding-saddle was commonly made of wicker-work and had the appearance of a basket or cradle. It was usually covered with carpet, and protected against wind, rain, and sun by means of a canopy and curtains, while light was admitted by openings in the side (cf. Gesenius, sub voce; Kalisch in loco). "That which is now customary among the Arabs consists of a large closed basket-work, with a place for sitting and reclining, and a window at the side; one of this kind hangs on each side of the camel" (Gerlach)—and sat upon them. "To us the picture of Rachel seated upon the camel furniture is true to life, for we have often seen its counterpart. The saddle-bags and cushions which were to be set upon the camel lay piled on the floor, while she sat upon them. And Laban searched—the word means to feel out or explore with the hands (cf. Genesis 27:12; Job. 12:25)—all the tent, but found them not.

And she said to her father,—"covering theft by subtlety and untruth" (Kalisch), and thus proving herself a time daughter of Laban, as well as showing with how much imperfection her religious character was tainted—Let it not displease my lord—literally, let it not burn with anger (רָחַם, from הָרַח, to glow, to burn) in the eyes of my lord (Adoni)—that I cannot rise up before thee;—Oriental politeness required children to rise up in the presence of their parents (vide Le Genesis 19:32; and cf. 1Kings 2:19). Hence Rachel's apology was not unnecessary—for the custom of women—(literally, the way of women; a periphrasis for menstruation (cf. Genesis 18:11) which, under the law, required females, as ceremonially unclean, to be put apart (Le Genesis 15:19). That, prior to the law, this particular statute concerning women was in force among the Aramaeans appears from the present instance; and

that it was not exclusively Jewish, but shared in by other nations of antiquity, is the opinion of the best authorities. Roberts mentions that under similar circumstances with Rachel no one in India goes to the temple or any religious ceremony—is upon me. It is just possible Rachel may have been speaking the exact truth, though the probability is she was guilty of fabrication. **And he searched** (everywhere except among the camel's furniture, partly from fear of defilement, but chiefly as regarding it impossible that Rachel in her then state would sit upon his gods), **but found not the images** (teraphim). The three times repeated phrase "he found not," emphasizes the completeness, of Lahan's deception.

The Voice

So Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two female servants' tent; *he searched*, but he did not find them. Then he came out of Leah's tent and into Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken the household gods and concealed them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. Laban *looked around and felt everything* in the tent, but he did not find them.

**Rachel (to her father):** Please don't be angry that I cannot get up for you, sir, but I am in the midst of my "time of month."

Rachel has learned the art of deception well from her father and her husband.

So Laban searched, but he did not find the household gods.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> came in the tent of Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> and in the tent of Le'ah <sup>[Weary]</sup> and in the tent of the two bondwomen and he did not find and he went out from the tent of Le'ah <sup>[Weary]</sup> and he came in the tent of Rahhel <sup>[Ewe]</sup>, and Rahhel <sup>[Ewe]</sup> had taken the family idols and she set them in place in the hollow of the camel and she settled upon them and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> quickly groped all the tent and he did not find, and she said to her father, he will not flare up in the eyes of my lord given that I will not be able to rise from your face given that the road of women is to me and he quickly searched and he did not find the family idols,...

Concordant Literal Version And coming is Laban into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent and into the two maidservant's tent, and does not find them. And forth is he faring from Leah's tent and is coming into Rachel's tent. Yet Rachel took the household elohim and placed them in the saddle basket of the camel, and she is sitting on them. And feeling is Laban all the tent, yet did not find them. And saying is she to her father, "It must not be hot in the eyes of my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is on me. And searching is Laban in all the tent, yet he does not find the household elohim.

Context Group Version And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two female slaves; but he didn't find them. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the talismans, and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban felt all about the tent, but didn't find them. And she said to her father, Don't let my lord be angry that I can't rise up before you; for the manner of women is on me. And he searched, but didn't find the talismans.

NASB So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find them. She said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols.

New European Version Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two female servants; but he didn't find them. He went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, put them in the camel's saddle,

and sat on them. Laban felt about all the tent, but didn't find them. She said to her father, Don't let my lord be angry that I can't rise up before you; for I'm having my period. He searched, but didn't find the teraphim.

A Voice in the Wilderness

And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maidservants' tents, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban groped all about the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, Let it not burn in the eyes of my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is with me. And he searched but did not find the household idols.

Young's Literal Translation

So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's. And Rachel has taken the teraphim, and puts them in the furniture of the camel, and sits upon them; and Laban feels all the tent, and has not found. And she says unto her father, "Let it not be displeasing in the eyes of my lord that I am not able to rise at your presence, for the way of women is on me." And he searches, and has not found the teraphim.

The gist of this passage:

Laban searches the tents for the small idols and cannot find them. Rachel does not get out of her saddle, claiming to be on her period. She is sitting upon the idols.

33-35

### Genesis 31:33a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                                 | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                 | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| bôw' (אוּב) [pronounced boh]                                    | <i>to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain</i>                        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #935<br>BDB #97   |
| Lâbân (לַבָּן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN]              | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>                                 | masculine singular proper noun; location                 | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity                               | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced OH-he]                                | <i>tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling</i>  | masculine singular construct                             | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13   |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-ġuh-KOH <sup>bV</sup> ]       | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>                  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                               | simple wâw conjunction                                   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity                               | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced OH-he]                                | <i>tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling</i>  | masculine singular construct                             | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13   |

## Genesis 31:33a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology              | BDB and Strong's #          |
|---|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Lê'âh (לֵאָה) [pronounced lay-AW]                               | <i>weary; transliterated Leah</i>   | feminine singular proper noun | Strong's #3812<br>BDB #521  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                               | simple wâw conjunction        | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity    | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced OH-heh]                               | <i>tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling</i>  | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13    |
| sh <sup>e</sup> nêy (שְׁנַיִם) [pronounced sh <sup>en</sup> -Ā] | <i>two, two of, a pair of, a duo of; both of</i>  | dual numeral construct        | Strong's #8147<br>BDB #1040 |
| 'âmâh (אֲמָה) [pronounced aw-MAW]                               | <i>maid, maidservant, handmaid, female servant, female slave</i>                                    | feminine plural noun          | Strong's #519<br>BDB #51    |

**Translation:** Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants,... Laban takes that opportunity to search through the stuff of Jacob, Leah and the two maids.

Let me suggest that Laban first went into Jacob's tent, as that is where he wanted to find his little idols. However, not finding them there, he was forced to examine the tent next door. We do not know how he felt about his two daughters, despite being upset that he could not wish them a celebratory goodbye.

**Laban Proposes to Search the Tents of His Daughters** (a painting); from Patriarchmen.org; accessed October 21, 2017.



Genesis 31:33a Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants,...

## The sleeping arrangements (commentators/discussion)

This tells us a little about the sleeping arrangements. Jacob, Leah and Rachel had their own tents. The two maidservants had a tent which they shared. Whether Jacob slept with either wife regularly is unknown—at least, based upon what we have here. Other passages would suggest that he spent a great deal of time with Rachel and much less time with Leah.

Matthew Poole: *The men and women's tents were distinct and separate. See Genesis 18:2 24:67.*<sup>579</sup>

The College Press Bible Study: *Separate tents for the husband and the wives and the handmaidens apparently were the rule in those days.*<sup>580</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Four tents are mentioned, one occupied by Jacob, one each by Leah and Rachel, and one by handmaidens. LXX renders by οἶκον = "house."*<sup>581</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

As we would have suspected, there is nothing that belongs to Laban in any of these tents.

Trapp remarks: *Hypocrites are suspicious of others better than themselves, and impudently inquisitive... Those that are most inquisitive about other men's manners, are most careless of their own.*<sup>582</sup>

### Genesis 31:33b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וַ)<br>[pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lô <sup>3</sup> (לֹא or לוֹא)<br>[pronounced <i>low</i> ]                   | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| mâtsâ' (מָצָא)<br>[pronounced <i>maw-TSAW</i> ]                             | <i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover; to meet (encounter)</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect       | Strong's #4672<br>BDB #592 |

**Translation:** ...but he did not find [them]. Laban is aware of only one set of things which is missing, and that is the collection of the pagan gods which he owned. We know nothing about them, apart from they are valuable to Laban, and apparently to Rachel. They are like good luck charms, I would suppose—small and possibly with some inherent value.

<sup>579</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:33.

<sup>580</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).

<sup>581</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:33.

<sup>582</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:33.

| Genesis 31:33c                        |  |  |                            |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]       | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH] | to go [come] out, to go [come] forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #3318<br>BDB #422 |
| min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]           | from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of                   | preposition of separation                                | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced OH-heh]     | tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling                                  | masculine singular construct                             | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13   |
| Lê'âh (לֵאָה) [pronounced lay-AW]     | weary; transliterated Leah   | feminine singular proper noun                            | Strong's #3812<br>BDB #521 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]       | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| bôw' (בָּוֹא) [pronounced boh]        | to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter, to advance; to attain        | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #935<br>BDB #97   |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced OH-heh]     | tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling                                  | masculine singular construct                             | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13   |
| Râchêl (רָחֵל) [pronounced raw-KHALE] | ewe and is transliterated Rachel   | feminine proper noun                                     | Strong's #7354<br>BDB #932 |

**Translation:** Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. This is interestingly written. This narrative is written with the idea that someone is reading it as if they are reading a short story. We all know that Rachel stole the teraphim. We all know that she has them. Without telling us where these teraphim are exactly, we watch in the narrative as Laban goes from one tent to the next, and finally to the tent of Rachel. So, there is a bit of tension here that is built up, in a literary sense. This seems to be me be completely and fully intentional. Interestingly enough, I can recall only one commentator who pointed out the literary aspect of this particular narrative.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The search for the teraphim was focused upon the tents of Leah and Rachel and their maids, Zilpah and Bilhah since they were the ones who would have had access to the room in their father's tent where the teraphim were kept. Laban goes to Rachel's tent last because he suspected her least of all and yet she was the guilty party. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the narrator Moses keeps the reader in suspense revealing that Laban searched all the tents in which the reader already knows the teraphim will not be found so that subsequently, the discovering in Rachel's tent seems inevitable.*<sup>583</sup> Most commentators believe that Moses wrote Genesis; I do not. At best, Moses committed to papyri what has already been recorded (the text being passed on from generation to generation).

<sup>583</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 502); accessed October 18, 2017.

Throughout Scripture, there are great literary elements—and in most cases, I do not believe that we have any older written material with these aspects. Here, suspense is built up.

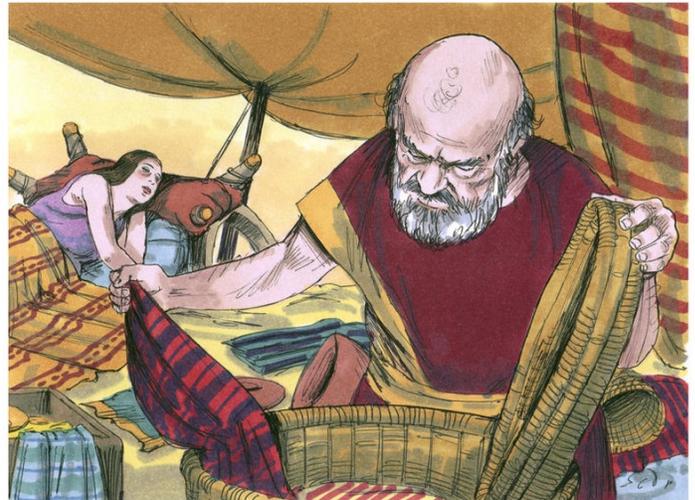
There is an oddity here: it appears that Laban first went into Jacob's, then Leah's and then the two handmaids; but here, he goes from Leah's tent to Rachel's. Could there have been a sub-tent or a sub-compartment where the two maids lived? Or, did Jacob go back to Leah's tent and look again?<sup>584</sup>

There are two things which are generally missed in the Scriptures: many of the narratives are written in ways to engage the reader. I had only the slightest familiarity with the Bible prior to being saved, so when I heard R. B. Thieme, Jr. teach some of the narratives in Genesis, I was spellbound—what's going to happen next? This does not make any of the narratives less historic—it just means that they are written/spoken with the reader/hearer in mind. These were not dull recollections of boring details.

The second thing which is often missed in the study of the Scriptures is, *God is very theatrical*. That is, there are not just miracles in the book of Exodus, but they are very theatrical miracles, where Moses warns, and the miracles themselves have meaning related to the Egyptian culture; and that very often, Moses steps up and raises up his staff prior to the execution of a miracle. Moses draws the attention of all those around him toward the power of God. Not everyone could hear the words spoken by Moses; but he was recognizable and his gestures could be understood from a distance. And rumors of his warnings have shot through the crowd, and Moses raises his staff and then smashes it to the ground, and the dust of the ground becomes like gnats and other small flying insects. See **Exodus 8** ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)).

**Laban Searches the Tents of His Daughters** (a graphic by Jim Padgett); from [Wikimedia](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

This is a fascinating series of events. Laban has just come whining about not being able to say goodbye to his daughters, and now he is going through their personal effects, which, if he found the teraphim, would potentially result in their deaths, due to Jacob's oath made in front of everyone (whoever is found with the idols would be executed for stealing). This lends even more credence to the view that these household gods carried with them the rights of inheritance and that they may have had some inherent value as well.



Laban was a selfish, materialistic man who wanted to have the say as to where his wealth went. There is no reason to be concerned about your present wealth or your wealth when you go to the grave. This does not preclude making out a will, but it is not a reason to be abnormally upset, either. As a loving father, when Jacob made the statement that the one who stole these teraphim shall not live, then it should have been Laban who said, prior to looking for anything, that such an act would not be necessary. Otherwise, had he found the idols, he would be sentencing a daughter to death.

We also get an idea as to the living arrangements. Jacob, Rachel and Leah all had their own tents. These tents are where they would go for solitude, to sleep and they were where their personal belongings were kept. The two maidservants shared a tent. The children probably stayed in the respective tents of their mothers. We do not know if there were any other servants besides those mentioned (however, given Jacob's wealth, having servants would have been expected).

<sup>584</sup> Gill: *Aben Ezra thinks that he was twice in Leah's tent, and at the last time came out of that into Rachel's; and that Jacob's tent lay between Leah's and Rachel's.* Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:33.

H. C. Leupold: *[T]he writer...[works] up to the climax of the search: he (Laban) came out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's. Rachel is a match for her father in craftiness. She has taken the teraphim and put them into "the camel's litter," a capacious saddle with wicker basket attachments on either side. Some describe it as a palanquin. Apparently it was so constructed that even when it was removed from the camel it offered a convenient seat for travellers. Laban feels over everything in the tent. The litter is all that remains. Had Rachel raised her protestation or excuse before this time she would have roused suspicion. By waiting till the last critical moment she diverts attention from the fact that she may be sitting upon the teraphim. For who would care to trouble a menstruating woman suffering pain? Besides, it may actually have been true what she was asserting.*<sup>585</sup>

Genesis 31:33 Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent.

### Was Laban willing to execute one of his daughters?

1. Perhaps it has occurred to you, let's say that Laban finds the idols in Rachel's tent—is he willing to execute her? Obviously, this question will require some speculation which I cannot entirely back up.
2. Right now, Laban is angry; and he is fueled by this anger. He just unloaded on Jacob, but the only charge that he really has against Jacob is the accusation that Jacob (or someone in his camp) stole his teraphim. All of his other accusations, Jacob answered; and his wives and children are there, and they have not run to Laban as their savior, which indicates that they willingly accompanied Jacob (something that we are aware of). In other words, Jacob did not take them away like prisoners of war.
3. Jacob is the one who suggests that the one who stole the gods should be executed; and he certainly makes such a statement because he assumes that no one in his party, among himself and wives, have stolen these teraphim.
4. All the while, we know that Rachel stole them. But, most importantly, Laban and Jacob do not know this.
5. But, here Laban is, searching through Rachel's tent—why? It is very possible that Jacob had stolen these gods and placed them among one of his wife's possessions.
6. I think on the one hand, Laban is just extremely angry and self-righteous at this point. The statues are gone, Jacob took off, so logically, they are with Jacob.
7. Two possibilities:
  - 1) Laban has not thought through what will he do if he finds these figurines in Rachel's tent (or Leah's tent).
  - 2) Laban has thought this through and realizes that Jacob, regardless of the actual circumstances, will take the blame for stealing this idols.
  - 3) In any case, Laban is not bound by anything to execute anyone; it is Jacob who made this a potential outcome.
8. There are additional possibilities:
  - 1) Laban has not thought through what he will do when the teraphim are found; or he has not thought through the real possibility that he may end up executing the husband of his two daughters. He is just that filled with anger at this point not to think things through.
  - 2) On the other hand, Laban may be calculating this out completely. He himself has not said he will execute anyone, but now he has that option. If he finds the idols, he figures that Jacob will take the responsibility for them, if they are in the tent of one of his wives. At that point, Laban can take this as far as he wants to take it.
  - 3) I do not think that Laban, no matter what, would kill one of his own daughters, despite his great anger. Furthermore, I don't think that he would kill Jacob, if Jacob confessed to the crime or was willing to take the punishment. If Jacob is executed, Laban assumes the responsibility for his daughters and children, which means a lot of capital outlay. He cannot marry off his daughters twice.
9. So, let's say we come to the point where Laban discovers the figurines, and now, either Rachel or Jacob are before him, worthy of execution. At that point, all options are on the table, and Laban gets to call the

<sup>585</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

## Was Laban willing to execute one of his daughters?

shots.

10. At that point, Laban could say to Jacob, “What should be the redemption price for your life?” (Or for the life of Rachel). Laban could end up taking half or more of Jacob’s livestock, which would be the redemption price for Jacob or Rachel’s life. It is not out of the question that Laban has played this out in his head already.

Obviously, we have no idea how far in advance Laban has thought this out. But, he is a very smart guy; and even though he is fueled right now by anger and adrenalin, there is no reason to think that his mind is not working through the possibilities and the end game.

Chapter Outline

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Genesis 31:33 And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tents of the two slave women, and he did not find [them]. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

Laban searches everywhere for these little deity statues. This also tells us that all of these adults had their own separate tents. This is one of those many places in Scripture where a custom or tradition is mentioned, where the Bible is neutral.

Along these same lines, the Bible is not saying that this is how marriages ought to be—and that when you marry so many women, everyone needs to have their own place. That is simply what happened. It is necessary to separate ancient customs from Biblical mandates; and Biblical laws related to ancient customs.

**Application:** Let me give you an odd application. Since gay marriage is now recognized by the state, it is very likely that polygamy will be next. We all know that gay marriage is not really a marriage and that polygamy, although this is a marriage, is not God’s ideal. So, what if a polygamous family is saved? What then? In most cases, unless one of the women chooses to leave, they simply continue on as a polygamous marriage. In any sort of marriage, the husband assumes responsibility for the woman. He is going to make certain that she is taken care of, in every way that a husband should take care of his wife. Marriage for any man is first and foremost a responsibility, first to the woman he marries, and then to the children that they bring up in the world. He becomes the leader of that household; and most importantly, the husband is the spiritual leader. If a man has married two women, then he remains in that state, even if everyone is saved after their polygamous marriage was initiated. He has assumed responsibility for two (or more) women, which obviously become quite complex in the same household. What the husband cannot do is say, “I am a Christian now; God’s plan is for one man and one woman marriages; so one of you has to go.” He is still responsible for both women and all of the children.

**Application:** Something else adds a new wrinkle to all of this. Let’s say there is a polygamous family and then they are all saved. In modern society, a non-virginal woman or a woman with children is no longer considered *unclean* (for want of a better word). Also, such a woman is no longer helpless and subject to the harsh realities of the world (not to the point of life or death; as with Hagar and Ishmael). This certainly opens up a whole new can of worms, given modern society. Let me suggest that this would be a decision which ought to be made carefully, given that there may be children involved. There are some good step-fathers in this world and some good step-children; however, the further one moves away from the natural order of things (one man + one woman + a few children), the more complex the problem becomes. If one member of a polygamous marriage is cast off, then what of the children? One might consider the damage done to them is going to be considerable, both remaining in such a marriage or separating from such a marriage.

**Application:** What about two men (or two women) who are “married” and one or both of them believe in Jesus Christ? The simple fact is, no matter what the law says, they are not married. If they remain married, they are going to be out of fellowship for most of their lives. They may even die the sin unto death. Homosexual relations are sinful, no matter how you feel about the other person. Anyway, in the case of a gay marriage, splitting up when one or both finds Jesus Christ as Savior is the proper thing to do. And, given the predisposition of both to

seek intimacy with the same gender, it might be better to separate from that lifestyle altogether. Furthermore, it is my understanding that a gay person who changes his mind about that lifestyle is often strongly rejected by the gay community. Such a person is a walking advertisement that gay relations are the result of a person's volition; not of a biological imperative.

The Bible deals with the subject of the husband's responsibility in marriage. R. B. Thieme, Jr. used to say that the husband owns 51% of the stock in marriage; let me suggest that his responsibility is higher than that.

### The Husband's Responsibility in Marriage

1. The husband is the authority in the family; and it is up to him to manage the family the right way. 1Timothy 3:1–5 **The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?** (ESV) Even though this is a passage about a man who wants to become a pastor of a church, the way he manages his own family is of utmost importance. A man who is unable to control his own family is not fit to be a pastor-teacher.
2. 1Timothy 5:8 **But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.** (NASB) A husband assumes a great many responsibilities as the husband and father. First and foremost, he is responsible for his wife and children. He has to make certain that they are taken care of. But this verse goes much further than that. Those would be of his own household. Who would be among *his own* outside of his own household? Possibly his own parents, is mother and father-in-law; and, in many case, other relatives. The entire context of this is the responsibility of believers to various people in their periphery. The husband is to see after the necessities of his family.
3. 1Corinthians 11:3 **But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.** (NIV) Just as Jesus is the head of every man (He loved us; He died for us; He saved us; He paid for our sins; He brought us out of slavery, paying for us with His blood). Although the man is the authority over the woman, he is to be the authority over the woman just as Jesus is his Authority. There is much more to this authority than subjecting a woman to close-order drill. That is not the exercise of authority (although it is not necessarily out of bounds for some marriages). There are a variety of ways that men lead in life; and in marriage. If you, as a man, are going to lead your wife in a highly authoritative way, then make sure that she fully understands that prior to marrying you. A man should not be one way before marriage, and then turn dramatically different after.
4. Ephesians 5:23 **For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.** (NASB) Again, the authority of the husband is affirmed, but it is parallel to Christ as the head of the church. Therefore, this is not some impersonal application of military authority over a frightened 5'2" 120 lb. little woman. All that Christ has done for us is applicable. A woman should feel safe and protected by her husband—even when she is in a lousy mood (I have been told that some women can be moody from time to time).
5. This is why it is important for the man to have some spiritual maturity—or, at least some spiritual growth—so that he can lead his family in the right direction.
6. As far back as Deut. 24:5, it is clear that the husband has the responsibility in a marriage: **If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.** (NIV) It is up to the husband to show his wife that she made the right decision to marry him.
7. Eph. 5:28–30 **In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body.** (ESV; capitalized) Most normal males do nothing intentionally to harm themselves. Many make some attempt to eat right and to even exercise to some extent. Just as we nourish and cherish are own bodies, so should be our attitudes toward our wives. This does not mean that we are on diet patrol for the wife, but that we nourish and cherish our marital

## The Husband's Responsibility in Marriage

- relationship. The wife should feel protected and nurtured.
8. This is further supported by Mark 10:6–9 (Jesus is speaking) **“But from the beginning of creation, `God made them male and female.’ `Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”** (ESV; Genesis 1:27 2:24) The husband and the wife become a singular unit; and the husband is in charge of it. I continually emphasize that because it is the one thing the woman needs to be aware of at all times—if you are going to marry Charley Brown, it does not matter if he is handsome or you love him—those are non-issues. But, if you look at the man and think, “I cannot obey him,” then the woman should not marry him.
  9. A similar passage is Colossians 3:19 **Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.** (ESV) The word *to be harsh* is *pikrainō* (πικραίνω) [pronounced *pihk-RAH-ee-no*], which means, 1) to make bitter; 1a) to produce a bitter taste in the stomach; 2) to embitter. exasperate; 2a) render angry, indignant; 2b) to be embittered, irritated; 2c) to visit with bitterness, to grieve (deal bitterly with). Thayer definitions only. Strong's #4087. With this verb is the negative. Understand what is being said here might be better explained in the next point:
  10. The husband is commanded to love the wife; the wife is *never* commanded to love her husband (Ephesians 5:33). It is quite obvious that a man is not necessarily going to *feel* in love every moment of the day; nor are we being told here that we need to somehow conjure up those feelings all of the time. The husband's love toward his wife is *what he does*. This is the fundamental difference between the husband and wife—the husband is the initiator and the wife is the responder. In courtship, generally speaking, it is the man who is the aggressor. After marriage has taken place, the man is still the aggressor. I don't mean in sex; but in love. In sex, the Bible allows for either the husband or the wife to be the aggressor (1Corinthians 7:4). However, in love, it is the husband who is the aggressor—both before and after marriage. Again, this is not aggressiveness in the sense of the man being on the prowl for sex; this is aggressiveness in, the man makes the first moves, whenever possible, to treat his wife right, to make her know that she is loved and protected and taken care of.
  11. 1Peter 3:7 **Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.** (ESV) *In an understanding way* is actually *according to the standard of knowledge*. It is incumbent upon the husband to know his wife, to understand her, to have knowledge of her, and to treat her accordingly (every woman is different and the man needs to understand his woman in order to initiate love). In most cases, this is going to be treating her with tenderness. I understand the *weaker vessel* to refer to two things: in most cases, the wife is physically weaker to the husband. It is wrong for the husband to use his greater physical strength to bully his wife in any way. Secondly, in marriage, the husband has the authority; therefore, the wife is the weaker vessel inasmuch as, she is second in command. Now, both the husband and wife are equal before God—so we are both **heirs in the grace of life**. Furthermore, a husband and wife must be of one accord, so that they can continue to have a strong prayer life. Discord in the home means that the powerful collective prayers of a husband and wife together are no longer powerful.
  12. The man must recognize that he is not complete without the woman. God created the woman to complete the man. Logically, you do not harm or abuse that which completes you. Genesis 2:19–20
  13. Even for the unbeliever, his blessed lot in life is his wife. Eccles. 9:9
  14. It is these principles which make it fairly easy for two people to determine if they should wed:
    - 1) For the man—is this the woman you are prepared to take care of and be responsible for, no matter what happens in life?
    - 2) For the woman—is this man someone you are willing to give your volition to?
    - 3) If either person thinks *no*, then they should not get married. How they feel about one another is not really the issue.

The Bible has a great deal to say about a man and his wife. Little of this teaching makes any sense when applied to so-called *gay marriage* (which is a misnomer, regardless of the law).

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Jacob stole away from Laban's land, taking with him his wives and children. Jacob's wife Rachel also stole the little deity statues that belonged to Laban. At this point in the narrative, Laban is searching Jacob's camp for these statues, not realizing that his daughter is the thief.

**Genesis 31:33** And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tents of the two slave women, and he did not find [them]. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

Here is something to consider—Laban went into Leah and Rachel's tents. Did he believe his daughters stole from him? Was he willing to execute either of his daughters? At this point, it is hard to determine what was in his mind. Obviously, he needed to search everywhere—but whether he would have required the execution of his own daughters—that is a tough question which would require a great deal of speculation. Perhaps he was simply being thorough? Perhaps he thought someone hid them in their tent? In any case, Laban has their tents searched as well.

## Genesis 31:34a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (ו, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]                      | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| Râchêl (רָחֵל) [pronounced <i>raw-KHALE</i> ]   | <i>ewe and is transliterated Rachel</i>   | feminine proper noun  | Strong's #7354<br>BDB #932  |
| lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i> ]   | <i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect   | Strong's #3947<br>BDB #542  |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object   | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84    |
| t <sup>e</sup> râphîym (תְּרַפִּיִּם) [pronounced <i>t<sup>e</sup>raw-PHEEM</i> ]           | <i>household idol, a kind of idol, an object of reverence, and a means of divination, often transliterated teraphim</i> | masculine plural noun with the definite article   | Strong's #8655<br>BDB #1076 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                                     | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| sîym (שִׂים) [pronounced <i>seem</i> ]; also spelled sûwm (שׁוּם) [pronounced <i>soom</i> ] | <i>to put, to place, to set; to make; to appoint</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #7760<br>BDB #962  |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]                                      | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>                     | a preposition of proximity  | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88   |

## Genesis 31:34a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology                                  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| kar (כַּר) [pronounced kahr]           | saddle bags, basket saddle; an enclosed riding space erected on a camel's saddle; pasture, meadow; ram, lamb, he-lamb; battering-ram | masculine singular construct                      | Strong's #3733<br>BDB #468 |
| This is quite a diversity of meanings. |  |   |                            |
| gâmâl (גַּמָּל) [pronounced gaw-MAWL]  | camel (this is obviously a transliteration)  | masculine singular noun with the definite article | Strong's #1581<br>BDB #168 |

**Translation:** Rachel had taken the teraphim and placed them in the camel's saddle bag,... My guess is, Rachel was on the bottom of everyone's list when it came to suspicion. It is very possible, in Laban's mind, that Jacob stole these items; maybe the maidservants. And then, maybe even Leah, because she went along with Laban's scheme to deceive Jacob. But Rachel was at the bottom of everyone's list when it came to being suspected of stealing anything. She was Laban's younger daughter and the woman that Jacob loved. It never occurs to Jacob that anyone has stolen anything from Laban—and certainly not Rachel. If Jacob thought for one second that Rachel had stolen these idols, do you think that he would have said, "Whoever is found with these household idols will die"? Rachel will claim to be having her period while she sits upon her camel. Does her father insist that she get off the saddle so he can check it? Certainly not. Based upon this narrative, she appears to be the person least under suspicion.

Apparently, no one noticed her taking them out of her father's tent—at the very least, Jacob did not.

Genesis 31:33–34 Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them inside the camel's saddle bag, and then sat down upon them. All the while, Laban is carefully feeling all around the tent, but without finding them.

### The camel's saddle bag (various commentators)

Barnes: *This was a pack-saddle, in the recesses of which articles might be deposited, and on which was a seat or couch for the rider.*<sup>586</sup>

The NET Bible: *The "camel's saddle" was probably some sort of basket-saddle, a cushioned saddle with a basket bound on. Cf. NAB "inside a camel cushion."*<sup>587</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *By this is probably meant the wicker framework of the camel's saddle, with its trappings and hangings.*<sup>588</sup>

Gill: *Hearing her father inquire about them, and her husband having given leave to search for them, and to put to death whoever should be found to have them, took them from the place where she had before laid them and put them into the camel's furniture... which some understand of the saddle on which she rode; rather, it seems to be the saddle cloth or housing.*<sup>589</sup>

<sup>586</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:33–42.

<sup>587</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 18, 2016.

<sup>588</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:34.

<sup>589</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:34.

### The camel's saddle bag (various commentators)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The common pack saddle is often used as a seat or a cushion, against which a person squatted on the floor may lean.*<sup>590</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *"The camel's furniture," i.e., the saddle (not "the camel's litter;" Luther), here the woman's riding saddle, which had a comfortable seat formed of carpets on the top of the packsaddle.*<sup>591</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge contains the most detail on this: *The word, car, rendered "furniture," properly denotes "a large round pannier," placed one on each side of a camel, for a person, especially women, to ride in. It is a hamper, like a cradle, having a back, head, and sides, like a great chair. Moryson describes them as "two long chairs like cradles, covered with red cloth, to hang on the two sides of the camel." Hanway calls them kedgavays, which "are a kind of covered chairs, which the Persians hang over their camels in the manner of panniers, and are big enough for one person to sit in." Thevenot, who calls them counes, says that they lay over them a cover, which keeps them both from the rain and sun; and Maillet describes them as covered cages, hanging on each side of a camel.*<sup>592</sup>

James M. Freeman: *It is not known whether this "furniture" was simply the cloth which covered the camel's back, or a couch which might be used at night for a bed, or a fixture resembling this wicker-work chair or cage, covered with a canopy, which is used by the modern ladies when they ride on camels.*<sup>593</sup>

Jahn's Biblical Archaeology: *The car, כר, or palanquin of the camel, "a covered vehicle which is secured on the back of the camel, and answers the purpose of a small house. It is often divided into two apartments, and the traveller, who can sit in either of them, is enabled also to carry some little furniture with him. These conveyances are protected by veils, which are not rolled up, except in front, so that the person within has the privilege of looking out while he is himself concealed. They are used chiefly by the women, rarely by the men."*<sup>594</sup>

Bruce K. Waltke: *A relief from Tell Halif in northern Syria (900 B.C.) shows a camel driver with a stick in his right hand, fully and securely seated on a boxlike saddle. The box, about 18 inches long and 14 inches high, is bound by straps to the camel and serves as both a riding saddle and a pack saddle.*<sup>595</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

### Genesis 31:34b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                       | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| yâshab (בָּשַׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAH <sup>AV</sup> ] | to remain, to stay; to dwell, to live, to inhabit, to reside; to sit         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #3427<br>BDB #442 |

<sup>590</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:34.

<sup>591</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:33–35.

<sup>592</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:34.

<sup>593</sup> *Manners and Customs of the Bible*; James M. Freeman; reprinted in 1972 by Logos International; p. 40.

<sup>594</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:35.

<sup>595</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 502); accessed October 18, 2017. Wenstrom cites Genesis, A Commentary, page 430, Zondervan.

## Genesis 31:34b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation       | Common English Meanings                                   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|----------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿah] | <i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i> | preposition of relative proximity with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752 |

**Translation:** ...and then she sat on them. Rachel knows that she has stolen the teraphim, and she knows how carefully her father is searching. These have to be quite small items; something which she can move from point A to point B without being noticed. Furthermore, they have to fit into the saddle bag without protruding so much that it is obvious what they are. So, these are not the size of the gnomes out in your garden; but they might be the size of typical army men or GI Joe-size (at the most).

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *“Household idols” is the noun teraphim (תִּרְפִּימוֹת) (ter-aw-feme), which were small idols like figurines and were considered the family gods, which gave the family protection and were kept on a god-shelf and were outlawed in Israel (See 1 Samuel 15:23; 19:13; 2 Kings 23:24; Zechariah 10:2f.).*

Wenstrom notes: *To add further suspense to the story, Moses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit avoids telling the reader until the last possible moment that Rachel had hidden the teraphim in her camel's saddle to prevent their discovery by Laban.*<sup>596</sup>

The plural is used for 2 or more (we have seen a situation in this chapter where the plural applied to two). And, again, just by using the narrative information which we have here, we are able to determine that she probably had 2 to 5 teraphim (depending upon their size). Maybe more, if they were smaller.

These idols were of a fairly small size, small enough to be hidden under Rachel's saddle, among her other things, and small enough to be sufficiently covered as she sat there. It would have been customary for her to get off her camel and to greet her father, but she did not, not wanting to be executed over these idols. Would Jacob and Laban have executed her? After Jacob's strong statement, Laban looks in the tents of his two daughters. This indicates that executing the thief would be very likely. How they would have both responded if they found out Rachel was the thief—there is no telling about that.

Although Wenstrom says<sup>597</sup> that Rachel sitting upon these idols indicated her contempt for them, I don't know that we can easily draw that conclusion. I believe that she is panicked and that this is the first thing that she thinks to do (as Jacob has promised death to whomever is found with these gods).

Again, all three human reactions and this drama here is easily explained by the teraphim. They were not necessarily gold idols, nor were they prized because one could go to them and divine information from them. It goes back to a Hurrian custom wherein the owner of an estate could bequeath his wealth to his son-in-law rather than to his sons by giving his household teraphim to him.<sup>598</sup> If this was ever later contested in court by the sons, the son-in-law only had to show up in court, with the teraphim to settle the matter. This explains why Rachel would have stolen the idol. However, at the same time, it would seem even more likely that Rachel's motivation for stealing them would be to improve her fertility with Jacob.

<sup>596</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 502); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>597</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 502); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>598</sup> This is one popular view.

| Genesis 31:34c  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| mâshash (משש) [pronounced maw-SHAHSH]   | <i>to touch, to feel (in the darkness), to feel (out, over, through), to grope</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect      | Strong's #4959<br>BDB #606 |
| Dr. Bob Utley: This term "felt" means "to feel carefully with the hands" (BDB 606, KB 653, Piel Imperfect). It is usually used of blind people groping in the darkness (cf. Deut. 28:29; Job. 5:14; Job. 12:25). <sup>599</sup> |   |  |                            |
| Lâbân (לבן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN]   | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                       | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object    | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| kôl (כָּל) [pronounced kohl]  | <i>the whole, all of, the entirety of, all; can also be rendered any of</i>   | masculine singular construct followed by a definite article    | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| 'ohel (אֹהֶל) [pronounced OH-heh]   | <i>tent, tabernacle, house, temporary dwelling</i>  | masculine singular noun with the definite article              | Strong's #168<br>BDB #13   |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]  | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| mâtsâ' (מצא) [pronounced maw-TSAW]  | <i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover; to meet (encounter)</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect         | Strong's #4672<br>BDB #592 |

**Translation:** At the same time, Laban [carefully] feels all around [Rachel's] tent but he did not find [them]. Laban is certain that these teraphim have been stolen. My guess is, they are reasonably valuable—perhaps works of art and perhaps made of precious metals and jewels.

Everything had to happen fairly quickly. When informed of Jacob's absence, and his missing daughters and grandchildren, Laban would have been quite upset. However, it possibly occurred to him to look around his home to see what was missing. Or, these teraphim were prominent. If the latter is true, then Jacob would have planned this to all take place while Laban is out onsite checking on his sons and their herds. My guess is, Jacob planned this whole thing fairly carefully. He knew where Laban would be; he knew about how long he had in order to escape. Obviously, stealing never entered into Jacob's mind; but taking out his proper amount of cattle and sheep was certainly a factor.

<sup>599</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:34.

Kretzmann's Commentary: *There is an irony in the fact that the idolater searches for his gods and cannot find them.*<sup>600</sup>

**Genesis 31:34** And Rachel had taken the images and put them into the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all the tent, but did not find them.

It appears that during all of this commotion, accusation, etc., that Rachel had to figure out what to do. We do not know when this took place; perhaps as soon as she realized that her father was near.

In any case, at some point, she moved these little statues to the saddle of her camel and then sits on the saddle in order to cover them. This tells us that these little deity statues are fairly small. They could be found in the saddle of the camel (but they probably did not protrude); and she is able to sit over them with her Mideastern garb and cover them up completely.



**Rachel Sitting on the Household Gods of Laban by Francesco Ferrando** (a painting) from National Trust. Painted: c.1720; Oil on canvas. *The scene shows an episode from the Old Testament. Rachel stole sacred figurines, 'the household gods', from the*

*house of her father, Laban, and hid them in a camel's pack. Here she is concealing them from him by protesting her inability to get up due to it being her time of the month. Both she and her older sister, Leah, were married to Jacob. He was finally escaping to Canaan after 14 years of labour, undertaken as payment for marrying Rachel. After Laban discovers the theft he sets out in pursuit and soon catches up with them. Meanwhile, his servants are searching a chest and Jacob is pointing out that he does not have the idols. Painting and text from BBC.*

As to value, that is difficult to even speculate. The inclusion of gold or gem stones increases their value significantly. Today, we can purchase a deity statue on ebay or amazon for under \$100; however, if we specify a gold plated statuette, such a statue will be worth easily \$1000 or more; and if the statue is solid gold with gemstones, the value increases ten thousandfold.

What we have observed are snippets of the conversation between Jacob and Laban. It probably was much more detailed than this and perhaps went on for 30 minutes or more. We know from the book of Job that people from that era could be very long-winded.

### Genesis 31:35a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's #        |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (i)<br>[pronounced wah] | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |

<sup>600</sup> From <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/kpc/genesis-31.html> (v. 33); accessed November 18, 2016.

## Genesis 31:35a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]  | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55            |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]   | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>                               | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)  | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39            |
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> V]  | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i>                                 | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix                                 | Strong's #1 BDB #3                  |
| 'al (אֲלֵ) [pronounced a]   | <i>no, not; nothing; none; neither, nor; do not, let not [with a verb]; let there not be [with an understood verb];</i>               | adverb of negation; conjunction of prohibiting, dehorting, deprecating, desire that something <i>not</i> be done | Strong's #408<br>BDB #39            |
| chârâh (חָרָה) [pronounced khaw-RAWH]   | <i>to burn, to kindle, to become angry, to burn with anger; to evoke great emotion</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect   | Strong's #2734<br>BDB #354          |
| b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>                                   | a preposition of proximity   | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88           |
| 'êynayim (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced éay-nah-YIM]  | <i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>  | feminine dual noun; construct form   | Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744 |
| Together, the bêyth preposition and the construct form 'îynêy (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced gee-NAY], literally mean <i>in the eyes of</i> ; it can be understood to mean <i>in the opinion of, in the thinking of, in the estimation of; as ____ sees things to be, in the sight of</i> . |   |  |                                     |
| 'ădônîy (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NEE]   | <i>my Lord, my Master, my Sovereign; my lord [master]; can be used to refer to a possessor, an owner; transliterated Adoni, adoni</i> | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix  | Strong's #113 & #136 BDB #10        |

The difference between this spelling and those which end in –ay or –ây is a vowel point, which would have been added much later by the Massorites. However, there would have been a difference in pronunciation.

**Translation:** She said to her father, “Do not allow the eyes of my adonai to become angry,... There is no one like the baby daughter to her father. She is almost always somewhere between the ages of 3 and 10 in his eyes. He cannot imagine her doing any wrong. She asks her father not to be angry with her; but she will explain that she is on her period. As if a father can be angry about that? It is something a father does not want to give much thought to.

## Genesis 31:35b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]                              | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>  | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition               | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| lô' (לא or לול) [pronounced low]                       | <i>not, no</i>   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| yâkôl (לכי) [also yâkôwl (לוכי)] [pronounced yaw-COAL] | <i>to be able, can, to have the ability, to have the power to; to be able to bear; to be able to bring oneself [to do anything]; to be lawful, to be permitted; to be powerful, to prevail</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect                 | Strong's #3201<br>BDB #407 |

With the negative, this means *cannot, to be unable to, to lack the ability to, to be powerless to, to lack permission to, to lack the power to.*

|                                     |   |  |                            |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced le]           | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| qûwm (קום) [pronounced koom]        | <i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i> | Qal infinitive construct   | Strong's #6965<br>BDB #877 |
| min (מן) [pronounced mihn]          | <i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than</i>             | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| pânîym (פנים) [pronounced paw-NEEM] | <i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>   | masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #6440<br>BDB #815 |

Together, min + pânîym mean *from before your face, out from before your face, from one's presence.* However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered *because of, because that; by.*

**Translation:** ...for I am unable to rise up before you... She tells her father that she is unable to rise up before him.

I break this down into small portions, but all of this comes out at once.

## Genesis 31:35c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation      | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                 | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| kîy (כי) [pronounced kee] | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i> | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |

| Genesis 31:35c   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| derek <sup>e</sup> (דֶּרֶךְ)<br>[pronounced DEH-rek <sup>e</sup> ] | way, distance, road, path;<br>journey, course; direction,<br>towards; manner, habit, way [of<br>life]; of moral character | masculine singular<br>construct  | Strong's #1870<br>BDB #202 |
| nāshîym (נָשִׁים)<br>[pronounced naw-<br>SHEEM]                    | women, wives  | feminine plural noun;<br>irregular plural of<br>Strong's #802                            | Strong's #802<br>BDB #61   |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                             | to, for, towards, in regards to,<br>with reference to, as to, with<br>regards to, belonging to                            | directional/relational<br>preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup><br>person singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** ...for the way of women [is] to me.” The way of women simply means that she is on her period. So, of course she cannot get up off her camel and stand up before him.

As was said earlier, he does not suspect her. It does not suddenly occur to Laban, “Aha, you are the culprit and this is a ruse. You must be sitting on the teraphim.” This never occurs to him. His youngest, baby daughter is on her period, and so, there is no more discussion about anything. Laban is not suspicious; it never occurs to him to be suspicious. This is his baby girl.

Genesis 31:33–35a-c Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them inside the camel's saddle bag, and then sat down upon them. All the while, Laban is carefully feeling all around the tent, but without finding them. She said to her father, “Do not allow the eyes of my lord to become angry with me. I am unable to rise up because I am having my period.”

### “The custom of women is upon me” (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *The custom of women is upon me - This she knew must be a satisfactory reason to her father; for if the teraphim were used to any religious purpose, and they seem to have been used in this way, as Laban calls them his gods, he therefore could not suspect that a woman in such a situation, whose touch was considered as defiling, would have sat upon articles that were either the objects of his adoration, or used for any sacred purpose. The stratagem succeeded to her wish, and Laban departed without suspicion.*<sup>601</sup>

Their explanation makes her excuse more clever than I supposed at first.

The College Press Bible Study: *Had Rachel raised her protestation or excuse before this time she would have aroused suspicion. By waiting to the last critical moment she diverts attention from the fact that she might be sitting upon the teraphim. For who would care to trouble a menstruating woman suffering pain? Because, it may have actually been true what she was asserting. Nothing appears here of the taboo that some tribes and races associated with women in this condition, taboos which temporarily rendered such women untouchable.*<sup>602</sup>

<sup>601</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:35.

<sup>602</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).

## “The custom of women is upon me” (various commentators)

The College Press Bible Study continues: *It should be noted, in passing that Rachel, by “covering her theft by subtlety and untruth,” Genesis 31:35, proved herself a true daughter of Laban, and “showed with how much imperfection her religious character was tainted.” “I cannot rise up before thee”; although Oriental politeness required children to rise up in the presence of their parents (cf. Leviticus 19:32, 1Kings 2:19).*<sup>603</sup>

John Gill: *for the custom of women is upon me; her menstrues; which before the law of Moses were reckoned a pollution, and such persons were not to be touched or come near unto, and everything they sat upon was unclean, and not to be touched also; Leviticus 15:19, and he searched; all about her, and around her; but did not oblige her to get up, nor could he imagine that ever the images could be under her in such circumstances: but found not the images; and so left off searching.*<sup>604</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *[C]onsequently Laban might refrain from making further examination, less from fear of defilement, than because he regarded it as impossible that any one with the custom of women upon her should sit upon his gods.*<sup>605</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *This refers to her menstrual period (BDB 202 CONSTRUCT BDB 61). It is obvious from Leviticus 15:19 that there were some cultural taboos connected with this. However, it is uncertain how much we can project these Levitical legislations back into the culture of Laban and Jacob, but there was some compelling reason why he did not ask Rachel to get up.*<sup>606</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Rachel’s statement “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you for the manner of women is upon me” means that she was having her monthly period. Whether she was or not, the Scriptures do not reveal. Under the Mosaic Law, women who were having their period were ceremonially unclean (See Leviticus 15:19-30). This statement was Rachel’s final act of retribution for the fraud Laban perpetrated on her and Jacob on what was to have been their wedding day and it was also retribution for Laban taking her bride price. So Rachel deceives her father, thus Laban reaped what he sowed.*<sup>607</sup>

Nahum Sarna: *[Laban] cannot approach Rachel and he cannot possibly imagine that she would sit on his “gods” in a state of menstrual impurity. The ancients widely regarded menstrual flow as a potently contaminating substance and the menstruant was thought to be possessed by evil spirits, thus requiring her separation from other persons.*<sup>608</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *For sheer ingenuity and daring, it is the equivalent of any other related in this fantastic Book of Genesis. The claim of Rachel that, “The manner of women is upon me,” was her manner of saying that she was menstruating, a condition that, in ancient times, was believed to make women “unclean,” thus defiling anything that they touched. To Laban, this meant that it would have been unthinkable that Rachel in such a condition would have come near his sacred images, much less SIT on them! Thus, we have a double reflection on Laban’s “gods,” being both stolen and defiled by contact with Rachel!*<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).*

<sup>604</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:35.

<sup>605</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:33–35.

<sup>606</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:35.

<sup>607</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 503); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>608</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 503); accessed October 18, 2017. Wenstrom cites Nahum Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary*, page 219, The Jewish Publication Society.

<sup>609</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

The Cambridge Bible concerning Rachel's motivation: *It seems very natural to suppose that Rachel did believe that by the use of these teraphim Laban could find out their flight, and the direction they took, and therefore she stole them; and having stolen them she was afraid to acknowledge the theft, and probably might think that they might be of some use to herself. Therefore, for these reasons, she brought them away.*<sup>610</sup>

At this point, only Rachel knows all that is going on (that she did steal the little deity statues and that she is sitting upon them). No one else seems to be aware of this. This is an experience unique to Rachel. She has stolen these little deity statues—for whatever reason—and yet she has finally given birth to this son, Joseph, which is something that she did not expect to happen. Right now, she is being threatened with possible execution (based upon the judgment of her own husband) and only she knows this.

For some people, there is a confluence of events that somehow straightens them out and puts them on a better path. Perhaps these are the events in Rachel's life which will cause her to introspect a bit more.

| Genesis 31:35d  |   |  |                             |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| châphas (חָפַס) [pronounced khaw-FAHS]                                      | <i>to search, to search for, to seek, to search through</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect      | Strong's #2664<br>BDB #344  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, ו) [pronounced weh]                | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]  | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518  |
| mâtsâ' (מָצָא) [pronounced maw-TSAW]  | <i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover; to meet (encounter)</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect         | Strong's #4672<br>BDB #592  |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>  | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object    | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84    |
| t <sup>r</sup> râphîym (תְּרַפִּיִּם) [pronounced t <sup>r</sup> raw-PHEEM] | <i>household idol, a kind of idol, an object of reverence, and a means of divination, often transliterated teraphim</i>       | masculine plural noun with the definite article                | Strong's #8655<br>BDB #1076 |

**Translation:** *So he continued to search, but he did not find the teraphim.* Quite obviously, Laban could search everywhere in the camp and not find his household gods. Rachel is sitting upon them and this never occurs to him that she is the one who would take them.

<sup>610</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:35.*

J. Vernon McGee: *Rachel is quite a clever girl herself, isn't she? She is the daughter of her father! She had taken them and put them in the camel's furniture, which is the box that went on the camel's back. Then she sat down on them and excused herself to her father. She said she couldn't get up because she didn't feel well that day. All the while, she is sitting on them. What a realistic picture we get of this family!*<sup>611</sup>

We can conclude a few things about these idols: they are small, they are valuable, and they represent idolatry.

We have already seen that she and Leah are on Jacob's side in this matter—he has worked years for Laban and has been cheated repeatedly, so this is Rachel's way of seeing that the rightful inheritance goes to their children because (1) Jacob has worked so long for Laban without just remuneration (Jacob was paid enough only because God was looking out for him) and (2) she and Leah are Laban's daughters who received very little at marriage, so they deserved something by way of inheritance. To her way of thinking, Laban's entire estate would have been the proper price. This could certainly explain why Laban left in a mad rush with enough men to overpower Jacob and his men (however, bear in mind, Laban could have viewed these idols in one way and Rachel could have viewed them in another).

In any case, Laban wants to give the estate to whomever he chooses—and, like many men, he wants to use this inheritance to exploit, control and manipulate his children. Jacob is absolutely flabbergasted that Laban would even accuse him of such a thing, and when the idols are not found, he lets fly with everything that he has been holding in for these past 20 years.

Genesis 31:33–35 Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, **but he did not find them**. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them inside the camel's saddle bag, and then sat down upon them. All the while, Laban is carefully feeling all around the tent, **but without finding them**. She said to her father, "Do not allow the eyes of my lord to become angry with me. I am unable to rise up because I am having my period." So Laban continued to search for the idols, **but he could not find them**.

### Laban searches, but he cannot find the stolen teraphim (several commentators)

NEV commentary: *The Divine cameraman is zooming in, so we can visualize the movement at close range, as Laban moves from tent to tent, with us knowing that the idols are in the last tent, building up a sense of suspense, realizing that Rachel's life depends upon this... and he doesn't find them.*<sup>612</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Laban is still convinced that it is Jacob who has stolen them. He searches all the tents thoroughly without exception. The teraphim were clearly too large to be hidden on the person, although not so large that they could not be hidden in the camel's furniture. It is clear that Jacob watches the process in anger. He does not like all his personal belongings being searched (Genesis 31:37).*

Pett continues: *Entering women's quarters was only justified in extreme circumstances and Laban does it himself. They are members of his family. But he finds nothing. Then he enters Rachel's quarters. That he accepts his daughter's word suggests that he cannot bring himself to believe that his own daughters would deceive him, for had he doubted it he would have been more than suspicious. But like many arrogant people he is oblivious to how badly he has treated them and never suspects for one moment that they are resentful. We must always remember that how we treat people will at some time rebound on us.*<sup>613</sup>

<sup>611</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>612</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

<sup>613</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:33–35.

## Laban searches, but he cannot find the stolen teraphim (several commentators)

Matthew Henry: *The diligent search Laban made for his gods (Genesis 31:33–35), partly out of hatred to Jacob, whom he would gladly have an occasion to quarrel with, partly out of love to his idols, which he was loth to part with. We do not find that he searched Jacob's flocks for stolen cattle; but he searched his furniture for stolen gods.*<sup>614</sup>

Griffith Thomas: *Amid much that is sad and even sordid in this story . . . amid craft, deceit, and lying on almost every side, we cannot fail to see the hand of God overruling and making even the wrath of man to praise Him.*<sup>615</sup>

College Press Bible Study: *Again, however, we turn to the Nuzi records for what seems to be the most important aspect of this whole case, namely, the part played by the teraphim and the theft thereof. "The author handles the entire episode with outstanding skill. When he speaks of the figurines on his own (19, 34f.), he uses the secular, and sometimes irreverent term (teraphim, perhaps 'inert things'); but Laban refers to them as 'my gods' (Genesis 31:30). The search is suspensefully depicted, as Laban combs through one tent after another until he gets to the tent of Rachel, where they have been hidden. Rachel's pretense of female incapacitation is a literary gem in itself. The crowning touch of drama and irony is Jacob's total unawareness of the truth—the grim danger implicit in his innocent assurance that the guilty party would be put to death.*<sup>616</sup>

Barnes: *Rachel pleads the custom of women as an excuse for keeping her seat; which is admitted by Laban, not perhaps from the fear of ceremonial defilement Leviticus 15:19–27, as this law was not yet in force, but from respect to his daughter and the conviction that in such circumstances she would not sit upon the teraphim.*<sup>617</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *She lies about it, but notice how God is sort of hands-off on this whole thing. He just left it to work itself out. There is no justification of her, but what we are seeing is this contrast between Jacob and his uprightness and the craftiness of Rachel. The Holy Spirit emphasizes how Jacob has matured during this time and he is totally without guile in this situation.*<sup>618</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The College Press Bible Study on the significance of the teraphim: *But the basic significance of the incident now transcends all such considerations of human interest or literary presentation. It derives from underlying social practices as they bear on the nature of the patriarchal narratives in general. According to the Nuzi documents, which have been found to reflect time and again the social customs of Haran, possession of the house gods could signify legal title to a given estate, particularly in cases out of the ordinary, involving daughters, sons-in-law, or adopted sons. This peculiar practice of Rachel's homeland supplies at last the motive, sought so long but in vain, for her seemingly incomprehensible conduct. Rachel was in a position to know, or at least to suspect, that in conformance with local law her husband was entitled to a specified share in Laban's estate. But she also had ample reason to doubt that her father would voluntarily transfer the images as formal proof of property release; the ultimate status of Laban's daughters and their maidservants could well have been involved as well. In other words, tradition remembered Rachel as a resolute woman who did not shrink from taking the law—or what she believed to be the law—into her own hands. The above technical detail would help to explain why Laban was more concerned about the disappearance of the images than about anything else (Genesis 31:30). For under Hurrian law, Jacob's status in Laban's household would normally be tantamount to self-enslavement. That position, however, would be*

<sup>614</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:25–35.

<sup>615</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:30–35.

<sup>616</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Laban's response (Gen. 31:43-44).

<sup>617</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:33–42.

<sup>618</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

altered if Jacob was recognized as an adopted son who married the master's daughter. Possession of the house gods might well have made the difference. Laban knew that he did not have them, but chose to act as though he did, at least to save face. Thus his seeming magnanimity in the end (43f.) would no longer be out of character. He keeps up the pretense that he is the legal owner of everything in Jacob's possession; yet he must have been aware that, with the images gone, he could not press such a claim in a court of law" (Speiser, ABG, 250–251).<sup>619</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *Rachel's taking the teraphim from her father was probably much more serious than we had imagined. The possession of those household gods implied leadership of the family, which meant that Jacob was going to inherit everything old Laban had! That is the reason Laban was so wrought up over it. He surely did not want Jacob to get his estate — he felt he had gotten too much already.*<sup>620</sup>

Matthew Henry suggests that Laban search for God instead: *He was of Micah's mind, You have taken away my gods, and what have I more? Judges 18:24. Were the worshippers of false gods so set upon their idols? did they thus walk in the name of their gods? and shall not we be as solicitous in our enquires after the True God? When He has justly departed from us, how carefully should we ask, Where is God my Maker? O that I knew where I might find Him! Job 23:3. Laban, after all his searches, missed of finding his gods, and was baffled in his enquiry with a sham; but our God will not only by found of those that seek him, but they shall find Him their bountiful Rewarder.*<sup>621</sup>

**Genesis 31:35** But she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before you. For the custom of women is upon me." And he searched, but did not find the images.

**Fresco by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo of Rachel sitting on the idols.** Posted at [Wikipedia](#). Interestingly enough, I came upon two works of art which commemorate this event, and both of them have Rachel sitting on the ground rather than on a camel, as the text clearly indicates. This reveals a wrong assumption which I had originally made. The text actually says nothing about a camel. She is sitting on a camel's saddle; the two artists assume that the saddle is on the ground somewhere, and that Rachel is sitting upon it separate from the camel. For many years, I had assumed that she was sitting upon a camel. The assumption that she was sitting on a camel's saddle on the ground makes much more sense. Why would she, having her period (as she claims) get up onto a camel? When I saw these paintings, I thought, *now that makes much more sense; the saddle has been removed from the camel, which is only logical.*



Did Laban mentally revisit these final moments of his search. Did he suddenly realize, while returning to Haran, where the little deities were hidden? We don't know. It is assumed by almost every commentator that his own daughter outsmarted him at this point—and it is possible that she did. But it is also possible that Laban purposely

<sup>619</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Laban's response (Gen\_31:43-44).

<sup>620</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>621</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:25–35 (slightly edited).

decided not to search any further. The only statement which tells us anything about this final disposition of all this is, **So he searched but did not find the household gods.** (ESV). Similar statements are also found in vv. 33 and 34. This suggests to me that Laban was looking and expected to find the statues, but he did not. What he thought later, after this was all over, we will never know.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

**Rachel and the deity statues:** So Rachel is sitting upon the deity statues on the saddle of the camel, but she refuses to get off the saddle (which is probably on the ground and not on a camel) because she tells her father she is experiencing her period. Many a woman has gotten her way by citing her period as the reason.

Why does she insist upon sitting on this saddle? First of all, I am guessing that no one asked this question. She said, "I am on my period," and that ended the conversation. But, not being a woman, let me hypothesize that there are specific chairs, saddles or couches which are more comfortable for a woman to sit upon during her period. Maybe there is the right kind of angle or form, and that is why a woman might sit on something like a saddle.

The fact that Laban did not insist on checking her saddle suggests that he did not suspect her. Or, if he did, finding that she is intentionally hiding the figurines could subject her to being executed.

There is a minor topic which I did not see discussed by any commentator—how do we know that this took place? Certainly, everyone there knows that Laban caught up to them, made all kinds of accusations, and then began looking around for his stolen gods. That is all known to everyone. Jacob's response is known to everyone there. But, how do we know (1) that Rachel stole the gods and (2) how she hid the gods? This is, quite obviously, not general knowledge. At this point in time, only Rachel knows what she has done.

Logically, it is Rachel who must reveal this information (although she could have been found out at a later date); and the most logical person for her to reveal this information to would have been her husband Jacob. Since we do not hear about these little statuettes ever again,<sup>622</sup> I would suggest that they were hidden, buried or left behind somewhere. In Genesis 35, anything related to idolatry is removed from Jacob's family, and that could have been the time that these teraphim were gotten rid of. Certainly, they could have been discovered after Rachel's death and even buried with her—but it would seem that such a discovery and act would have been a part of the Bible narrative.

What can we take from this? First, Laban's gods could be easily stolen and then easily hidden from him. They were of no real value to him. Secondly, it is Rachel who hides and protects these gods more than them protecting her. Did this incident, where her actual life was on the line, change her thinking? Did she place some kind of value on these gods previously and after this incident, recognize that they were of no actual value?

Genesis 31:33–35 **Consequently, Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel's tent. Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them inside the camel's saddle bag, and then sat down upon them. All the while, Laban is carefully feeling all around the tent, but without finding them. She said to her father, "Do not allow the eyes of my lord to become angry with me. I am unable to rise up because I am having my period." So Laban continued to search for the idols, but he could not find them.**

### Rachel and the deity statues (William Wenstrom)

Why did Rachel steal the household idols? As we note earlier in this study of Genesis 31, the obvious reason is that by taking away her father's household idols, she was taking away his protection from his perspective, which the idols were thought to give. Also, we have noted that another explanation supported by the text and

<sup>622</sup> There is a possible reference to them in Genesis 35.

## Rachel and the deity statues (William Wenstrom)

archaeology relates her theft to a practice during the days of the patriarchs that is mentioned in Hurrian texts found in a place called "Nuzi," which is about 10 miles southwest of modern Kirkuk in northeastern Iraq.

These Hurrian texts included about 5,000 tablets from family archives from approximately 1500 B.C. and they give us insight into life in the days of the patriarchs. According to these documents from Nuzi, possession of the household gods was connected to inheritance and property rights of their owner. Therefore, Rachel stole the household gods in order to establish a future claim on Laban's family inheritance. She thought by possessing them would somehow help validate the legitimacy of her husband's title to the flocks he had acquired while serving Laban and represent the inheritance she had a right to expect. The household gods were a token of rightful claim to the possessions and the headship of the family.

Rachel must have felt justified in stealing these gods and in expecting to share in the family inheritance. After all, this is what she and Leah had just affirmed to Jacob: Genesis 31:14, "Rachel and Leah said to him, 'Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house?'"

From Rachel's perspective, getting Laban's wealth was God's will and if that was the case with the matter of the flocks which Jacob had been tending, why should it not be true of the estate at Laban's death?

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 502–503); accessed October 18, 2017.

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Snider's translation of Genesis 31:31–35 Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, Since I thought, 'you will take your daughters from me by force.' The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; (with whom you will find your Elohiym, not he will live) in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take it for yourself." Now Jacob was unaware that Rachel had stolen them. So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and came in to Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent, but did not find them. Now she said to her father, stfwd "Stop being angry, my lord, because I am not able to rise before you, for the way of women is on me." (to burn or be kindled, used of anger, form is immediate prohibition, stop an action in progress--in eyes of my Lord --since I am not able to rise from before you--because I am having my period) So he searched but did not find the idols.

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:31–35

1. Jacob responds to the attack of Laban, but only addresses two of the items Laban had brought up.
2. The first was the reason for his secret departure, which he attributes to nothing more than fear of Laban.
3. There is no doubt that this is true, he feared Laban and the fact that Laban could have used force to remove his wives from him.
4. He does not mention the appearance of God and the command to leave Haran, since Laban would have hardly believed this anyway.
5. Jacob moves on rapidly, since Laban was little interested in explanations and Jacob is aware of this.
6. The second item he addresses is the theft of the gods, which Jacob was certain was not perpetrated by anyone in his caravan.
7. He is so sure, that he insists on the death penalty for the one who would have done this.
8. Beyond searching for the idols, Jacob invites Laban to search for anything else which may have belonged to him, in the presence of the relative who had accompanied Laban.
9. He is absolutely certain of his innocence, and does not for a moment suspect Rachel of the theft.
10. Laban makes a thorough search as expressed in vs 33, and in the use of the Piel in vs 35. "searched" chaphas

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:31–35

11. What we find out from Rachel's comment is that Laban was fuming all the while he was searching for his
12. She basically tells him to stop being angry, and then excuses herself from dismounting her camel, since she says she is on her period.
13. Whether or not this was true, it gets her off the hook, and Laban abandons the search for his goods.
14. The fact that he so desperately wanted his idols may have been due to the fact that their possession was proof of the right to inherit his estate.
15. More to the point, Laban was a religious reversionist and put his trust in these statues.
16. What is worse is that his daughter Rachel is as bad as he is in terms of religious reversionism.
17. She certainly here demonstrates herself to be a match in terms of deception, as well.
18. The fact that she thought these idols were worthwhile or necessary points out that she was much more like her father than she may have wanted to believe.
19. Rachel is horsy, deceptive, a religious reversionist, and within 10 years will die the SIN UNTO DEATH.
20. This incident should have been a warning sign to her and to Jacob.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:31–35 Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. "The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take it for yourself." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen his idols [lit., *them*].

So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find them. She said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols.

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:31–35

#### Jacob's Defense (vv. 31-35)

1. Jacob's defense of this actions is intense and sharp.
2. He does not contend that the manner of his leaving was apropos but launches into a rebuttal of Laban's speech.
3. He says the reason for his actions was based on his fear that Laban would take by force his daughters from their husband (v.31).
4. The verb *gazel* means to steal by force.
5. Cf. 18:15; 26:7; 26:9.
6. Jacob admits that fear was the overriding factor in his secretive departure from Haran.
7. As for the charge of stealing Laban's household idols Jacob is so convinced of the innocence of all his people that pronounces the death penalty on anyone guilt of this crime.
8. Jacob calls for a judicial inquiry as noted in the words "in the presence of our kinsmen."
9. Those who had come with Laban could identify the stolen goods.
10. It is highly doubtful that the death penalty was inflicted on persons for petty theft among the people of Haran.
11. Jacob unwittingly passes a death sentence upon his favorite wife (v. 32).
12. At this point in the narrative the charges and countercharges between the two men cease and the break to search for the teraphim commences.
13. This allows the pace to slow down to heighten the suspense.
14. The narrator is good at establishing the tension as per the words: "Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them."

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:31–35

15. Then the narrator has Laban searching all the tents that we know the teraphim will not be found (v.33).
16. Finally, Laban enters the tent of the thief and the tension reaches its apex (v. 33b).
17. Laban enters Rachel's tent where she is sitting on the camel's saddle.
18. In one of the pouches of the saddle bag the stolen property resides.
19. At the last possible moment the narrator informs the reader that Rachel had placed the idols in a place that would be less likely found out (v. 34).
20. Laban enters Rachel's tent where she sits on the saddle bag that holds Laban's gods.
21. While she sat there Laban "felt through all the tent" indicating that Laban felt all things one by one before he was satisfied that the idols were not there.
22. The verb "felt" (iterative mashash) was used of Isaac's examination of Jacob's hands and neck in a futile attempt to discover the identity of the person in his bedroom.
23. Laban is feeling, frisking, house-searching only to fall victim to a trick like Jacob would have been able to pull off.
24. Lastly, Laban turns to his daughter who has strategically placed herself upon the stolen goods.
25. Rachel politely and calmly requests that he not be asked to rise up from her seat offering the excuse that he was not feeling well as she was having her period.
26. This is where the story shifts to malicious pleasure.
27. It pokes fun at the teraphim which are saved by a menstrual cycle!
28. Further they are closely associated with that which is unclean as if they were not better than sanitary towels!
29. At the end of Laban's searching, Laban appears the fool.
30. His only substantial charge is rendered null and void.
31. Laban is left hanging out to dry as his only serious accusation appears unfounded.
32. The trickster is hoaxed as seen in the threefold "he did not find."

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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### Jacob's Response

The very first phrase of v. 36 really belongs at the end of v. 35: **So he continued to search, but he did not find the teraphim. Therefore Laban [lit., he] burned [in anger] toward Jacob...** When you read through all of the translations, you will find out that they disagree with me (they make *Jacob* out to be the subject of the verb). Just to prepare you, I am right and they are all wrong.

Both men are angry at one another. Laban has had his say and now Jacob will weigh in, explaining his side of the story. In some ways, this is almost like a courtroom drama. Jacob's wives and children are watching, as if publically viewing the court case; and the *brothers of Laban* act as a jury. They have heard what Laban has to say, and they have seen him unable to produce any evidence. Some of the things which Jacob will complain about will be things that these men have seen themselves.

We might understand the upcoming passage to be summarized by, *and Jacob unloaded on Laban*. Jacob has some strong opinions about Laban, and Laban being unable to show that anything had been stolen gives Jacob the perfect opportunity to lay into him.

Gen. 31:36–37 Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? For you have felt through all my goods; what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.

Gen 31:38–40 These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

Gen 31:41–42 These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night." (ESV)

### Jacob's response to Laban (William Wenstrom)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:36-42 contains Jacob's speech before Laban and all their relatives, which is delivered with ferocious intensity and summarizes his twenty years with Laban. In Genesis 31:36-38, Jacob demonstrates his innocence from being wrongly accused of stealing the teraphim in the present and his innocence in the past in not stealing from Laban's flocks. In Genesis 31:39-40, he presents to his audience the difficult conditions he had to work under. In Genesis 31:41-42, Jacob appeals to God's vindication of him in the past and in the present in Laban's dream.*<sup>623</sup>

Wenstrom continues: *When Laban's search does not turn up anything, Jacob flies off the handle. Jacob's emotions had been building up over the years and all of a sudden they come to a boiling point. Even Laban, who probably was a bully and a rough character, is taken back momentarily. Both men know that Jacob is under divine protection. So Jacob can afford to blow up.*

Wenstrom continues: *Genesis 31:36-42 are Jacob's testimony of twenty years of pent-up emotions. He has been cheated and used and treated as dirt. Laban had been a hard taskmaster and Jacob a very conscientious servant. So we see Jacob reveling in his innocence in addition to the assurance he gained from Laban's report that God had spoken to him in the night, preventing harm to Jacob.*

Wenstrom concludes: *In the light of these events Jacob now seemed to have the upper hand or in other words, he held the winning cards, and he planned to use them to greatest advantage. The years of friction between these two men now boiled over as Jacob scalded Laban with righteous indignation. Jacob was angry and called for a judgment scene. He knew he was totally innocent and he felt the suspicions of his father-in-law were unfair and unjustified. He felt that Laban had made up the story of the stolen teraphim as an excuse to search his possessions.*<sup>624</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *Jacob is angry and he legally challenges Laban. He has a very rational organized case that he presents against Laban, so he is not irrationally angry at this point. But his sense of justice has been violated and he presents a logical case against Laban.*<sup>625</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

I wanted to break this long quotation up. In retrospect, maybe I should have stopped after v. 39? As you can tell from the translations below, there is no generally agreed upon division. The entire quotation runs to v. 42.

<sup>623</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 503); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>624</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 504); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>625</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

And so he burns to Jacob and so he contends in Laban and so answers Jacob and so he says to Laban, “What [is] my violation; what [is] my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? For you have [carefully] felt all my goods, what have you found from all goods of your house? Set [them] here before my brothers and your brothers and they will render a decision between two of us. These twenty a year I with you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and rams of your flock I have not eaten. Torn flesh I did not bring unto you. I [even] I bore his loss. From my hand, you sought him, stolen [in] day and stolen [by] night. I was in the day, consumed me heat; and cold the night. And so departed my sleep from my [two] eyes.

Genesis  
31:36–40

Therefore Laban [lit., *he*] burned [in anger] toward Jacob and Jacob [lit., *he*] disputed [the allegations made] by Laban. Therefore, Jacob answered and said to Laban, “What [exactly is] my infraction; what [is] my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? You [lit., *Because you*] have [carefully] felt [the tents and you have searched] all my possessions, [and] what have you found from all the possessions from your house? Set [them all] here in front of my kinsmen and your kinsmen and they will decide between the two of us. [For] these 20 years [that] I [have been] with you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flocks. I did not bring torn flesh to you [to account for a loss]; I bore its loss. You sought [remuneration] from my hand, [whether] stolen [in] the day or stolen at night. [Thus] I was consumed by heat in the day; and [by] cold in the night. My sleep departed from my two eyes.

Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban’s treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, “What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us. For the 20 years that I have worked for you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I never brought an animal to you killed in the wild; I bore the loss of that animal. It was your policy that I cover that loss, even if an animal were stolen from me. During the day, the heat was nearly unbearable; furthermore, it was bitterly cold on many nights. I was sleep deprived in order to protect your herds.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so he burns to Jacob and so he contends in Laban and so answers Jacob and so he says to Laban, “What [is] my violation; what [is] my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? For you have [carefully] felt all my goods, what have you found from all goods of your house? Set [them] here before my brothers and your brothers and they will render a decision between two of us. These twenty a year I with you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and rams of your flock I have not eaten. Torn flesh I did not bring unto you. I [even] I bore his loss. From my hand, you sought him, stolen [in] day and stolen [by] night. I was in the day, consumed me heat; and cold the night. And so departed my sleep from my [two] eyes.

Targum (Onkelos)

And Jakob was angry, and contended with Laban. And Jakob answered and said to Laban, What is my guilt- my crime, that thou hast pursued after me? Now that thou hast searched all my things [Or, "vessels."], what hast thou found, of all the things of thy house? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, and they shall decide between us both. These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and

thy goats have not failed, and the rams of thy flock I have not eaten. The wounded I have not brought to thee; what was deficient in number, from my hand hast thou required it. I have watched by day, and I have watched by night. (Thus) have I been; in the day the heat devoured me, and the frost came down upon me at night, and sleep passed away from my eyes.

- Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) And the anger of Jakob took fire, and he contended with Laban. And Jakob answered and said to Laban, What is my sin, and what my transgression, that thou hast so eagerly come after me? Having, therefore, searched all my vessels, what hast thou found of all the vessels of thy house? Lay now the matter before my brethren and thy brethren, and let them decide the truth between us two. These twenty years have I been with thee: thy ewes and thy goats have not failed, and the price of the rams of the flock I have not eaten. That torn by wild beasts I have not brought to thee; for had I sinned, from my hand thou wouldst have required it. What was stolen in the day by men, that have I made good; and what was stolen in the night by wild beasts was made good also. [The Jerusalem targum: The dead I have not brought to thee; every one which had fled from the number, I have made that good; of my hands thou hast required it: and what thieves stole by day or wild beasts devoured by night I have made good.] I have been in the field; by day the heat hath devoured me, and the cold by night, and sleep hath been parted from me.
- Revised Douay-Rheims And Jacob being angry, said in a chiding manner: For what fault of mine, and for what offense on my part have you so hotly pursued me, And searched all my household stuff? What have you found of all the substance of your house? lay it here before my brethren, and your brethren, and let them judge between me and you. Have I therefore been with you twenty years? your ewes and goats were not barren, the rams of your flocks I did not eat: Neither did I show you that which the beast had torn, I made good all the damage: whatsoever was lost by theft, you did exact it of me: Day and night was I parched with heat, and with frost, and sleep departed from my eyes.
- Aramaic ESV of Peshitta Ya'aqub was angry, and argued with Laban. Ya'aqub answered Laban, "What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? Now that you have felt around in all my things, what have you found of all your household things? Set it here before my relatives and your relatives, that they may judge between us two. "These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not cast their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. That which was torn of animals, I did not bring to you. I bore its loss. Of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. This was my situation: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes.
- Peshitta (Syriac) And Jacob was displeased, and argued with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? and what is my fault, that you have hotly pursued after me? Behold you have searched all my baggage, and what have you found of all your household articles? Put it here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both. Behold, I have been with you for the past twenty years; your ewes and your she goats have not cast their young, and I have not eaten of the rams of your flock. That which was torn by wild beasts I never brought to you; I bore the loss of it; of my hand you did require it; likewise that which was stolen by the day or by the night. Thus by day I was scorched by the heat, and at night suffered from cold; and my sleep departed from my eyes.
- Septuagint (Greek) And Jacob was angry, and strove with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my injustice, and what my sin, that you have pursued after me, and that you have searched all the furniture of my house? what have you found of all the furniture of your house? set it here between your relations and my relations, and let them decide between us two. These twenty years have I been with you; your sheep, and your she-goats have not failed in bearing; I devoured not the rams of your cattle. That which was taken of beasts I brought not to you; I made good of

myself the thefts of the day, and the thefts of the night. I was parched with heat by day, and chilled with frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes.

#### Significant differences:

It is a little tricky who is burning in anger towards whom; which is a problem found throughout the English translations. There is a lamed preposition which precedes *Jacob*, which usually makes *Jacob* the object of the verb. *Everyone* appears to disagree with me on this point. The way I translate this is, *and Laban was burning (with anger) towards Jacob; and Jacob complained (strove, quarreled, conducted a legal case) against Laban; and so Jacob answered and said to Laban, "What is my offense?"* (I have replaced the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular with the name of the person who is doing the action) The point is, there are two men here who are quite angry with one another. Nearly every translation, ancient and recent, have Jacob filled with all of the (righteous) anger. In all of the ancient translations, it is Jacob who is the subject of the first 3 verbs (according to the English translation). I believe that Jacob is the subject of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> verbs. It is not out of the ordinary for the anger of someone to be spoken of in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person.

The Latin lacks the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> verbs. One targum speaks of laying the *matter* before their relatives; but it is actually physical stuff that the Hebrew calls for. One targum has *the price of the* (rams); when it ought to simply be *the rams*. The Pseudo-Jonathan targum adds in a number of words.

I found these words from the Hebrew difficult to translation and understand: *From my hand, you sought him, stolen [in] day and stolen [by] night*. There were quite a number of opinions as to what was being said. It appears that Jacob had to make good on any animal who was stolen from the flock, day or night. That seems to be the consensus of the meaning of that phrase. One targum has him watching day and night.

#### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

##### Bible in Basic English

Then Jacob was angry with Laban, and said, What crime or sin have I done that you have come after me with such passion? Now that you have made search through all my goods, what have you seen which is yours? Make it clear now before my people and your people, so that they may be judges between us. These twenty years I have been with you; your sheep and your goats have had young without loss, not one of your he-goats have I taken for food. Anything which was wounded by beasts I did not take to you, but myself made up for the loss of it; you made me responsible for whatever was taken by thieves, by day or by night. This was my condition, wasted by heat in the day and by the bitter cold at night; and sleep went from my eyes.

##### Easy English

Then Jacob became angry with Laban. He asked him 'What have I done wrong? What have I done against you? Why have you followed me? Now you have looked through everything that I have. And what have you found that belongs to you? If you have found anything, put it in front of your relatives and mine. Let them say which one of us is right. I have worked for you for 20 years. Your animals have all given birth to young ones. I have not eaten any of your male animals. I did not bring you animals killed by wild animals. I paid you for them. You said that I must pay for any animals that someone took in the day or night.'

Jacob said, 'This is what it was like to work for you: I could not get away from the heat of the sun in the day. It felt like it was eating me. And the night-time was so cold that I could not sleep.'

##### Easy-to-Read Version—2006

Then Jacob became very angry and said, "What wrong have I done? What law have I broken? What right do you have to chase me and stop me? You looked through

everything I own and found nothing that belongs to you. If you found something, show it to me. Put it here where our men can see it. Let our men decide which one of us is right. I have worked 20 years for you. During all that time none of the baby sheep and goats died during birth. And I have not eaten any of the rams from your flocks. Any time a sheep was killed by wild animals, I always paid for the loss myself. I did not take the dead animal to you and say that it was not my fault. But I was robbed day and night. In the daytime the sun took away my strength, and at night sleep was taken from my eyes by the cold.

*God's Word™*

Then Jacob became angry and confronted Laban. "What is my crime?" Jacob demanded of Laban. "What is my offense that you have come chasing after me? Now that you've rummaged through all my things, did you find anything from your house? Put it here in front of all our relatives. Let them decide which one of us is right.

"I've been with you for 20 years. Your sheep and goats never miscarried, and I never ate any rams from your flocks. I never brought you any of the flock that was killed by wild animals. I paid for the loss myself. That's what you demanded of me when any of the flock was stolen during the day or at night. The scorching heat during the day and the cold at night wore me down, and I lost a lot of sleep.

Good News Bible (TEV)

Then Jacob lost his temper. "What crime have I committed?" he asked angrily. "What law have I broken that gives you the right to hunt me down? Now that you have searched through all my belongings, what household article have you found that belongs to you? Put it out here where your men and mine can see it, and let them decide which one of us is right. I have been with you now for twenty years; your sheep and your goats have not failed to reproduce, and I have not eaten any rams from your flocks. Whenever a sheep was killed by wild animals, I always bore the loss myself. I didn't take it to you to show that it was not my fault. You demanded that I make good anything that was stolen during the day or during the night. Many times I suffered from the heat during the day and from the cold at night. I was not able to sleep.

International Children's B.

Then Jacob became very angry. He said, "What wrong have I done? What law have I broken to cause you to chase me? You have looked through everything I own. But you have found nothing that belongs to you. If you have found anything, show it to everyone. Put it in front of your relatives and my relatives. Then let them decide which one of us is right. I have worked for you now for 20 years. During all that time none of the lambs and kids died during birth. And I have not eaten any of the male sheep from your flocks. Any time a sheep was killed by wild animals, I did not bring it to you. I made up for the loss myself. You made me pay for any animal that was stolen during the day or night. In the daytime the sun took away my strength. At night I was cold and could not sleep.

*The Message*

Now it was Jacob's turn to get angry. He lit into Laban: "So what's my crime, what wrong have I done you that you badger me like this? You've ransacked the place. Have you turned up a single thing that's yours? Let's see it—display the evidence. Our two families can be the jury and decide between us.

"In the twenty years I've worked for you, ewes and she-goats never miscarried. I never feasted on the rams from your flock. I never brought you a torn carcass killed by wild animals but that I paid for it out of my own pocket—actually, you made me pay whether it was my fault or not. I was out in all kinds of weather, from torrid heat to freezing cold, putting in many a sleepless night.

NIRV

Jacob was very angry with Laban. "What is my crime?" he asked. "What have I done to you that you hunt me down like this? You have searched through all my things. What have you found that belongs to your family? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine. Let them decide between the two of us.

"I've been with you for 20 years now. The little ones of your sheep and goats were not dead when they were born. I haven't eaten rams from your flocks. I didn't bring

New Simplified Bible you animals torn apart by wild beasts. I made up for the loss myself. Also, you made me pay for anything stolen by day or night. And what was my life like? The heat burned me in the daytime. And it was so cold at night that I froze. I couldn't sleep. Jacob lost his temper. »What crime have I committed?« he asked angrily. »What law have I broken that gives you the right to hunt me down? »Now that you have searched through all my belongings, what household article have you found that belongs to you? Put it out here where your men and mine can see it. Let them decide which one of us is right. »I have been with you now for twenty years. Your sheep and your goats have not failed to reproduce. I have not even eaten any rams from your flocks. »I always absorbed the loss when wild animals killed a sheep. I did not take it to you to show that it was not my fault. You demanded that I make good anything that was stolen during the day or during the night. »Many times I suffered from the heat during the day and from the cold at night. I was not able to sleep.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible Jacob was angry and complained to Laban, "What have I done wrong and what's my crime that you've tracked me down like this? You've now felt through all of my baggage, and what have you found from your household's belongings? Put it in front of our relatives, and let them decide between us. For these twenty years I've been with you, your female sheep and goats haven't miscarried, and I haven't eaten your flock's rams. When animals were killed, I didn't bring them to you but took the loss myself. You demanded compensation from me for any animals poached during the day or night. The dry heat consumed me during the day, and the frost at night; I couldn't sleep.

Contemporary English V. Jacob became very angry and said to Laban: What have I done wrong? Have I committed some crime? Is that why you hunted me down? After searching through everything I have, did you find anything of yours? If so, put it here, where your relatives and mine can see it. Then we can decide what to do. In all the twenty years that I've worked for you, not one of your sheep or goats has had a miscarriage, and I've never eaten even one of your rams. If a wild animal killed one of your sheep or goats, I paid for it myself. In fact, you demanded the full price, whether the animal was killed during the day or at night. I sweated every day, and I couldn't sleep at night because of the cold.

The Living Bible Now Jacob got mad. "What did you find?" he demanded of Laban. "What is my crime? You have come rushing after me as though you were chasing a criminal and have searched through everything. Now put everything I stole out here in front of us, before your men and mine, for all to see and to decide whose it is! Twenty years I've been with you, and all that time I cared for your ewes and goats so that they produced healthy offspring, and I never touched one ram of yours for food. If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, did I show them to you and ask you to reduce the count of your flock? No, I took the loss. You made me pay for every animal stolen from the flocks, whether I could help it or not. I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day, and through the cold and sleepless nights.

New Berkeley Version Angrily, Jacob reprimanded Laban; Jacob said to Laban, "What is my misdemeanor? What is my crime that you have pursued me so hotly? Thought you have been feeling all my household goods, which of all your utensils have you discovered? Place it here in front of my kinsmen and yours, so they may judge between us two. During my twenty years with you, your ewes and yourshe-goats have not miscarried and the rams of your flock I have not eaten. What the wild beasts mangled I did not bring to you, but I personally replaced it, and you exacted from me whatever was carried off by day or by night. As for me personally, heat wore me down by day and cold by night, besides loss of sleep.

## New Century Version

Then Jacob became very angry and said, "What wrong have I done? What law have I broken to cause you to chase me? You have looked through everything I own, but you have found nothing that belongs to you. If you have found anything, show it to everyone. Put it in front of your relatives and my relatives, and let them decide which one of us is right. I have worked for you now for twenty years. During all that time none of the lambs and kids died during birth, and I have not eaten any of the male sheep from your flocks. Any time an animal was killed by wild beasts, I did not bring it to you, but made up for the loss myself. You made me pay for any animal that was stolen during the day or night. In the daytime the sun took away my strength, and at night I was cold and could not sleep.

## New Living Translation

Then Jacob became very angry, and he challenged Laban. "What's my crime?" he demanded. "What have I done wrong to make you chase after me as though I were a criminal? You have rummaged through everything I own. Now show me what you found that belongs to you! Set it out here in front of us, before our relatives, for all to see. Let them judge between us!

"For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night.

"I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights.

**Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

## American English Bible

And all [of this] made Jacob very angry; so he argued with Laban and asked him: "What wrong have I done to you and what is my sin that caused you to chase after me and then search all the furnishings in my home? What have you found [that is part of] the furnishings of your house? Lay it out here between your relatives and mine, and let them decide!

"Why, I've been with you for twenty years, during which your sheep and nanny goats didn't fail to give birth... and I didn't eat any of the rams from your herds. All that I ever took was the wild animals that I didn't bring to you. Why, I [paid] for anything that was stolen during the day or during the night, as I was dried out with the heat of the day, [chilled] by frost in the night, and I seldom ever got much sleep!

## Beck's American Translation

Then Jacob was angry and scolded Laban. "What wrong have I done?" Jacob demanded of Laban. "Or what si, that you come in hot pursuit of me? You've searched through everything I have, but what did you find of all your household things? Set it here in front of my relatives and yours, and let them decide which of us two is right.

"For twenty years now I've been with you. Your ewes and your she-goats didn't miscarry, and I didn't eat the rams of your flock. If anything was torn by wild animals, I didn't bring it to you; I paid for its loss. You demanded from me anything that was stolen by day or by night. There I was—the scorching heat wore me down by day and the cold by night, and I lost my sleep.

## International Standard V

**Jacob Rebukes Laban**

Then Jacob got angry and started an argument with Laban. "What have I done?" he demanded. "What's my crime that would cause you to come pursue me so violently? Now that you've searched all my belongings, what did you find that belongs to your house? Set it here in front of our relativesgg and we'll let them judge between us! Meanwhile, these past 20 years that I've been with you, your sheep and goats never had miscarriages, I never once ate any of the rams from your flock, and whatever was torn by beasts, I never bothered to bring to you.

Revised Knox Bible Instead, I bore the losses myself. Even so, you demanded that I provide restitution for anything that was stolen, whether during the day or the night. As it was, I was attacked by drought during the day and by cold at night. I never got any decent rest. And now Jacob broke out into angry reproaches against Laban. For what fault, what guilt of mine, have you so hotly pursued me, and made this search of all my goods? What treasure have you found here, of all the treasures in your house? Bring it out here, before my brethren and yours, and let them judge between us. Was it for this that I spent twenty years in your service? All that time, your ewes and she-goats were never barren, no wether lamb of yours did I take for my own eating. If wild beasts preyed on them, I made good the damage, instead of bringing it to shew you; I must needs give account to you of all that was lost by theft. Burning heat by day, and biting frost at nights, till my eye-lids lost the power of sleep;...

Translation for Translators Then Jacob became angry. He rebuked Laban, saying, "What crime did I commit? For what sin that I committed have you pursued me? Now you have searched through all my possessions, and what did you find from all these possessions that belongs to you? Put it here in front of my relatives and your relatives, so that they can decide who is right, you or me!

I was with you for twenty years. In all that time, your sheep and goats have not miscarried/always given birth to animals safely . I have not killed and eaten any rams from your flocks. When one of your animals was attacked and mauled/killed by a wild animal, I did not bring it to you. I replaced the dead animal with a living one of my own animals. Whenever one of your animals was stolen, during the day or during the night, you demanded that I replace it with one of my own animals. I suffered from the heat during the day and from the cold at night. I was often not even able to sleep [PRS]!

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible Jacob was to be furious, and was to dispute with Laban. Jacob was to answer, and was to say to Laban: You is to have, for the transgression of missing the mark, hotly pursued me, since you is to have scabbled over my articles - is you to have found, that of your household articles? - Be setting them here before your brothers, even your brothers were to decide between the two of us. Are, for twenty years, the ewes and she-goats to have miscarried? - have I of they strong of the small cattle, I eaten? - They torn of them, I am to have brought in, I was to be making clean, from my hand you was to exact them, and they being stolen by day, and they being stolen by night. In the day, the parching heat is to have consumed me, and the frost by night, even my sleep was to retreat from my eyes.

Conservapedia Jacob was furious, and spoke contentiously with Laban. He said to Laban in answer, "What is my transgression? What sin did I commit, that you dashed after me the way you did? Now you've just felt all my furnishings, and what have you found in all my household furnishings? Now place it right here in front of my cousins and your cousins, and let them judge [Literally, "correct." Jacob is asking for a "trial" by jury.] between the two of us. I have been with you for twenty years. Your ewes and nanny-goats have never once miscarried, nor have I ever eaten the rams out of your flock. I never brought you any animal that had been torn to pieces; I took the loss! You demanded that from my hand, whether it was stolen by day or by night. That's what my position was. The drought plagued me by day, and the frost by night. I didn't get much sleep, either."

Ferrar-Fenton Bible Then Jacob was furious, and abused Laban, and Jacob was savage and said to Laban, " What is my fault ; and what is my sin ? that you have come after me ? Now you have searched all my goods, what have you found of all the goods of your house ? Put it before my people and your people, and they shall decide between us. During the twenty years I have been with you, I have not lost a sheep or a goat of

yours, and I have never eaten a ram of your flock. I have not brought you the maimed. I have borne the loss from my own hand. I have restored to you the stolen by day, -and the stolen by night. I have borne the heat by day, and the cold by night, and my eyes never rested.

HCSB

### Jacob's Covenant with Laban

Then Jacob became incensed and brought charges against Laban. "What is my crime?" he said to Laban. "What is my sin, that you have pursued me? You've searched all my possessions! Have you found anything of yours? Put it here before my relatives and yours, and let them decide between the two of us. I've been with you these 20 years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I did not bring you any of the flock torn by wild beasts; I myself bore the loss. You demanded payment from me for what was stolen by day or by night. There I was—the heat consumed me by day and the frost by night, and sleep fled from my eyes.

H. C. Leupold

So Jacob grew angry and stern with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban: What am I guilty of? wherein have I sinned? that thou didst hotly pursue after me. For thou hast felt over all my goods. What hast thou found of all thy household goods? Set it here before my and thy kinsmen, and let them give the verdict over both of us. Look here, for twenty years I have been with thee. Thy ewes and thy she-goats have not miscarried; the rams of thy flock I have not eaten. If anything would be torn, I did not bring it to thee; it was I who used to make good. Thou didst hold me responsible for that which was stolen by day as well as for that which was stolen by night. I was a man whom heat consumed by day and frost by night; and sleep would flee from my eyes.

Lexham English Bible

Then Jacob became angry and quarreled with Laban. Jacob answered and said to Laban, "What [is] my offense? What [is] my sin that you pursued after me? For you have searched all my possessions and what did you find among all the possessions of my household? Set it before my kinsmen and your kinsmen that they may decide between the two of us! These twenty years I [was] with you; your ewes and your female goats did not miscarry, and the rams of your flocks I did not eat. I brought no mangled carcass to you--I bore its loss. From my hand you sought it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. [There] I was, during the day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

NIV, ©2011

Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "How have I wronged you that you hunt me down? Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us. "I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes.

Urim-Thummim Version

Then Jacob was angry and quarreled with Laban, and Jacob shouted to Laban saying, where is my offense and what is my sin for you to have pursued after me in this blaze? Now that you have searched all my stuff, what have you found of all your household objects? Place it here before my relatives and your relatives so that they may judge between the both of us. For 20 years now I have been with you, your sheep and she goats have not miscarried, neither the rams of your flock did I consume. The dashed I have not brought to you, I suffered the loss, from my hand you required it whether stolen by day or stolen by night. In my situation I was consumed by heat and cold, and was sleepless.

Wikipedia Bible Project

And Jacob was upset, and argued with Laban, and Jacob countered Laban, saying: "What is my crime? What is my sin, that you lit off after me? Since you have sorted through all my things, what you have found from all your household place here,

against my kinfolk and yours; and they will render judgement between the two of us." "These twenty years, I am with you, and have your ewes and your goats not given birth? And have I not fed your flocks? The incidentally-killed animals, I did not bring to you, lest I sin--- from my lot you deducted them, those stolen by days, and the stolen by night. And I was in the day consumed by grief, and the night is icy, and my sleep did wander from my eyes.

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

Christian Community (1988) Then Jacob became angry and rebuked Laban. "What is my crime?" he asked him. "What sin of mine makes you hound me down? Now that you have searched through all my belongings, have you found anything that belongs to your household? If so, let it be seen here in the presence of your family and mine and let them judge between the two of us. During the twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried and I haven't eaten any of the rams from your flocks. I haven't brought you any animal torn by a wild beast. I suffered the loss and you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. During the day I have been stifled by the heat and at night I have suffered from the cold, and sleep has left my eyes.

The Heritage Bible And Jacob burned, and contended with Laban; and Jacob answered, and said to Laban, What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have run after me so hotly? Since you have felt all my vessels, what came forth to you of all the implements of your house? Put it here in front of my brothers and your brothers; they will make it right between the two of us. And I was with you twenty years; your ewes and your she goats have not failed to bear, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. I did not bring to you the mangled; I let it be missing from me; you searched it out from my hand, *whether* stolen by day, or stolen by night. I was devoured by the drought in the day, and the frost by night, and sleep was driven from my eyes.

New American Bible (2002) Jacob, now enraged, upbraided Laban. "What crime or offense have I committed," he demanded, "that you should hound me so fiercely? Now that you have ransacked all my things, have you found a single object taken from your belongings? If so, produce it here before your kinsmen and mine, and let them decide between us two. "In the twenty years that I was under you, no ewe or she-goat of yours ever miscarried, and I have never feasted on a ram of your flock. I never brought you an animal torn by wild beasts; I made good the loss myself [Laban's actions were contrary to the customs of the ancient Near East, as recorded in the Code of Hammurabi: "If in a sheepfold an act of god has occurred, or a lion has made a kill, the shepherd shall clear himself before the deity, and the owner of the fold must accept the loss" (par. 266); cf ⇒ Exodus 22:12.]. You held me responsible for anything stolen by day or night. How often the scorching heat ravaged me by day, and the frost by night, while sleep fled from my eyes!.

New American Bible (2011) Jacob, now angered, confronted Laban and demanded, "What crime or offense have I committed that you should hound me? Now that you have rummaged through all my things, what have you found from your household belongings? Produce it here before your kinsmen and mine, and let them decide between the two of us. "In the twenty years that I was under you, no ewe or she-goat of yours ever miscarried, and I have never eaten rams of your flock. I never brought you an animal torn by wild beasts [Ex 22:12]; I made good the loss myself [Jacob's actions are more generous than the customs suggested in the Code of Hammurabi: "If in a sheepfold an act of god has occurred, or a lion has made a kill, the shepherd shall clear himself before the deity, and the owner of the fold must accept the loss" (par. 266); cf. Ex 22:12.]. You held me responsible for anything stolen by day or night.

Often the scorching heat devoured me by day, and the frost by night, while sleep fled from my eyes!

New English Bible

Jacob was angry, and he expostulated with Laban, exclaiming, 'What have I done wrong? What is my offence, that you have come after me in hot pursuit and gone through all my possessions? Have you found anything belonging to your household? If so, set it here in front of my kinsmen and yours, and let them judge between the two of us. In all the twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and she-goats have never miscarried; I have not eaten the rams of your flocks; I have never brought to you the body of any animal mangled by wild beasts, but I bore the loss myself; you claimed compensation from me for anything stolen by day or by night. This was the way of it: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and sleep deserted me.

New Jerusalem Bible

Then Jacob lost his temper and took Laban to task. And Jacob said to Laban, 'What is my offence, what is my crime, for you to have hounded me like this? You have gone through all my belongings; have you found anything belonging to your household? Produce it here in the presence of my brothers and yours, and let them decide between the two of us. In all the twenty years I was under you, your ewes and your she-goats never miscarried, and I never ate rams from your flock. Those mauled I never brought back to you, but bore the loss myself. You demanded compensation from me, whether the animal was stolen in daylight or at night. In the daytime the heat devoured me, and frost at night; I never had a good night's sleep.

New European Version

Jacob was angry, and he expostulated with Laban, exclaiming, 'What have I done wrong? What is my offence, that you have come after me in hot pursuit and gone through all my possessions? Have you found anything belonging to your household? If so, set it here in front of my kinsmen and yours, and let them judge between the two of us. In all the twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and she-goats have never miscarried; I have not eaten the rams of your flocks; I have never brought to you the body of any animal mangled by wild beasts, but I bore the loss myself; you claimed compensation from me for anything stolen by day or by night. This was the way of it: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and sleep deserted me.

Revised English Bible

Jacob heatedly took Laban to task. "What have I done wrong?" he exclaimed. "What is my offence, that you have come after me in hot pursuit and have gone through all my belongings? Have you found a single article belonging to your household? If so, set it here in front of my kinsmen and yours, and let them decide between the two of us. In all the twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and she-goats have never miscarried. I have never eaten rams from your flocks. I have never brought to you the carcass of any animal mangled by wild beasts, but I bore the loss myself. You demanded that I should pay compensation for anything stolen by day or by night. This was the way of it: the heat wore me down by day and the frost by night; I got no sleep.

### **Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible

Then Ya'akov became angry and started arguing with Lavan. "What have I done wrong?" he demanded. "What is my offense, that you have come after me in hot pursuit? You have felt around in all my stuff, but what have you found of all your household goods? Put it here, in front of my kinsmen and yours, so that they can render judgment between the two of us! I have been with you for these twenty years! Your female sheep and goats haven't aborted their young, and I haven't eaten the male animals in your flocks. If one of your flock was destroyed by a wild animal, I didn't bring the carcass to you but bore the loss myself. You demanded that I compensate you for any animal stolen, whether by day or by night. Here's how

## The Complete Tanach

it was for me: during the day thirst consumed me, and at night the cold — my sleep fled from my eyes.

And Jacob was annoyed, and he quarreled with Laban, and he said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have pursued me?"

**that you have pursued:** Heb. תִּקְלָד; you pursued, like (Lam. 4:19): "they chased us (וַיִּקְלְדוּ) on the mountains," and like (I Sam. 17:53): "from pursuing (קִוְלָדִים) the Philistines." - [from Targum Onkelos]

For you have felt about all my things. What have you found of all the utensils of your house? Put it here, in the presence of my kinsmen and your kinsmen, and let them decide between the two of us.

**and let them decide:** Let them clarify who is right, aprover in Old French, prove, clarify. — [from Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel]

Already twenty years have I been with you, and your ewes and she goats have not aborted, neither have I eaten the rams of your flocks.

**have not aborted:** They have not aborted their fetuses, like: (Hos. 9:14): "a miscarrying (לִי־כֶשֶׁת) womb" (Job 21:10): "his cow bears young and does not abort (לִי־כֶשֶׁת)."

**the rams of your flocks:** From here they deduced that even a one-day-old ram is called a ram. Otherwise, what is his boast? He did not eat rams, but he ate lambs. If so, he is a thief. — [from B.K. 65b] 39.

I have not brought home to you anything torn [by other animals]; I would suffer its loss; from my hand you would demand it, what was stolen by day and what was stolen at night.

**anything torn:** By a lion or a wolf. — [from Targum Jonathan ben Uzziel]

**I would suffer its loss:** Heb. הִנָּטַח, an expression similar to (Jud. 20:16): "and not miss (אִי־טָחִי)"; (I Kings 1: 21): "My son Solomon and I will be lacking (מִי־אֶטַח)." I would suffer the loss; if it was missing, it was missing to me, for you would demand it from my hand.

**I would suffer its loss:** The Targum renders: אֲנִי־נִמַּח אִיגֶשׁ תּוֹהַד, what was missing (תִּדְקֶפֶן) and lacking from the count, like (Num. 31:49): "and no man was missing (דִּקְפֵּן) from us," which the Targum renders: אֶל־שֶׁאֵין.

**what was stolen by day and what was stolen at night:** הָיִיתְבִּגְגָה הַלַּיְלִית וְהַיּוֹמִית, [similar to] הָיִיתְבִּגְגָה וְהַלַּיְלִית תְּבִגְגָה וְהַיּוֹמִית, what was stolen by day and what was stolen at night, I paid all.

**what was stolen:** Heb. יִתְבַּגֵּג. Similar to (Lam. 1:1): "great (יִתְבַּר) among the nations, a princess (יִתְרֶשֶׁת) among the provinces"; (Isa. 1:21): "full (יִתְאֲלֵם) of justice"; (Hos. 10:11): "that loves (יִתְבַּהוּא) to thresh."

I was [in the field] by day when the heat consumed me, and the frost at night, and my sleep wandered from my eyes.

**the heat consumed me:** An expression of (Deut. 4:24): "a consuming (הִלְכָא) fire."

**and the frost:** Heb. חֲרָקוּ, like (Ps. 147:17): "He hurls His ice (וַיַּחְרֶקֶה)." The Targum renders: אֲדִילָג, ice, or frost.

**my sleep:** Heb. שָׁנָה. An expression of שָׁנָה, sleep.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| exeGes                | <p>and Yaaqov inflames and chides with Laban:<br/>         and Yaaqov answers and says to Laban,<br/>         What is my rebellion?<br/>         What is my sin, that you so hotly pursue after me?<br/>         You grope all my instruments:<br/>         what found you of all your household instruments?<br/>         set it thus in front of my brothers and your brothers,<br/>         to reprove between the two of us.<br/>         These twenty years I am with you;<br/>         your ewes and your she goats aborted not<br/>         and the rams of your flock I ate not:<br/>         and I brought not the torn to you for the sin;<br/>         of my hand you sought<br/>         - stolen by day, or stolen by night.<br/>         So be I;<br/>         in the day the parch consumes me<br/>         and the frost by night;<br/>         and my sleep flees from my eyes.</p> |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)     | <p>Now Jacob became incensed and took up his grievance with Laban. Jacob spoke up and said to Laban, "What is my crime, what is my guilt that you should pursue me? You rummaged through all my things; what have you found of all your household objects? Set it here, before my kinsmen and yours, and let them decide between us two.<br/>         "These twenty years I have spent in your service, your ewes and she-goats never miscarried, nor did I feast on rams from your flock. That which was torn by beasts I never brought to you; I myself made good the loss; you exacted it of me, whether snatched by day or snatched by night. Often, scorching heat ravaged me by day and frost by night; and sleep fled from my eyes.</p>   |
| Kaplan Translation    | <p>Jacob was angry, and he argued with Laban, asserting himself. 'What is my crime?' he exclaimed. 'What terrible thing did I do that you came chasing me like this? You inspected all my things - what did you find from your house? Place it right here! In front of my relatives and yours! Let them determine which of us is right! 'Twenty years I worked for you! All that time, your sheep and goats never lost their young. Not once did I ever take a ram from your flocks as food. I never brought you an animal that had been attacked - I took the blame myself. You made me make it good whether it was carried off [Or 'stolen.' See Exodus 22:12.] by day or by night. 'By day I was consumed by the scorching heat, and at night by the frost, when sleep was snatched from my eyes.</p>   |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible | <p>And Ya'akov was in wrath, and upbraided Lavan: and Ya'akov answered and said to Lavan, What is my peyssha? What is my chattat, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?<br/>         Whereas thou hast searched through all that I own, what hast thou found of all thy kelei bais? Set it here before my achim and thy achim, that they may judge between us both.<br/>         These esrim shanah have I been with thee; recheleicha (thy ewes) and thy female goats have not miscarried, and the rams of thy tzon have I not eaten.<br/>         That which was terefah (torn of beasts) I brought not unto thee; I bore the loss of it; of my yad didst thou require it, whether stolen by yom, or stolen by lailah.<br/>         Thus I was; in the yom the chorev (heat) consumed me, and the kerach (cold) by lailah; and my sheynah (sleep) departed from mine eyes.</p>                 |

#### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

## The Amplified Bible

Then Jacob became angry and argued with Laban. And he said to Laban, “What is my fault? What is my sin that you pursued me like this? Although you have searched through all my possessions, what have you found of your household goods? Put it here before my relatives and your relatives, so that they may decide [who has done right] between the two of us. These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not lost their young, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. I did not bring you the torn carcasses [of the animals attacked by predators]; I [personally] took the loss. You required of me [to make good] everything that was stolen, whether it occurred by day or night. This was my situation: by day the heat consumed me and by night the cold, and I could not sleep. Then Jacob became very angry and accused Laban and said, “What ·wrong have I done [is my offense]? What ·law have I broken [is my sin] to cause you to ·chase [hotly pursue] me? You have ·looked [felt] through everything I own, but you have found nothing that belongs to you. If you have found anything, show it to everyone. Put it in front of your ·relatives [brothers] and my ·relatives [brothers], and let them ·decide which one of us is right [judge between us]. I have ·worked for [been with] you now for twenty years. During all that time none of the ·lambs [ewes] and kids ·died during birth [miscarried], and I have not eaten any of the ·male sheep [rams] from your flocks. Any time an animal was killed by wild beasts, I did not bring it to you, but made up for the loss myself. You made me pay for any animal that was stolen during the day or night. In the daytime the ·sun [heat] ·took away my strength [consumed me], and at night I was cold and ·could not sleep [sleep fled from my eyes].

## The Expanded Bible

## Kretzmann's Commentary

**Verses 36-42**

## Jacob Rebukes Laban

And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? What is my sin that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? The advantage was now entirely on Jacob's side, and he lost no time in making use of it, but called Laban to account for his attitude as well as for all his misdeeds, also in coming after him in such a high-handed way. 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. That the search, undertaken upon suspicion which amounted to a certainty, had yielded absolutely no results made Laban, appear foolish in the eyes of both parties. 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. Rather than go to Laban with a detailed report concerning every loss in the flocks, Jacob voluntarily filled all gaps. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. In the Orient, the intense cold of the night corresponds to the burning heat of the day, just as in the Southwest of our country.

## NET Bible®

Jacob became angry [*Heb* “it was hot to Jacob.” This idiom refers to anger.] and argued with Laban. “What did I do wrong?” he demanded of Laban [*Heb* “and Jacob answered and said to Laban, ‘What is my sin?’” The proper name “Jacob” has been replaced by the pronoun (“he”) in the translation and the order of the introductory clause and direct discourse rearranged for stylistic reasons.]. “What sin of mine prompted you to chase after me in hot pursuit [*Heb* “What is my sin that you have hotly pursued after me.” The Hebrew verb translated “pursue hotly” is used elsewhere of soldiers chasing defeated enemies (1 Sam 17:53).]? When you searched through all my goods, did you find anything that belonged to you [*Heb* “what did you find from all the goods of your house?”]? Set it here before my relatives and yours [*Heb* “your relatives.” The word “relatives” has not been

repeated in the translation here for stylistic reasons.], and let them settle the dispute between the two of us [*Heb* “that they may decide between us two.”]!

“I have been with you for the past twenty years. Your ewes and female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. Animals torn by wild beasts I never brought to you; I always absorbed the loss myself. You always made me pay for every missing animal [*Heb* “from my hand you exacted it.” The imperfect verbal form again indicates that this was a customary or typical action. The words “for every missing animal” are supplied in the translation for clarity; the following clause in Hebrew, “stolen by day or stolen by night,” probably means “stolen by wild beasts” and refers to the same animals “torn by wild beasts” in the previous clause, although it may refer to animals stolen by people. The translation used here, “missing,” is ambiguous enough to cover either eventuality], whether it was taken by day or at night. I was consumed by scorching heat [Or “by drought.”] during the day and by piercing cold [*Heb* “frost, ice”] at night, and I went without sleep [*Heb* “and my sleep fled from my eyes.”].

#### The Pulpit Commentary

And Jacob was wroth,—literally, and it burned, sc. with indignation (same word as used by Rachel, Genesis 31:35), to Jacob, i.e. he was infuriated at what he believed to be Laban’s unjustifiable insinuation about his lost teraphim—and chode—or contended; the fundamental signification of the root, בִּיר or בּוּר, being to seize or tear, e.g. the hair, hence to strive with the bands (Deut. 33:7), or with words (Psalm 103:9). The two verbs, בָּרַיִו and רָחַתּוּ, give a vivid representation of the exasperation which Jacob felt—with Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban,—in words characterized by “verbosity and self-glorification” (Kalisch), or “acute, sensibility and elevated self-consciousness (Delitzsch, Keil), according as one inclines to an unfavorable or favorable view of Jacob’s character—What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? The intensity of Jacob’s feeling imparts to his language a rythmical movement, and leads to the selection of poetical forms of expression, such as יִרְחֹא קָלֵד, to burn after, in the sense of fiercely persecuting, which occurs again only in 1Samuel 17:53 (vide Gesenius and Furst, sub voce; and cf. Keil, in lose), causing the reader at times to catch “the dance and music of actual verse” (Ewald). Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff,—literally (so. What is my sin) that thou hast felt all my articles (LXX; Kalisch)? the clause being co-ordinate with the preceding; though by others יָכ is taken as equivalent to רָשָׁעָא, quando quidem, since (A.V; Ainsworth), or quando, when (Calvin, Murphy)—what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here Before my brethren and thy brethren (i.e. Laban’s kinsmen who accompanied him, who were also of necessity kinsmen to Jacob), that they may judge betwixt us both—which of us has injured the other. This twenty years have I been with thee (vide infra, vet. 41); thy ewes (לֵתָר, a ewe, whence Rachel) and thy she goats—וְעֵז a she-goat; cf. Sanscrit, adsha, a he-goat; adsha, a she-goat; Goth; gaitsa; Anglo-Saxon, gat; German, geis; Greek, αἴξ; Turkish, gieik (Gesenius, sub voce)—have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. Roberts says that the people of the East do not eat female sheep except when sterile, and that it would be considered folly and prodigality in the extreme to eat that which has the power of producing more. That which was torn of beasts (הַפְּרִיטָה, a coll. fem; from פָּרַט, to tear in pieces, meaning that which is torn in pieces, hence cattle destroyed by wild beasts) I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it;—הִנְטָחָא, literally, I made expiation for it, the piel of טָחָא, signifying to make atonement for a thing by sacrifice (Le 1Samuel 9:15), or by compensation, as here; hence “I bare the loss it” (Rashi, equivalent to cf. Furst), or εἰ γὰρ ἀπειτίνοῦν (LXX.), or, perhaps, “I will be at the loss of it, or pay it back” (Kalisch)—of my hand didst thou require it,—otherwise, “of my hand require it” (Kalisch)—whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Without adhering literally to the text, the LXX. give the sense of this and the preceding clause as being, “From my own I paid back the

stolen by day and the stolen by night." Thus I was; (i.e. I was in this condition that) in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night תַּרְקָה, ice, so called from its smoothness, hence cold. The alternation of heat and cold in many eastern countries is very great and severely felt by shepherds, travelers, and watchmen, who require to pass the night in the open air, and who in consequence are often obliged to wear clothes lined with skins (of. Psalm 121:6; Jer. 36:30). "The thermometer at 24° Fahr. at night, a lump of solid ice in our basins in the morning, and then the scorching heat of the day drawing up the moisture, made the neighborhood, convenient as it was, rather a fever-trap, and premonitory symptoms warned us to move". "The night air at Joaiza was keen and cold; indeed there was a sharp frost, and ice appeared on all the little pools about the camp". "Does a master reprove his servant for being idle; he will ask, "What can I do? the heat eats me up by day, and the cold eats me up by night". And my sleep departed from mine eyes. Syrian shepherds were compelled to watch their flocks often both night and day, and for a whole month together, and repair into long plains and deserts without any shelter; and when reduced to this incessant labor, they were besides chilled by the piercing cold of the morning, and scorched by the succeeding heats of a flaming sun, the opposite action of which often swells and chafes their lips and face".

The Voice

When Jacob saw that Laban's search had come up empty, he became angry and confronted Laban.

**Jacob:** What is my offense? What have I done that is so wicked to make you pursue me like a common criminal? You searched through all of my things, and what have you found that belonged to you? Whatever it is, set it down here between your family and mine, and they can decide whose it is. I've worked for you for 20 years. Your ewes and your female goats have never miscarried *under my care*. I have never feasted on any of the rams in your flocks. When wild animals attacked, I didn't bring the carcass to you *to deal with*; I bore the cost myself. You required me to cover any losses, whether the animals were stolen by day or night, *and I did so*. There I was—*at your service*—during the day I was hounded by heat; during the night I was cold and couldn't get a good night's sleep.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> flared up and he disputed with Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> and Ya'aqov [He restrains] answered and he said to Lavan <sup>[White]</sup>, what is my revolution, what is my error that you inflamed after me, given that you quickly groped all my instruments what did you find from all the instruments of your house, set in place in this way opposite my brothers and your brothers and they will make a conviction between the two us, this twenty years I was with you, your ewes and your she-goats had not been childless and the strong ones of your flocks I did not eat, a torn thing I did not bring to you, I will reconcile her, from my hand you will search her out, stolen of the day and stolen of the night, I existed in the day, the parching heat ate me and ice in the night and my snooze tossed from my eyes,...

Concordant Literal Version

And hot is Jacob, and contending is he with Laban. And answering is Jacob and saying to Laban, "What is my transgression and what is my sin, that you dash after me, and that you feel all the furnishings of my tent? And what have you found of all the furnishings of your house? Place it thus in front of my brethren and your brethren, and correct will they the matter between us two. This twenty years am I with you. Your ewes and your she-goats were not bereaved, and the rams of your flock I did not eat. That which was torn to pieces, I did not bring to you. I was made a sin offering for it! From my hand you sought it, be it stolen by day or stolen by night!" So became I: In the day the drought devoured me, and the ice in the night, and flit did my sleep from my eyes.

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Context Group Version  | And Jacob was angry, and berated Laban: and Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? What is my disgrace, that you have hotly pursued after me? Whereas you have felt all about my things, what have you found of all your household things? Set it here before my brothers and your brothers, that they may judge between us two. These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your she-goats haven't cast their young, and the rams of your flocks I have not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I didn't bring to you; I bore the loss of it; of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes.  |
| Emphasized Bible       | And it was vexing to Jacob and he contended with Laban,—and Jacob responded and said to Laban, What was my trespass, what my sin, that thou shouldst have come burning after me? Now that thou hast felt about among all my goods, what hast thou found of the goods of thine own house? Set it out here, right before my brethren and thy brethren,—that they may give sentence betwixt us two. This twenty years' time, 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, The torn, have I not brought in unto thee—I bare the loss, At my hand, didst thou require it,—Stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus have I been—By day, drought hath consumed me, And, frost, by, night,—So that my sleep fled away from mine eyes. |
| Modern English Version | Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. And Jacob asked Laban, “What is my offense? What is my sin that you have so hotly pursued after me? You have searched all my things, and yet what have you found of all your household things? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, so that they may judge between us both.<br>“This twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and the male goats of your flock I have not eaten. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand whether it was stolen by day or stolen by night. It was like this with me: In the day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.                              |
| New King James Version | Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: “What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me? Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? <i>Set it</i> here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both! These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, <i>whether</i> stolen by day or stolen by night.  |
| New European Version   | Jacob was angry, and argued with Laban. Jacob answered Laban, What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? Now that you have felt around in all my stuff, what have you found of all your household stuff? Set it here before my relatives and your relatives, that they may judge between us two. These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not cast their young, and I haven't eaten the rams of your flocks. That which was torn of animals, I didn't bring to you. I bore its loss. Of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. This was my situation: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from my eyes.  |
| Third Millennium Bible | And Jacob was wroth, and chided Laban; 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 goods, what hast thou found of all thy household things? Set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge between us both. These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy shegoats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That   |

which was torn by beasts I brought not unto thee; I bore the loss of it. From my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

Young's Updated LT

And it is displeasing to Jacob, and he strives with Laban; and Jacob answers and says to Laban, "What is my transgression? what my sin, that you have burned after me? For you have felt all my vessels: what have you found of all the vessels of your house? Set here before my brothers, and your brothers, and they decide between us both. These twenty years I am with you: your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried, and the rams of your flock I have not eaten. The torn I have not brought in unto you—I, I repay it—from my hand you will seek it. I have been deceived by day, and I have been deceived by night. I have been thus : in the day consumed me has drought, and frost by night, and wander does my sleep from my eyes.

**The gist of this passage:**

Laban is angry that he has not found anything and Jacob is angry for the same reason. Jacob unloads on Laban, pointing out that he has not committed this crime for which Laban has pursued him; and that, for the 20 years he has worked for Laban, he has been a responsible employee.

36-40

| Genesis 31:36a   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>             | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| chârâh (חָרָה) [pronounced <i>khaw-RAWH</i> ]  | <i>to burn, to kindle, to become angry, to burn with anger; to evoke great emotion</i>          | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #2734<br>BDB #354 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i> | directional/relational preposition                       | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| The lâmed preposition before Jacob means that Jacob is <i>not</i> the subject of the verb. |   |  |                            |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ġuh-KOH<sup>B</sup>V</i> ]                            | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>              | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |

**Translation:** *Therefore Laban [lit., he] burned [in anger] toward Jacob...* There is going to be an exchange here that we do not actually hear. That, we do not know all of the dialogue which follows. Although Owens (and almost all other translators) make Jacob out to be the subject of this first verb, he is not, because his name is preceded by a preposition. A preposition often acts like the sign of a direct object; and sometimes modifies the meaning of the verb.

I think I disagree with nearly every available translation. For this reason, I went back and double-checked my work here, looking at qbible (<http://qbible.com/hebrew-old-testament/genesis/31.html>) (an excellent site, by the way). The middle and right hand transliteration and interlinear Bibles make it appear that I am wrong and all of the other translations are correct; however, the interlinear ignores the lâmed preposition which precedes *Jacob*. That little preposition means *to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to*. The subject of a verb does not have a preposition in front of it (like English).

V. 36a should have best been placed at the end of v. 35. Laban searched, could not find his idols and he is furious.

Laban knows that Jacob stole his household idols. He is certain of it. He does not require proof. He does not have to find these idols to be certain of this. He knows it. The idols are gone; Jacob is gone—what more proof is required? This is basic and does not require a genius to go from point A (the missing idols and the missing Jacob) to point B (Jacob—or someone in his party—stole the idols). Laban is convinced of this, and just because he cannot find the idols does not mean that he is wrong. Therefore, Laban is quite upset and he is right up in Jacob’s face, yelling at him and accusing him. “I don’t know where the hell you hid my idols. We are surrounded by a great wilderness; perhaps they are hidden there!”

While Jacob makes his points, Laban is fuming with anger. If Laban is angry and Jacob is not, then this gives Jacob the upper hand. He is better able to make his points. Those with Laban do not automatically side with Laban, as they have, no doubt, worked with Jacob or have associated with Jacob; so some of them who are impartial, view these events with some objectivity.

Jacob never considers the idea that Laban’s teraphim were stolen, it happened when Jacob took his family out of there; and there is no other logical explanation apart from someone in Jacob’s party taking them.

Genesis 31:36 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban’s treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, “What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me?”

**The anger of Laban and/or Jacob (various commentators)**

Dr. Peter Pett: *Having watched his possessions being mauled by Laban without result Jacob is very angry and makes clear his grievances in front of the leaders of the confederacy. Laban is necessarily on the defensive. He has been proved ‘wrong’. He has failed to justify his charge of theft.*<sup>626</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *This is a passionate and angry Jacob, a man who has a lot to be angry about He begins by asking rhetorically, “What is my sin that you should pursue me so hotly and embarrass me in this way?” You searched everything in my camp, so show me what you found? Jacob is done with pretense or saving face or preserving Laban’s honor. He’s talking plainly and honestly with Laban.*<sup>627</sup>

It is likely that both men are angry with one another, and this gives them the chance to *let it all out*, as it were. However, Jacob seems to be the most cogent and logical of the two, suggesting that he had a cooler head in this dispute.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge provides a list of Scriptures where men are angry: Genesis 30:2 34:7 49:7 Num. 16:15 2Kings 5:11 13:19 Proverbs 28:1 Mark 3:5 Ephesians 4:26 James 1:19–20.<sup>628</sup>

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**Genesis 31:36b**

| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong’s #        |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (i)<br>[pronounced wah] | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wâw consecutive  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #253 |

<sup>626</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:36–42.

<sup>627</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>628</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:36.

## Genesis 31:36b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                              | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| rîyb (בִּיַּב) [pronounced ree <sup>bv</sup> ]    | <i>to debate, to contend, to dispute; to conduct a case or suit [against someone], to make a complaint [against someone]; to find fault</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #7378<br>BDB #936 |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>   | a preposition of proximity                               | Strong's# none<br>BDB #88  |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN] | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                 | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |

**Translation:** ...and Jacob [lit., he] disputed [the allegations made] by Laban. Jacob is also upset by all this. He did not steal the idols; he knows that he did not steal the idols; and he has no reason to think that anyone else did. After all, Laban just checked all throughout the camp and they weren't there. So, insofar as Jacob is concerned, Laban is this windbag accuser; accusing him without reason.

Furthermore, the last thing that Jacob wants is some household idols. He believes in the God of his father. Why would he ever want teraphim. All of this is absurd to Jacob, and these accusations are examples of just how screwed up Laban is. Does Jacob need any more proof that Laban is completely wrong (even though he isn't)?

So these two men are yelling back and forth at each other, filling the air with harsh and acerbic remarks flying back and forth. It is very likely that much of what they are saying is not even recorded in the Word of God.

Jacob will present a set of very logical points; and it is unclear whether Jacob is actually filled with anger as Laban is (despite all of the English translations which ignore the lâmed preposition before Jacob's name in v. 36a).

## Genesis 31:36c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                      | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                           | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| ʿânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced gaw-NAWH]                       | <i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #6030<br>BDB #772 |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-ġuh-KOH <sup>bv</sup> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                           | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |

| Genesis 31:36c                                    |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                              | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]                | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]            | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition                       | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN] | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                 | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |

**Translation:** *Therefore, Jacob answered and said to Laban,...* These words are found exactly in this way back in v. 8. The fact that Jacob *answers* Laban, generally indicates that Laban said something to him first. Given what we find in the previous portions of this verse, Laban had a lot to say to Jacob. These men, after 20 years, the last 6 or more of which have been filled with bitterness, unload on each other. They tell each other how they really feel.

It appears that Jacob is more in control of his emotions than Laban is. However, both men make some cogent points. However, Jacob certainly has the better arguments.

Laban has searched Jacob's stuff and found nothing; yet he remains angry. This gives Jacob the perfect opening to unload on Laban.

*John Gill: Having answered Laban's questions to the silencing of him, and nothing of his upon search, being found with him, Jacob took heart, and was of good courage and in high spirits, and in his turn was heated also; and perhaps might carry his passion a little too far, and is not to be excused from some degree of sin and weakness; however, his reasoning is strong...and his expostulations very just.*<sup>629</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch noticed, as I did, almost a poetic quality to the words spoken by Jacob: *Acute sensibility and elevated self-consciousness give to Jacob's words a rhythmical movement and a poetical form.*<sup>630</sup>

| Genesis 31:36d   |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]                                       | <i>what, how, why</i>   | interrogative; exclamatory particle                                 | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |
| pesha <sup>c</sup> (פֶּשַׁע) [pronounced PEH-shah <sup>g</sup> ] | <i>violation, infraction, disobedience, insubordination, rebellion, transgression, trespass</i> | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix | Strong's #6588<br>BDB #833 |

**Translation:** *...“What [exactly is] my infraction;...* At this point, Laban has been searching through all of Jacob's stuff, and he has come up with nothing. Jacob asks him straight out, “What is my infraction? What have I done wrong?”

<sup>629</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:36.

<sup>630</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:36–39.

Genesis 31:36 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, "What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me?"

### "What is my actual offense?" Jacob asks (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Jacob regards the charge of the theft of the teraphim as a mere pretext, devised by Laban in order to ransack his goods. For the word rendered "trespass," "transgression," "rebellion," cf. Genesis 50:17; 1Samuel 24:12; 1Kings 12:19; 2Kings 8:20.*<sup>631</sup>

Gill: *[W]hat heinous offence have I committed? what law of God or man have I broke?*<sup>632</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *Jacob was attacked by Laban before the relatives, now Jacob retaliates with rhetorical questions.*

1. "What is my transgression?" (Genesis 31:36)
2. "What is my sin?" (Genesis 31:36)
3. "What have you found?" (Genesis 31:37).<sup>633</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 31:36, Jacob's questions, "What is my transgression? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me?" demonstrate his innocence before God and that his conduct towards Laban in the eyes of God has been impeccable.*<sup>634</sup>

God, by coming to Laban, has already rendered His judgment.<sup>635</sup>

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## Genesis 31:36e

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                        | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]                  | <i>what, how, why</i>  | interrogative; exclamatory particle                                      | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |
| chattâ'th (חַטָּאת) [pronounced khat-TAWTH] | <i>misstep, slip of the foot; sin; sinfulness; a sin-offering; penalty [for sin], calamity, misfortune</i> | feminine singular noun with a 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix     | Strong's #2403<br>BDB #308 |
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]                 | <i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>  | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition                         | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| dâlaq (דָּלַק) [pronounced daw-LAHK]        | <i>to burn, to flame; to hotly pursue</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                   | Strong's #1814<br>BDB #196 |
| 'achârêy (אַחֲרָי) [pronounced ah-kuh-RAY]  | <i>behind, after; following; after that, afterwards; hinder parts</i>                                      | preposition; plural form with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #310<br>BDB #29   |

<sup>631</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:36.

<sup>632</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:36.

<sup>633</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:36.

<sup>634</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 504); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>635</sup> In part, inspired by *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:36.

**Translation:** ...what [is] my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Here is Jacob's point. What exactly did I do, what is my sin, that you have ridden for 7 days to catch up to me and yell at me in front of my wives and children? Where the hell to you get off doing that? What is wrong with you? Tell me what I have done, exactly, that was wrong; tell me how I have done anything against you.

Can you see how angry each man is<sup>636</sup>; and can you understand how justified each man feels? At this point in time, neither man is trying to get over on the other man. Neither man is looking to cheat the other right here; but both men feel as if they have been cheated, slandered; and each man believes he has a legitimate beef with the other.

Do you see why God came to Laban and said, "Listen, you need to hold your tongue. You cannot just run off at the mouth and yell at Jacob. You cannot just tell him what is good and bad that he has done. You need to back off from this." We don't know how much Laban backed off. It does not appear to be by much.

The longer that Laban searches, the angrier that Jacob becomes. He is an intelligent man. Laban came and made a big show about how he is upset because Jacob stole his daughters and he is unable to say goodbye to them properly; and now, all of a sudden, he is not kissing his daughters goodbye, he is on a careful search for these teraphim; a search that could result in the execution of one of his daughters. Jacob is pondering this while his and his wives' personal effects are being gone through. As he puts all of this together, he gets more and more angry with Laban and his phoney facade.

We seem to be close to the point of these men coming to blows; and each man believes himself to be right.

**Genesis 31:36** And Jacob was angry, and rebuked Laban. And Jacob answered and said to Laban, "What is my trespass? What is my sin, that you have so hotly pursued after me?"

As Laban searches and searches intently, Jacob becomes more and more indignant.

This is the MKJV translation, and they have the first subject wrong; Laban is the subject.

There is only one thing which was actually taken from Laban—those small deities—and since he does not find them, Jacob gets self-righteous and huffy about it.

All of this suggests that Jacob was very careful about Laban's livestock. He did not just let them roam free, but took care of them. We know this because Laban has not in any way complained about his own livestock. That is a big plus in the Jacob column.

Gill: *that you have so hotly pursued after me? with so much haste and swiftness, and with such a number of men, as if he came to take a thief, a robber, or a murderer.*<sup>637</sup>

Jacob continues to speak; he can hold it in no longer. He continues:

| Genesis 31:37a              |  |  |                            |
|-----------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation        | Common English Meanings                                  | Notes/Morphology                                 | BDB and Strong's #         |
| kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee] | for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time | explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |

<sup>636</sup> Actually, we are not positive that Jacob is angry. He will put together a fairly cogent argument for his side.

<sup>637</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:36 (slightly edited).

## Genesis 31:37a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| mâshash (משש) [pronounced maw-SHAHSH]                           | <i>to touch, to feel (in the darkness), to feel (out, over, through), to grope</i>                                     | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel perfect                    | Strong's #4959<br>BDB #606 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]                                    | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]; also kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>  | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֵּלִי) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> lee]     | <i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i> | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix      | Strong's #3627<br>BDB #479 |

**Translation:** You [lit., *Because you*] have [carefully] felt [the tents and you have searched] all my possessions, ... Laban has been in Jacob's tent; he has felt around everything, so that he could even feel what might be hidden under the tent. The word used here often stands for manufactured goods; but these are whatever things that Jacob owns which he has taken with him (which is probably not very much).

Jacob is going to focus in on Laban's accusations.

## Genesis 31:37b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced maw]            | <i>what, how, why</i>   | interrogative; exclamatory particle                       | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |
| mâtsâ' (מַצָּא) [pronounced maw-TSAW] | <i>to attain to, to find, to detect, to happen upon, to come upon, to find unexpectedly, to discover; to meet (encounter)</i>       | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect    | Strong's #4672<br>BDB #592 |
| min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]           | <i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i> | preposition of separation                                 | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced kohl]          | with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of, all; any of</i>   | masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |

Literally, they mean *from all...* However, together, various literal translations give the following renderings: *about all, of all* (1Samuel 23:23); *over all, more than all, above all* (Genesis 3:14).

| Genesis 31:37b  |  |   |                            |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| k <sup>e</sup> lîy (כֵּלִי) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> lee] | <i>manufactured good, artifact, article, utensil, vessel, weapon, armor, furniture, receptacle; baggage, valuables</i> | masculine plural construct  | Strong's #3627<br>BDB #479 |
| bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced BAH-yith]                       | <i>house, residence; household, habitation as well as inward</i>   | masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1004<br>BDB #108 |

**Translation:** ...[and] what have you found from all the possessions from your house? Jacob says, "You have gone through my tent and my stuff; just what have you found that belongs to you?" Jacob knows that he has Laban here, because there is nothing of Laban's with Jacob.

Dr. John Gill: *Is there any vessel or utensil, or anything whatever you can claim as your own? Is there anything that has been taken away from you either by me or mine?* <sup>638</sup>

Genesis has some very common and what we might consider to be modern literary items. The reader knows all about Rachel having stolen the gods from her father; we know about her father searching everywhere. Then she sits upon the saddle for the camel, sitting over the teraphim. We are seeing this from the 3<sup>rd</sup> person omniscient perspective, which, in this case, builds up the suspense.

| Genesis 31:37c  |  |   |                            |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| sîym (שִׂים) [pronounced seem]; also spelled sūwm (שׁוּם) [pronounced soom] | <i>put, place, set; make; appoint</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative                       | Strong's #7760<br>BDB #962 |
| kôh (כֹּה) [pronounced koh]   | <i>so, thus, here, hence; now; in the meantime</i>   | adverb  | Strong's #3541<br>BDB #462 |
| neged (נֶגֶד) [pronounced NEH-ged]  | <i>what is conspicuous when it is a substantive and, as a preposition, in front of, in the sight of, opposite to, before (in the sense of being in front of)</i> | preposition   | Strong's #5048<br>BDB #617 |
| ’achîym (אֲחֵים) [pronounced awhk-EEM]                                      | <i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>  | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix           | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26   |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]             | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| ’achîym (אֲחֵים) [pronounced awhk-EEM]                                      | <i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>  | masculine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26   |

<sup>638</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:37 (slightly edited).

**Translation:** *Set [them all] here in front of my kinsmen and your kinsmen...* Now Jacob rubs it in. He says, “Look, why don’t you gather up everything that belongs to you, and lay them out before our mutual servants, and we will let them decide who is right and who is wrong.” Well, Laban has nothing. Laban might be very angry but he has found nothing. He has nothing to set out in front of anyone. Jacob is really rubbing this in.

It is very difficult to dispute some of Laban’s claims, that he wanted to kiss his children and grandchildren goodbye; and he wanted to throw them a going-away party. Well, anyone could claim such things. But, Laban also came after Jacob because he believed that Jacob stole from him. Now, that is something that can be seen to be true or false.

| Genesis 31:37d  |   |   |                             |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong’s #          |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #251   |
| yâkach (יָכַח) [pronounced <i>yaw-KAHK</i> ]                            | when there is a dispute involved: <i>to hammer out a decision or an agreement to resolve a conflict, to render a decision; to argue, to dispute</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect       | Strong’s #3198<br>BDB #406  |
| bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]                                | <i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>   | preposition   | Strong’s #996<br>BDB #107   |
| sh <sup>e</sup> nêy (שְׁנַיִם) [pronounced <i>sh<sup>e</sup>n-Ā</i> ]   | <i>two, two of, a pair of, a duo of; both of</i>  | dual numeral noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix | Strong’s #8147<br>BDB #1040 |

**Translation:** *...and they will decide between the two of us.* “Let’s let your people and my people look at all the stuff which you have found that is yours, and we will allow them to make the decision. Who is right and who is wrong.” Laban has nothing. He has found nothing. He has nothing to set out. Jacob knows this and he makes a very big deal of it.

On the one hand, it may seem as if Jacob is saying, “Let’s get this all out into the open. Let your people and my people look it all over and make a judgment.” However, I believe that he is being somewhat sarcastic, because there is nothing for Laban to set out in front of everyone—he has found nothing. There would be nothing for everyone to look at and evaluate.

Jacob has even gotten a bit self-righteous here. He was fairly certain that the deities had not been stolen from Laban, and, after Laban searched for some time and came up with nothing, Jacob is ready for him to display anything which was not rightfully taken so that Jacob’s men and Laban’s men can decide who is right and who is wrong here. Jacob is definitely into self-justification.

Dr. John Gill: *Jacob was so conscious to himself of his own uprightness, that he could safely leave anything that might be disputed in arbitration with the very men that Laban had brought with him: it was so clear a case that he had not wronged him of anyone thing.*<sup>639</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *[Jacob] calls upon everybody there to act as a jury. Laban can't produce any evidence; they are just false charges. Then Jacob goes on to spell out how he has been maltreated and abused by Laban for the last twenty years. He points out that during those twenty years Laban*

<sup>639</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:37.

was blessed because of his presence. He goes on to point out that he did not benefit from the flocks. He didn't personally benefit from anything that was owned by Laban.<sup>640</sup>

**Genesis 31:37** For you have searched all my stuff; what have you found of all your household stuff? Set it here before my brothers and your brothers, that they may judge between us both.

And Jacob rubs it in big time. The word *brothers* is used quite loosely simply to refer to the people who are with Jacob and the people who are with Laban. This same use of the word *brother* is found even today in everyday speech.

“Put everything that you found right out there in front of everyone, and then we will be judged by our own respective crews,” Jacob suggests. Nothing has been found, so there is nothing that Laban can place out in front of everyone. All the witnesses who are there will be staring at an empty pile; there is nothing that Laban can produce.

Bear in mind that, unless the deity statues were of great value, then this is really not the main issue between Jacob and Laban. There are some real issues between these two men; but they focus is upon this comparatively insignificant slight (however, we do not know the value of these figurines, so they could be quite expensive<sup>641</sup>).

What is really important is, did Jacob provide reasonable years of service to Laban? Have Laban's daughters been treated well? Given the circumstances, is this split up a reasonable thing to do?

Jacob next testifies to his own responsibilities regarding Laban's livestock.

Genesis 31:36–37 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, “What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us.”

### Laban found nothing (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *As Laban found nothing, Jacob grew angry, and pointed out the injustice of his hot pursuit and his search among all his things, but more especially the harsh treatment he had received from him in return for the unselfish and self-denying services that he had rendered him for twenty years.*<sup>642</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *In a real sense the relatives constituted a court of nomadic law. They must render a decision in the dispute (Genesis 31:37).*<sup>643</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Jacob's question, “Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods?” appeals to his audience that Laban's accusation that he stole his household gods has been proven wrong, and that he is innocent.*

Wenstrom continues: *Jacob proposes that if Laban found anything that belonged to him, he should set it before all their relatives and let them judge what to do. The tables have been turned where Jacob has gone from being the accused to being the aggrieved party.*<sup>644</sup>

<sup>640</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>641</sup> Recall the Jacob has made Laban quite wealthy; could he have made investments in these deities? Could they have been made of precious metals, like gold?

<sup>642</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:36–39.

<sup>643</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:36.

<sup>644</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 504); accessed October 18, 2017.

The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge offers these Scriptures on disputes between men: Genesis 31:32 Joshua 7:23 1Samuel 12:3–4 Matthew 18:16 1Corinthians 6:4–5 1Thessalonians 2:10 Hebrews 13:18 1Peter 2:12 3:16.<sup>645</sup>

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### Genesis 31:38a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                     | Common English Meanings                             | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                        |
|--|---|--|---|
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]                               | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i> | masculine singular demonstrative adjective   | Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |
| ‘eserîym (עֶשְׂרִים) [pronounced ges <sup>e</sup> -REEM] | <i>twenty</i>                                       | plural numeral adjective   | Strong's #6242<br>BDB #797                |
| shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW]                    | <i>year</i>   | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #8141<br>BDB #1040               |
| ’ânôkîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced awn-oh-KEE]                  | <i>I, me; (sometimes a verb is implied)</i>         | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun   | Strong's #595<br>BDB #59                  |
| ‘îm (עִם) [pronounced geem]                              | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>               | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767                |

**Translation:** [For] these 20 years [that] I [have been] with you,... Jacob worked for the first 7 years for Leah; then he worked another 7 years for Rachel. On top of this, he worked 6 years for himself and his family. All in all, he has worked for Laban for 20 years.

Now Jacob will lay out his work record. This work record sounds pretty good for a man who once tried to get everything by cheating, deceiving and manipulating.

Genesis 31:36–38 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, "What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us. For the 20 years that I have worked for you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flock.

<sup>645</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:37.

### Jacob now presents his grievances to Laban (various commentators)

Jacob had pent-up grievances against Laban, which he now lets out. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Recrimination on his part was natural in the circumstances, and, as usual, when passion is high, the charges took a wide range. He rapidly enumerated his grievances for twenty years and in a tone of unrestrained severity described the niggard character and vexatious exactions of his uncle, together with the hardships of various kinds he had patiently endured.*<sup>646</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:36-42 are Jacob's testimony of twenty years of pent-up emotions. He has been cheated and used and treated as dirt. Laban had been a hard taskmaster and Jacob a very conscientious servant. So we see Jacob reveling in his innocence in addition to the assurance he gained from Laban's report that God had spoken to him in the night, preventing harm to Jacob.*

Wenstrom continues: *In the light of these events Jacob now seemed to have the upper hand or in other words, he held the winning cards, and he planned to use them to greatest advantage. The years of friction between these two men now boiled over as Jacob scalded Laban with righteous indignation. Jacob was angry and called for a judgment scene. He knew he was totally innocent and he felt the suspicions of his father-in-law were unfair and unjustified. He felt that Laban had made up the story of the stolen teraphim as an excuse to search his possessions.*

Wenstrom concludes: *In Genesis 31:36-38 Jacob presents his case to his household and Laban's clan, thus before all their relatives. Jacob presents several rhetorical questions to his audience in order to present his innocence and to assure that his reputation in Paddan Aram remains intact.*<sup>647</sup>

Chapter Outline

Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

#### Genesis 31:38b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| râchêl (לָחַר) [pronounced raw-KHALE]                           | ewes  | feminine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #7353<br>BDB #932  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as  | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| 'êz (עֵז) [pronounced gayz]                                     | she-goat; in the plural, it can mean goats' hair  | feminine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #5795<br>BDB #777  |
| lô' (אֵל or אול) [pronounced low]                               | not, no   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation                 | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518  |
| shâkal (שָׂקַל) [pronounced shaw-KAHL]                          | to bereave, to make childless, to cause barrenness; to make abort, to cause an abortion, to miscarry; used of a sword which causes the death of young men | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Piel perfect; pausal form                       | Strong's #7921<br>BDB #1013 |

<sup>646</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:36–37.

<sup>647</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 504); accessed October 18, 2017.

**Translation:** ...your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried;... Jacob was in charge of some of Laban's stock, which were animals that Jacob raised for Laban. Jacob oversees the births of these animals. Like human births, many just continue until birth; but in some, there are problems. Either Jacob experienced very few problems or he was able to deal with these problems and save the young.

Dr. John Gill: *your ewes and your she goats have not cast their young: or very few of them: it was a rare case for any to be abortive, if ever: this, though owing to the blessing of God, was for Jacob's sake, and, under God, to be ascribed to his care and diligence in watching and keeping the flock, and doing everything needful for them.*<sup>648</sup>

For most of his tenure with Laban, these sheep and goats have been Laban's. Nevertheless, Jacob has gone to great lengths to keep them alive. He would sit through and possibly even assist in the births of the lambs and kids. Jacob did not take the attitude, *whatever happens*.

| Genesis 31:38c  |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| 'ayil (אֵיל) [pronounced AH-yil]                                | <i>ram; ram (as food; as a sacrifice); a ram's skin (skin dyed red, for tabernacle)</i> | masculine plural construct  | Strong's #352<br>BDB #17   |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced tzohn]                                 | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>                                     | feminine singular collective noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |
| Also spelled ts <sup>o</sup> ôwn (צֹאֵן) [pronounced tseh-OWN]. |   |   |                            |
| lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]                              | <i>not, no</i>  | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation                              | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| 'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]                              | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect; pausal form                                   | Strong's #398<br>BDB #37   |

**Translation:** ...and I have not eaten the rams from your flocks. Even though Laban's flocks under Jacob saw great increase, Jacob did not, from time to time, pull out one of the rams and surreptitiously eat it. He respected that these all belonged to Laban.

In order for a flock to increase in size, the key is the number of females. A single male or a smaller group of males could have serviced a larger group of females, who would continue to have lambs and kids. Removing a male now and again would have been easy for Jacob to do. However, he did not do that.

Dr. John Gill: *and the rams of the flock have I not eaten: being content with meaner food, as lentil pottage and the like; see the contrary of this in shepherds.*<sup>649</sup>

<sup>648</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:38 (slightly edited).

<sup>649</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:38.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Eastern people seldom kill the females for food except they are barren.*<sup>650</sup>

**Genesis 31:38** I was with you these twenty years. Your ewes and she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of your flock I have not eaten.

Jacob has a great many faults. However, he is an honest man in his work and he is a good worker.

*To cast their young* means for the ewes and female goats to either spontaneously abort or to give birth to stillborn lambs. In other words, Jacob took good care of Laban's flocks and they had a strong and healthy birthrate. In a previous chapter, Jacob was careful about breeding healthy animals with other healthy animals.

Jacob did not even eat Laban's animals. I would have assumed that this would be acceptable, for Jacob to occasionally cook up one of Laban's animals, but Jacob did not even do that. This suggests that Laban's sons probably appeared from time to time and required an accounting of Laban's livestock.

Jacob is testifying to his own honor as a herdsman for Laban; and this is certainly of greater importance. This is their fundamental relationship—owner and herdsman. Given what we have read, and given the fact that Laban is not complaining about the condition of his herd, suggests that Jacob was a good caretaker of his property.

| Genesis 31:39a   |  |  |                            |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| ṭērēphâh (הִפְרָט)<br>[pronounced <i>tehr-ay-FAW</i> ] | <i>torn flesh, torn by an animal, that which is torn</i>   | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #2966<br>BDB #383 |
| lô' (אֵל אוֹל)<br>[pronounced <i>low</i> ]             | <i>not, no</i>   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation   | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518 |
| bôw' (אוֹב)<br>[pronounced <i>boh</i> ]                | <i>to take in, to bring [near, against, upon], to come in with, to carry, to cause to come [in], to gather, to bring to pass</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Hiphil perfect  | Strong's #935<br>BDB #97   |
| 'el (אֶל)<br>[pronounced <i>ehl</i> ]                  | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>                          | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied); with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |

**Translation:** I did not bring torn flesh to you [to account for a loss];... When working for Laban, there were no excuses. If a wild animal came into the flock and killed this or that sheep; Jacob did not go to Laban and say, "Sorry about this; you have to remove this sheep from your roster."

This suggests that there was a fairly thorough system of accounting which took place. In fact, this entire verse indicates that Laban knew exactly what kind of animals Jacob was overseeing and he knew their ages and conditions. You and I look at a flock of sheep, and we think, *flock of sheep*. Laban looked at this flock, and he knew that there were 144 rams, 298 ewes and 79 she-goats (or, whatever). He knew how much he owned; he knew how much Jacob was responsible for.

<sup>650</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:38.

## Genesis 31:39b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                         | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| 'ânôkîy (אָנֹכִי)<br>[pronounced awn-oh-KEE] | <i>I, me;</i> (sometimes a verb is implied)  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular personal pronoun  | Strong's #595<br>BDB #59   |
| châṭâ' (חָטָא)<br>[pronounced khaw-TAW]      | <i>to bear the blame [for sin], to take the consequences for sin; to bear loss; to make a sin offering; to purify from sin [uncleanness]</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Piel imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #2398<br>BDB #306 |

The NET Bible: *The imperfect verbal form indicates that this was a customary or typical action.*<sup>651</sup>

**Translation:** ...I bore its loss. Jacob's job was not just to tend to the flocks and see that they get food and water, but he was to protect them. If a wild animal came into the midst and killed a sheep, Jacob had to bear that loss. This was taken out of his wages. There was no, "Look, I cannot help it if a bear attacks. I mean, what can I do?" Jacob was not allowed to say anything like that.

Dr. John Gill: *I bore the loss of it; took it upon himself, as if it had been somewhat blameworthy in him, as the word used signifies; and so made satisfaction for it; which, how he did, when he had no wages, is difficult to say: he might have some perquisites allowed him by Laban, though he had no settled salary; or he might lay himself under obligation to make it good whenever it was in his power.*<sup>652</sup>

It may be best to understand that this became their agreement after the 14 years had been completed.

## Genesis 31:39c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                       | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]                | <i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>        | preposition of separation   | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |
| yâd (יָד) [pronounced yawd]                | <i>hand; figuratively for strength, power, control</i>   | feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix  | Strong's #3027<br>BDB #388 |
| bâqash (בָּקַשׁ)<br>[pronounced baw-KAHSH] | <i>to seek, to search, to desire, to strive after, to attempt to get, to require, to demand, to ask, to seek with desire and diligence</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1245<br>BDB #134 |

Surprisingly enough, this is the first occurrence of this word in the Bible (apart from being in the book of Job).

|  |  |   |                            |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| gânab (גָּנַב) [pronounced gaw-NAH <sup>BV</sup> ] | <i>stolen [from], taken [by theft or deceit]</i> | feminine singular, Qal passive participle; construct form | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|

<sup>651</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 19, 2016.

<sup>652</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39.

| Genesis 31:39c  |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm]                                   | <i>day; time; today or this day (with a definite article); possibly immediately</i> | masculine singular noun   | Strong's #3117<br>BDB #398 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>               | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| gânab (גָּנַב) [pronounced gaw-NAH <sup>BV</sup> ]              | <i>stolen [from], taken [by theft or deceit]</i>                                    | feminine singular, Qal passive participle; construct form                       | Strong's #1589<br>BDB #170 |
| lay <sup>e</sup> lâh (לַיְלַיִל) [pronounced LAY-law]           | <i>night; nightly, at night, in the night, during the night</i>                     | masculine singular noun; this word can take on adverbial qualities; pausal form | Strong's #3915<br>BDB #538 |

**Translation:** You sought [remuneration] from my hand, [whether] stolen [in] the day or stolen at night. This is a continuation of the thought above. If a wild animal sneaked into the flock and ran off with a ewe lamb, that was paid for by Jacob. He bore the cost of that loss. If some thief got into the flock and stole an animal, that loss came out of Jacob's pocket.

**Genesis 31:39** That which was mangled I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it at my hand, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

If there was any loss, Jacob took the hit. As with many Bible passages, we do not know everything related to it. Did Laban's sons come into Jacob's camp now and again and do a head count? They must have kept careful records. That seems to be the case, although we are not told that anywhere else. What would further suggest this is, the great concern Laban's sons had about Jacob's increasing wealth. Certainly, they would want to check and recheck Jacob's stock.

Is Jacob exaggerating his faithful service? That is possible, but I don't think that is what is happening here. Otherwise, Laban would call him on it. I think that Laban knows that this is the service that Jacob has given him; and he does not appear to fully appreciate it.

Jacob is far from being a perfect man, but this does not mean that he is a dishonest or lazy worker. Again, the lack of complaints by Laban about Jacob's work suggests that Jacob is giving an accurate recitation of his service.

Genesis 31:36–39 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, "What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us. For the 20 years that I have worked for you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I never brought an animal to you killed in the wild; I bore the loss of that animal. It was your policy that I cover that loss, even if an animal were stolen from me."

## Jacob bore losses that he should have been able to write off (many commentators)

H. C. Leupold: *Sellin reminds us that a custom of the East provided that as long as a shepherd could lay before the owner the torn beast, the shepherd was not held chargeable, inasmuch as the torn beast counted as evidence that the shepherd had boldly driven off the predatory beast. Jacob was accorded no such consideration. He was held accountable.*<sup>653</sup>

David Guzik: *How faithfully did Jacob serve Laban? It was an ancient custom that a shepherd could bring the torn carcass of a sheep to his owner, as evidence that he was brave enough to not let the wolf devour it or take it away, and thus the shepherd would be excused. But Jacob says he didn't even do this, and every animal that was attacked, he made good out of his own flock.*<sup>654</sup>

The College Press Bible Study: *The particular law in the Code of Hammurabi (par. 266) reads: "If there occurs in the fold an act of god, or a lion takes a life, the shepherd shall clear himself before the deity; the owner of the fold must then accept the loss incurred." Thus Laban is accused of disregarding the explicit legal provisions for such contingencies: cf. Exodus 22:13 (ABG, 247). "That which was torn of wild beasts through my neglect I made good of my own accord; but even where I could not be held responsible, you still demanded restitution" (SC, 185).*<sup>655</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Jacob allowed himself to be the loser by the animals that were killed by wild beasts. Instead of bringing the mangled remains so that their value might not be deducted, he cheerfully bore the full loss: see Exodus 22:12–13; Amos 3:12. Jacob had exceeded the standard of fairness which was required by custom: "I bare the loss of it," i.e. "I used to make myself responsible for the loss."*<sup>656</sup>

Clarke: *This more particularly marks the covetous and rigorous disposition of Laban; for the law of God required that what had been torn by beasts the shepherd should not be obliged to make good, Exodus 22:10, Exodus 22:13. And it is very likely that this law was in force from the earliest times.*<sup>657</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The shepherds are strictly responsible for losses in the flock, unless they can prove these were occasioned by wild beasts.*<sup>658</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *Despite Jacob's efforts, Laban treated him wrongly throughout their time together. Jacob reminds Laban that when a wild beast killed a goat or sheep in the "eld, Jacob bore those losses himself. Under the custom of the day, a shepherd wasn't expected to absorb the cost of animals lost to thieves or wild animal attacks. He could bring back the carcass of the dead animal to prove it was the result of an animal. Jacob never bothered to produce such proof when animals were killed. Laban required that Jacob bear those losses himself, meaning it was Jacob's responsibility to repay Laban for those animals.*<sup>659</sup>

<sup>653</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>654</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:36–42.

<sup>655</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).

<sup>656</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:39.

<sup>657</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39.

<sup>658</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:39.

<sup>659</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

## Jacob bore losses that he should have been able to write off (many commentators)

Matthew Poole:

*Question: How could Jacob pay these losses, seeing he came empty from his father's house, and got nothing by his service, for the first fourteen years, but his wives?*

*Answer:*

*Either, 1. He had some supplies sent from his father, though it be not mentioned in this history. Or, 2. He might have some inconsiderable allowances or privileges from Laban, out of which he could easily defray these charges, which because of his great care and watchfulness did but seldom happen. Or, 3. These losses were put to his account, to be satisfied by him as soon as he should be able to do it.<sup>660</sup>*

*Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: Jacob reveals further of his great integrity in dealing with Laban and that he states that he even bore losses that were really not his fault, and for which he was not legally responsible according to the law of Hammurabi coming from this period demonstrates and from the Mosaic Law as well (See Exodus 22:10-11).*

*Wenstrom continues: Genesis 31:39 reveals that Jacob is not taking credit for doing more than the law demanded but rather he is accusing Laban of violation of Near Eastern law and custom, which absolved a shepherd of personal responsibility in a case of a beast killing a sheep, provided he could supply the carcass of the dead sheep. Though he was liable for lost or stolen sheep, he was not liable for sheep torn by predators.<sup>661</sup>*

*Henry M. Morris: It was customary that when a shepherd brought a torn animal to his master that this was regarded as evidence that he had defended the sheep and had driven the beast away and that he had done all he could to save the sheep; under these circumstances, the master bore the loss, rather than the shepherd. Jacob however had borne all the losses himself, evidently by replacing lost animals from Laban's flocks with animals from his own flocks.<sup>662</sup>*

*Dr. Robert Dean: Laban required the losses of Jacob, which indicates he was a harsh taskmaster. Jacob had done his job, he was faithful and had a good work ethic. He took care of everything, and he was honest and upright in the way he dealt with Laban, but Laban mistreated him throughout this time.<sup>663</sup>*

*L. M. Grant: Then Jacob strongly speaks of the way Laban had treated him. For twenty years, he says, he has served Laban. He had so cared for the females of Laban's flock that they had not miscarried, nor had he taken any of Laban's sheep, even to eat. Any animal that was lost, whether killed by wild animals or whether stolen, Laban held Jacob accountable for: He had to pay for the loss.<sup>664</sup>*

*James Burton Coffman: "According to Hammurabi's laws, a shepherd who presented the remnants (of a sheep torn by a wild beast) as evidence, was not liable for the losses that Jacob described." [26] The prophet Amos made mention of shepherds retrieving just such evidence in Genesis 3:12, indicating that it was a well-established custom that in such cases, the owner of the flock, not the shepherd, made good the loss. Laban had thus exceeded his lawful rights in requiring of Jacob that he bear the loss of all animals lost in such a manner. This was later incorporated into the Divine Law (Exodus 22:13).*

<sup>660</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39.

<sup>661</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 504); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>662</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 504); accessed October 18, 2017. Wenstrom cites *The Genesis Record*, page 488, Baker Book House.

<sup>663</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](http://www.deanbibleministries.org); accessed October 20, 2017 (slightly edited for a typo).

<sup>664</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017 (slightly edited).

## Jacob bore losses that he should have been able to write off (many commentators)

Coffman continues: *Of this situation, McKeating wrote: "The shepherd was accountable to the owner for any animal lost, unless he could prove that it was lost owing to circumstances beyond his control." Because of the unfairness of Laban, Jacob spent many a sleepless night protecting the flocks from predatory beasts.*<sup>665</sup>

I believe that Coffman and his references paint the most accurate picture. Laban did not allow a loss which would be the result of an animal attack or something like that. Therefore, Jacob had to be particularly on guard, all of the time, day or night, to protect the animals, or absorb the loss.

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Genesis 31:36–39 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, "What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us. For the 20 years that I have worked for you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I never brought an animal to you killed in the wild; I bore the loss of that animal. It was your policy that I cover that loss, even if an animal were stolen from me."

## Jacob proclaims himself to be honest and hardworking (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *Laban was so rigorous and unjust as to require the restoration of them, or an equivalent for them at the hand of Jacob.*<sup>666</sup>

Benson: *What Jacob here affirms, and for the truth of which he appeals to Laban, shows him to have been of a very industrious and faithful disposition, and that Laban's temper was exceedingly selfish and sordid: for though Jacob was his relation, and his substance had increased so greatly under his hand, yet he was very rigid toward him, and required him to make good all the cattle that were lost, by whatever accident it happened.*<sup>667</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Jacob's indignant protest proclaims (1) his length of service, (2) his perfect honesty, (3) his uncomplaining endurance of hardship, in spite of capricious changes in his wage. And now that he has left Haran, it was only because of God's mercy, and not through Laban's kindness, that he did not go empty-handed.*<sup>668</sup>

Matthew Henry: *The character of a good servant, and particularly of a faithful shepherd. Jacob had approved himself such a one, Genesis 31:38–40. 1. He was very careful, so that, through his oversight or neglect, the ewes did not cast their young. His piety also procured a blessing upon his master's effects that were under his hands. Note, Servants should take no less care of what they are entrusted with for their masters than if they were entitled to it as their own. 2. He was very honest, and took none of that for his own eating which was not allowed him. He contented himself with mean fare, and coveted not to feast upon the rams of the flock. Note, Servants must not be dainty in their food, nor covet what is forbidden them, but in that, and other instances, show all good fidelity. 3. He was very laborious, Genesis 31:40. He stuck to his business, all weathers; and bore both heat and cold with invincible patience.*<sup>669</sup>

<sup>665</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional references at that link.

<sup>666</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39.

<sup>667</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39–40.

<sup>668</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:38.

<sup>669</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:36–42.

**Jacob proclaims himself to be honest and hardworking (various commentators)**

Dr. Bob Utley: *Jacob defends his shepherding techniques and diligence (before the kinsmen).*

1. *the lambs had not miscarried*
2. *he had not eaten of the rams*
3. *he took the loss of the sheep due to wild animals*

*All of this fits exactly into the culture of that day which is shown in the Law Code of Hammurabi, (paragraph 266).<sup>670</sup>*

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *And in his recounting of his life in Haran, we hear Jacob's testimony of God. Jacob begins by reminding of Laban of his faithfulness in service to him. He served twenty years, which was in keeping with their agreements. Secondly, he did his job well, ensuring that the goats and sheep didn't miscarry, demonstrating Jacob's care and skill in the work.<sup>671</sup>*

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *In summary, Jacob worked hard doing everything in honor and according to his word, while Laban did everything in dishonor and in an attempt to win an advantage.<sup>672</sup>*

Jacob simply went beyond even that which was customary, when it came to the protection and preservation of Laban's herds.

Both men have already agreed that Laban's prosperity was based upon the blessing of God and Jacob's hard work. Gen. 30:27–28 *But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you. Name your wages, and I will give it."* Jacob agreed about this. Gen. 30:29–30 *Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock has fared with me. For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?"*

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**Genesis 31:40a**

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]  | <i>to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass</i>                          | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect      | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| Without a specific subject and object, the verb hâyâh often means <i>and it will come to be, and it will come to pass, then it came to pass</i> (with the wâw consecutive). It may be more idiomatically rendered <i>subsequently, afterwards, later on, in the course of time, after which</i> . Generally, the verb does not match the gender whatever nearby noun could be the subject (and, as often, there is no noun nearby which would fulfill the conditions of being a subject). |   |   |                            |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity                        | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88   |
| yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm]   | <i>day; time; today</i> (with a definite article)   | masculine singular noun with the definite article | Strong's #3117<br>BDB #398 |

<sup>670</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:38–42.

<sup>671</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>672</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

## Genesis 31:40a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings                                  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Together, these are literally translated <i>in the day</i> ; however, we may understand it to mean <i>in that day</i> ; <i>in this very day</i> ; <i>at once, presently</i> ; <i>lately</i> ; <i>by day</i> ; <i>in the daytime</i> ; <i>throughout the day</i> ; <i>in this day, at this [that] time</i> ; <i>now</i> ; <i>before that</i> . These interpretations often depend upon <i>when</i> the action of the verb takes place. |  |  |                            |
| When followed by an infinitive, this can be rendered <i>in the day in which</i> , <i>in the day when</i> , <i>in the day that</i> ; <i>when</i> .   |  |  |                            |
| 'âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]  | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #398<br>BDB #37   |
| chôreb (חֹרֵב) [pronounced KHOH-rehb]   | <i>dryness, desolation, drought, heat; parching heat</i> | masculine singular noun  | Strong's #2721<br>BDB #351 |

**Translation:** [Thus] I was consumed by heat in the day;... Jacob was responsible for Laban's flocks and herds all of the time. It did not matter how hot it was; he had to oversee them. He had to feed, water and guide them.

## Genesis 31:40b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]  | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| qerach (קֶרַח) [pronounced KEH-rahkh]  | <i>frost, ice; hail; crystal; cold</i>                                | masculine singular noun  | Strong's #7140<br>BDB #901 |
| This is also spelled qôrach (קֶרַח) [pronounced KOH-rahkh].  |   |  |                            |
| The NET Bible: <i>Heb "frost, ice," though when contrasted with the חֹרֵב (khorev, "drought, parching heat") of the day, "piercing cold" is more appropriate as a contrast.</i> <sup>673</sup> |   |  |                            |
| lay <sup>l</sup> âh (לַיְלִי) [pronounced LAY-law]   | <i>night; nightly, at night, in the night, during the night</i>       | masculine singular noun; this word can take on adverbial qualities; pausal form; with the definite article | Strong's #3915<br>BDB #538 |

**Translation:** ...and [by] cold in the night. The word for cold here can also mean *frost, ice, hail*. In dry weather, the night cools off significantly (there is no moisture in the air to *hold* the heat); so there were times that Jacob experienced great heat in the daytime; but, by night, he was very cold—sometimes facing ice and frost.

<sup>673</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 19, 2016.

## Genesis 31:40c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                       |
|---|---|--|--|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253                |
| nâdad (נָדַד) [pronounced naw-DAHD]   | <i>to move; to move oneself, to wander about, to stray; to retreat, to flee, to depart; to fly [away], to flutter; to remove, to put away; to abominate</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                         | Strong's #5074<br>BDB #622               |
| Except for several occurrences in the book of Job, this is the first time this word appears in Scripture.   |   |  |  |
| sh <sup>e</sup> nath (שָׁנַת) [pronounced sh <sup>e</sup> nahth]  | <i>sleep; a state of sleep</i>  | feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix           | Strong's #8153<br>(= #8142?)<br>BDB #446 |
| The spelling above appears to be for Strong's #8153; spellings for Strong's #8142: shênâh (שֵׁנָה) [pronounced shay-NAW] and shênâ' (שֵׁנָה') [pronounced shay-NAW]; and there may be some other forms. They all appear to be either the same word; or at the very least, synonyms. There is some disagreement upon the vowel points and this appears to be in the construct form, although that does not fit in with the rest of the sentence. |   |  |  |
| min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]   | <i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i>                         | preposition of separation  | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577               |
| êynayim (עֵינַיִם) [pronounced éy-nah-YIM]  | <i>eyes, two eyes, literal eye(s), spiritual eyes; face, appearance, form; surface</i>  | feminine dual noun; with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix; pausal form | Strong's #5869 (and #5871) BDB #744      |

**Translation:** *My sleep departed from my two eyes.* Jacob's duties, combined with the sometimes nearly unbearable cold of night kept him from sleeping many nights. Recall that he would bear the loss of any lamb being taken off by a bear. Jacob made sure that the births were all successful. This means that Jacob acted when the time was right, no matter whether it was in the middle of the night; and no matter how warm or cold it was.

Dr. John Gill: *and my sleep departed from my eyes; through diligent care and watchfulness of the flocks in the night season, which on some occasions were necessary; see Luke 2:8.*<sup>674</sup>

I used to go camping with my parents along the northern coast of California. I recall the nights of sleeping in sleeping bags, which were not, at that time, properly insulated. So at night, even in a tent in a sleeping bag, that cold wind would seem to go right through you. It would be too cold to fall asleep. So there would be a significant number of hot days and very cold nights that Jacob endured.

The Voice provides us with a wonderful translation of this passage (except for the first phrase):

*When Jacob saw that Laban's search had come up empty, he became angry and confronted Laban. **Jacob:** What is my offense? What have I done that is so wicked to make you pursue me like a common criminal? You searched through all of my things, and what have you found that belonged to you? Whatever it is, set it down here between your family and mine, and they can decide whose it is. I've worked for you for 20 years. Your ewes and your female goats have never miscarried *under my**

<sup>674</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39 (slightly edited).

*care*. I have never feasted on any of the rams in your flocks. When wild animals attacked, I didn't bring the carcass to you *to deal with*; I bore the cost myself. You required me to cover any losses, whether the animals were stolen by day or night, *and I did so*. There I was—*at your service*—during the day I was hounded by heat; during the night I was cold and couldn't get a good night's sleep.

The Voice adds some additional text, but it helps smooth out the translation and, using the time-tested italics approach, we do not become confused with what is in or not in the text.

**Genesis 31:40** I was there; in the day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night. And my sleep departed from my eyes.

### Jacob speaks of enduring harsh weather conditions (various commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 31:40, Jacob reveals the terrible conditions he had to work under at times and that he was very conscientious in tending to Laban's flocks. The fact that Jacob had been exposed to extreme weather conditions reveals that Jacob who once was a homebody and a momma's boy has been toughened up under Laban's school of hard knocks and has been trained for leadership away from home.*<sup>675</sup>

L. M. Grant: *He found himself suffering often by the heat of the day and shivering at night because of the cold, being unable to sleep.*<sup>676</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *The more intense the heat by day in the near tropical regions, the more acute the cold. Out in the open Jacob's shepherd duties exposed him aplenty to both. Short rations of sleep were almost the rule besides.*<sup>677</sup>

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**Genesis 31:40** I was there; in the day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night. And my sleep departed from my eyes.

Much of the time, Jacob is going to be taking these animals about to find fresh food; fresh grass. So there are no pens to keep them or to protect them; but there were predators. Jacob was extremely responsible over these years. He took very good care of Laban's animals.

We know Jacob in some fairly negative ways. We know how he got Esau's birthright; we know how he deceived his own father. We know that he was heavily influenced by his mother (even as an adult); and how his parents playing favorites did some damage to his psyche. We know that he sneaked away from Laban. So Jacob is not a great man (so many of us can relate to him because of this). But, he did put in an honest, full day's work.

So, Jacob's defense of himself is probably not overblown. This is probably quite accurate. Jacob had been a good worker for Laban. Jacob was responsible; and Laban was blessed, as God's blessing to Jacob overflowed to Laban.

Laban enjoyed great financial increase by his association with Jacob. You may recall that at least twice in the Bible, statements are made about God materially blessing both Abraham and Isaac; so it seems reasonable that God would bless Jacob as well—and that those associated with Jacob would enjoy blessing by association.

As we have already seen, Jacob was prospered by God, much to the chagrin of Laban's sons. That Laban is similarly blessed is a reasonable assumption to make.

<sup>675</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 505); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>676</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>677</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

Genesis 31:36–40 Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him. Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, "What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us. For the 20 years that I have worked for you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I never brought an animal to you killed in the wild; I bore the loss of that animal. It was your policy that I cover that loss, even if an animal were stolen from me. During the day, the heat was nearly unbearable; furthermore, it was bitterly cold on many nights. I was sleep deprived in order to protect your herds.

### Weather variables in the middle east (various commentators)

James Burton Coffman: *In view here are the harsh temperature changes of the Arabian deserts, where "the temperature rises to 120 degrees during the day and falls as low as 55 degrees at night." Frost occurs occasionally even during the hottest seasons. Laban was silenced by this protest. He immediately changed the subject.*<sup>678</sup>

Sir John Chardin: *In Europe, the days and nights resemble each other, with respect to the qualities of heat and cold; but it is quite otherwise in the East. In the lower Asia, in particular, the day is always hot, and, as soon as the sun is fifteen degrees above the horizon, no cold is felt in the depth of winter itself. On the contrary, in the height of summer, the nights are as cold as at Paris in the month of March. It is for this reason that in Persia and Turkey they always make use of furred habits in the country, such only being sufficient to resist the cold of the nights.*<sup>679</sup>

Chuck Smith: *He was out there in the hot sun. And he was out there in the cold nights. And for twenty years he had really gone through all of the miseries of the outdoors and all.*<sup>680</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The temperature changes often in twenty-four hours from the greatest extremes of heat and cold, most trying to the shepherd who has to keep watch by his flocks.*<sup>681</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *[I]t is well known, that in the East the cold by night corresponds to the heat by day; the hotter the day the colder the night, as a rule.*<sup>682</sup>

Whedon: *Compare Psalm 121:6; Jer. 36:30 (Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: He shall have none to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat by day and the frost by night.). The extremes of heat and cold between day and night in the East are evidenced by all travellers.*<sup>683</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *Furthermore, Jacob worked under difficult and harsh conditions living in the "elds caring for the flocks. Hot days, cold evenings, and sleepless nights in protecting the flock. While Jacob worked for 20 years in keeping with his agreements, Laban changed the wages ten times trying to minimize Jacob's wealth and maximize his own.*<sup>684</sup>

<sup>678</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional reference at that link.

<sup>679</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39–40.

<sup>680</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:40.

<sup>681</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:40.

<sup>682</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:40–41.

<sup>683</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:40 (slightly edited).

<sup>684</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

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## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Adam Clarke contrasts Jacob and Laban: *The expostulation of Jacob with Laban, and their consequent agreement, are told in this place with great spirit and dignity. Jacob was conscious that though he had made use of cunning to increase his flocks, yet Laban had been on the whole a great gainer by his services. He had served him at least twenty years, fourteen for Rachel and Leah, and six for the cattle; and some suppose he had served him twenty years besides the above, which is not unlikely: see the remarks at the conclusion of this chapter. (See Clarke at Genesis 31:55 (note)) Forty or even twenty years of a man's life, devoted to incessant labor and constantly exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, (see Genesis 31:40), deserve more than an ordinary reward. Laban's constitutional sin was covetousness, and it was an easily besetting sin; for it appears to have governed all his conduct, and to have rendered him regardless of the interests of his children, so long as he could secure his own. That he had frequently falsified his agreement with Jacob, though the particulars are not specified, we have already had reason to conjecture from Genesis 31:7, and with this Jacob charges his father-in-law, in the most positive manner, Genesis 31:41. Perhaps some previous unfair transactions of this kind were the cause why Jacob was led to adopt the expedient of outwitting Laban in the case of the spotted, spangled, ring-streaked, and grised cattle. This if it did take place, though it cannot justify the measure, is some palliation of it; and almost the whole of Jacob's conduct, as far as relates to Laban, can be better excused than his injuring Laban's breed, by leaving him none but the weak, unhealthy, and degenerated cattle.*<sup>685</sup>

Hawker approaches this passage from a different point of view: *Is there nothing in those verses to prompt Ministers to watchfulness in their ministry; and servants to faithfulness in their service? Above all, does not the Reader discover somewhat here to bring to his remembrance the unequalled ministry and service of the Lord Jesus? Was he not exposed for his sheep, in the day to the drought, and to the frost by night? Did he not, as their Surety, suffer the loss of all things? And did not God the Father, at his hand, require all, when he undertook their redemption? Precious Jesus! how sweet and endearing does every renewed view of your love appear, in which you testified your regard to your people.*<sup>686</sup>

Let me suggest this about Jacob: he was not yet spiritually mature; however, he had come to the point in his life where he was honorable and he did not try to cheat Laban. In other words, Jacob abided by the laws of divine establishment. He was not yet to the point where he fully trusted God and all of the promises that God had made to him. We know this because Jacob tried to sneak away from Laban; worried that Laban would take some of his stuff from him (in my opinion, that was Jacob's chief concern).

**This to me, twenty a year in your house I serve you—four-teen a year in two of your daughters and six years in your flock. And so you change my wages ten times. Except that an Elohim of my father, Elohim of Abraham and a fear of Isaac was to me; because now empty-handed you have sent me away. My affliction and a labor of my palms has seen Elohim; and so He resolved [the conflict] last night.”**

Genesis  
31:41–42

**This has been my life [lit., *this to me*]: [for] the 20 years I have served you—14 for your two daughters and 6 for your flock. Yet you have changed my wages 10 times. If not for the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham and the fear-respect of Isaac being mine, you would have sent me away empty-handed. Indeed, Elohim has seen [both] my affliction and the work of my hands; consequently, He resolved [our conflict] last night [when He spoke to you in a dream].”**

<sup>685</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:39.

<sup>686</sup> Robert Hawker *The Poor Man's Commentary*; ©1805; from e-sword, Genesis 31:34–39 (slightly edited).

**This is what my life has been under you: I have served you for 20 years. I worked 14 years for your daughters and an additional 6 years for some of your sheep and cattle. Yet, throughout this time, you arbitrarily changed my wages 10 times. If it were not for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the teaching of my father Isaac about this God, you would have found a way to send me away empty-handed. However, God has seen both my affliction and the work of my hands; consequently, when He came to you in that dream, He resolved our conflict.”**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

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|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | This to me, twenty a year in your house I serve you—four—teen a year in two of your daughters and six years in your flock. And so you change my wages ten times. Except that an Elohim of my father, Elohim of Abraham and a fear of Isaac was to me; because now empty-handed you have sent me away. My affliction and a labor of my palms has seen Elohim; and so He resolved [the conflict] last night.”   |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | These twenty years have I served in thy house; fourteen years for thy two daughters; and six years for thy sheep; and thou hast changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my <u>fathers</u> , the God of Abraham, and He whom Izhak hath feared [Sam. Vers. "the redeemer of Izhak."], <u>had been my helper</u> , even now thou hadst sent me away empty: but my labour, and the travail of my hands, have been manifest before the Lord, and He rebuked <u>thee</u> in the evening. |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | These twenty years have I been in thy house, serving thee; fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy sheep; and thou hast changed my wages ten parts. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and He whom Izhak feareth had been in <u>my help</u> , even now hadst thou sent me away empty: but my affliction and the travail of my hands are manifest before the Lord, and therefore He admonished <u>thee</u> in the evening.                               |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And in this manner have I served you in your house twenty years, fourteen for your daughters, and six for your flocks: you have changed also my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had stood by me, peradventure now you had sent me away naked: God beheld my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked <u>you</u> yesterday.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless God of my father, God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty. God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked <u>you</u> last night.”   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | Behold, I have been twenty years in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock; and you have changed my wages ten times. And if it had not been for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and your regard for Isaac, which have been on my side, surely you would have sent me away now empty. God saw my toil and the labor of my hands, and rebuked <u>you</u> last evening.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | These twenty years have I been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years among your sheep, and you <u>falsely</u> rated my wages for ten lambs. Unless I had the God of my father Abraam, and the fear of Isaac, now you would have sent me away empty; God saw my humiliation, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked <u>you</u> yesterday.  |
| Significant differences: | The Greek adds the word <i>falsely</i> . One targum has <i>fathers</i> rather than <i>father</i> . The Greek lacks <i>the God of</i> prior to Abraham. Both targums above add the word <i>helps</i> , <i>helper</i> . The verb <i>resolved</i> can also mean <i>to rebuke</i> ; there is no suffix <i>you</i> in the  |

final phrase (which appears to be found in every ancient language except the Hebrew).

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English    | These twenty years I have been in your house; I was your servant for fourteen years because of your daughters, and for six years I kept your flock, and ten times was my payment changed. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away with nothing in my hands. But God has seen my troubles and the work of my hands, and this night he kept you back.  |
| Easy English              | Jacob said, 'This is what it was like to work for you: I could not get away from the heat of the sun in the day. It felt like it was eating me. And the night-time was so cold that I could not sleep. It was like this for 20 years. That is the time that I have been working for you, in your household. I worked for 14 years to pay you for your daughters. Then I worked for 6 years for your animals. And you changed what I received from you many times. The God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac was with me [The God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac are all names for God. God is very powerful and has authority over everything. Fear means to know that.]. If he were not, then you would have sent me away with nothing. But God has seen what you have done to me. He has seen how I have worked for you. And last night he told you that he knew what you had done.' V. 40 is included for context. |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006 | I worked 20 years like a slave for you. For the first 14 years I worked to win your two daughters. The last six years I worked to earn your animals. And during that time you changed my pay ten times. But the God of my ancestors, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, was with me. If God had not been with me, you would have sent me away with nothing. But he saw the trouble that I had and the work that I did, and last night God proved that I am right.”   |
| <i>The Message</i>        | “In the twenty years I've worked for you, ewes and she-goats never miscarried. I never feasted on the rams from your flock. I never brought you a torn carcass killed by wild animals but that I paid for it out of my own pocket—actually, you made me pay whether it was my fault or not. I was out in all kinds of weather, from torrid heat to freezing cold, putting in many a sleepless night. For twenty years I've done this: I slaved away fourteen years for your two daughters and another six years for your flock and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not stuck with me, you would have sent me off penniless. But God saw the fix I was in and how hard I had worked and last night rendered his verdict.” Vv. 38–40 are included for context. I think the second use of <i>for twenty years</i> emphatically supports Jacob's work ethic and complaints against Laban.        |
| Names of God Bible        | I've been with your household 20 years now. I worked for you 14 years for your two daughters and 6 years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. If the <b>Elohim</b> of my father, the <b>Elohim</b> of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed by now. <b>Elohim</b> has seen my misery and hard work, and last night he made it right.”   |
| NIRV                      | And what was my life like? The heat burned me in the daytime. And it was so cold at night that I froze. I couldn't sleep. That's what it was like for the 20 years I was living with you. I worked for 14 years to marry your two daughters. I worked for six years to get my share of your flocks. You changed my pay ten times. But the God of my father was with me. He is the God of Abraham and the God Isaac worshiped. If he hadn't been with me, you would surely have sent me away without anything to show for all my work. But God has seen my hard times. He has seen all the work my hands have done. So last night he warned you.” V. 40 is included for context.   |

New Simplified Bible »I have been in your house twenty years! I was your servant for fourteen years because of your daughters. I kept your flock for six years. You changed my wages ten times. »If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, out of respect for Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed by now. God has seen my misery and hard work. Last night he made it right!«

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible I've now spent twenty years in your household. I worked for fourteen years for your two daughters and for six years for your flock, and you changed my pay ten times. If the God of my father—the God of Abraham and the awesome one of Isaac—hadn't been with me, you'd have no doubt sent me away without anything. God saw my harsh treatment and my hard work and reprimanded you yesterday.”

Contemporary English V. I had to work fourteen of these twenty long years to earn your two daughters and another six years to buy your sheep and goats. During that time you kept changing my wages. If the fearsome God worshiped by Abraham and my father Isaac had not been on my side, you would have sent me away without a thing. But God saw my hard work, and he knew the trouble I was in, so he helped me. Then last night he told you how wrong you were.

The Living Bible Yes, twenty years—fourteen of them earning your two daughters, and six years to get the flock! And you have reduced my wages ten times! In fact, except for the grace of God—the God of my grandfather Abraham, even the glorious God of Isaac, my father—you would have sent me off without a penny to my name. But God has seen your cruelty and my hard work, and that is why he appeared to you last night.”

New Berkeley Version So I spent twenty years in your home, fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your stock. Ten times [“Again and again,” or “Time and again,” we would say.] you changed my wages. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Reverence of Isaac [Literal translation meaning “He whom Isaac reveres.”] had been on my side, you would not doubtless have dismissed me empty-handed; but God saw my misery and my manual labor, and He gave judgment last night.”

New Century Version I worked like a slave for you for twenty years—the first fourteen to get your two daughters and the last six to earn your flocks. During that time you changed my pay ten times. But the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, was with me. Otherwise, you would have sent me away with nothing. But he saw the trouble I had and the hard work I did, and last night he corrected you.”

New Life Version I have been in your house twenty years. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock. And you changed my pay ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac, had not been with me, for sure you would have sent me away with nothing. God has seen my suffering and the work of my hands. So He spoke sharp words to you last night.”

New Living Translation “I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and rebuked you!” V. 40 is included for context.

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible 'During these twenty years that I stayed in your house, I served you for fourteen years for your two daughters. [Then I spent the next] six years among your sheep...

just to have you fraudulently set my wages as ten lambs! Why, if it weren't for the God of my father Abraham and for the fact that [you're] afraid of Isaac's [God], you would have sent me away empty-handed! And it was because God saw how I was humiliated and how hard I've worked that He [scolded you] last night!"

Beck's American Translation I've been in your home twenty years: I worked fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Awesome One of Isaac, had not been on my side, you would now have sent me away empty. God has seen my misery and hard work, and last night He decided who was right."

International Standard V I've lived in your house these 20 years—serving fourteen years for your two daughters and another six years for your flocks. During all that time you changed [Lit. *you cut through*] my wages ten times. If the God of my father—the God of Abraham, the God whom Isaac feared—had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty handed. But God saw my misery and how hard I've worked with my own hands—and he rebuked you last night."

Revised Knox Bible Burning heat by day, and biting frost at nights, till my eye-lids lost the power of sleep; thus it was that I spent twenty years as a servant in your household, fourteen years for your daughters, and six for your flocks; time and again you did alter your bargain with me. Why, if the God of my father Abraham, the God before whom Isaac trembles, had not prospered me, you would have sent me away penniless; as it is, God has taken account of my wretchedness, and the toil these hands have borne; that is why he gave you, yesterday, his warning. V. 40 is included for context.

Translation for Translators I lived in your household for twenty years. I worked for you for fourteen years to buy your two daughters, and for six more years to buy some of your sheep and goats. During that time, you changed and reduced my wages many times [HYP]. If God, the one whom my grandfather Abraham worshiped and before whom my father Isaac trembled in fear, had not been with me and helped me, you would have sent me away with nothing in my hands/owning nothing ! But God saw how much I was suffering and how hard I was working, so last night he told you that what you have done to me was wrong."

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible In the day, the parching heat is to have consumed me, and the frost by night, even my sleep was to retreat from my eyes. I am to have been for twenty years, in your house serving you: four and ten years for your two daughters, and six years for your small cattle; even was you to alter my wages in ten counts.

Conservapedia That's how it's been for me, for twenty years in your household. I served you for fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your cattle. You changed my wages ten separate times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the awe of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my humiliation and the weariness of my hands, and that's why He corrected you last night!" That's a rather bold-faced statement for Jacob to make, seeing that he has not a scrap of evidence. But Jacob has Laban trapped by the Divine injunction to keep everything on a friendly basis, and Jacob knows it.<sup>687</sup>

Ferrar-Fenton Bible This twenty years I have been in your house, — I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your sheep, and you cheated me over my wage ten times. If the GOD of my father Abraham, and the Worshipped of Isaac, had not been with me, then you would have sent me away empty. But GOD saw my weary feet, and defended me last night."

<sup>687</sup> The Conservapedia translation places this note with v. 41, but I think that it is better placed with v. 42.

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| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Thus have I been twenty years in your house, and served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your sheep, and you have changed my reward ten times. And except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the God whom Isaac fears had been with me: surely you had sent me away now all empty. But God beheld my tribulation, and the labor of my hands: and rebuked you yesterday.  |
| H. C. Leupold           | Look here now, for twenty years I have been doing service in thy house, fourteen years for thy daughters and six years in connection with thy cattle, and thou hast altered my pay ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and He whom Isaac revered, had not been for me, surely now thou wouldst have let me go empty-handed. But my misery and the toil of my hands, God saw it and reproved thee last night.   |
| NIV, ©2011              | This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you." V. 40 is included for context. |
| Tree of Life Version    | I was consumed by heat during the day, consumed by frost during the night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. This is how it's been for me twenty years in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flocks—and you changed my salary ten times! Had I not had the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, you would have sent me away empty-handed now. But God saw my misery and the toil of my hands and last night He became the Judge." V. 40 is included for context.                              |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | These twenty years I have been in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock. You have changed my wages ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the one Isaac fears, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my oppression and how hard I worked, and he rebuked you last night."   |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | For 20 years in your house I served you, 14 years for your two daughters and 6 years for your flocks, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me, you would have sent me away destitute, but my affliction and labor of my hands Elohim did see and he rebuked you last night.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | This was for me twenty years in your house, I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flocks; and you swapped my wages ten times. If not for the God of my father, the god of Abraham and the fear of Isaac, I would have until now, been empty handed. And God has witnessed my suffering and my entitlement, this was proved yesterday night."   |

**Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

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| Christian Community (1988) | It's twenty years that I've been with you. I worked fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and ten times you have altered my wages. If the God of my father Abraham and the Fearsome God of Isaac had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands and last night he passed sentence." |
| The Heritage Bible         | And these twenty years I have been in your house; I worked fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have slid by my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac,  |

had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty. God has seen my trouble, and the labor of my palms, and made it right to you last night.

New American Bible (2002) Of the twenty years that I have now spent in your household, I slaved fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, while you changed my wages time after time. If my ancestral God, the God of Abraham and the Awesome One of Isaac, had not been on my side, you would now have sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my plight and the fruits of my toil, and last night he gave judgment."

New American Bible (2011) Of the twenty years that I have now spent in your household, I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, while you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, you would now have sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my plight and the fruits of my toil, and last night he reproached you [Gn 31:24, 29]."

New Jerusalem Bible It was like this for the twenty years I spent in your household. Fourteen years I slaved for you for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, since you changed my wages ten times over. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, the Kinsman of Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my plight and my labours, and last night he delivered judgement.'

New Revised Standard V. These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you for fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear [Meaning of Heb uncertain] of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked you last night.'

Revised English Bible For twenty years I have been in your household. I worked fourteen years for you to win your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times over. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would now have sent me away empty-handed. But God saw my labour and my hardships, and last night he delivered his verdict."

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible These twenty years I've been in your house — I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock; and you changed my wages ten times! If the God of my father, the God of Avraham, the one whom Yitz'chak fears, had not been on my side, by now you would certainly have already sent me away with nothing! God has seen how distressed I've been and how hard I've worked, and last night he passed judgment in my favor."

The Complete Tanach This is twenty years that I have spent in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your animals, and you changed my wages ten times.

**and you changed my wages:** You would change the stipulation between us from speckled to spotted and from ringed to striped.

Had not the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, been for me, you would now have sent me away empty handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, and He reproved [you] last night."

**and the Fear of Isaac:** He did not wish to say, “the God of Isaac,” because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not associate His name with the righteous while they are alive. Although He said to him upon his departure from Beer-sheba (above, 28:13): “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac,” since his eyes had become dim and a blind man is like a dead man, Jacob was afraid to say, “the God of,” and said, “and the Fear of.”

**and He reprov[ed] [you] last night:** Heb. וְיָצַח, an expression of reproof, but it is not an expression of clarification.

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| exeGes[es] companion Bible | Thus - twenty years in your house;<br>I served you fourteen years for your two daughters<br>and six years for your flocks:<br>and you changed my hire ten times.<br>Unless Elohim of my father - Elohim of Abraham<br>and the fear of Yischaq were with me,<br>surely you had now sent me away empty.<br>Elohim sees my humiliation<br>and the labour of my palms;<br>and reprov[ed] you yesternight.  |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)          | Of the twenty years that I spent in your household, I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flocks; and you changed my wages time and again. Had not the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God took notice of my plight and the toil of my hands, and He gave judgment last night.”   |
| Kaplan Translation         | Twenty years now I have worked for you in your estate - fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for some of your flocks. You changed my wages ten times! 'If the God of my fathers - the God of Abraham and the Dread of Isaac [See Genesis 31:53. Since Isaac was still alive, Jacob would not call Him 'God of Isaac.'] - had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty handed! But God saw my plight and the work of my hands. Last night, He rendered judgment [(Ramban). Or, 'He reprimanded you last night' (Rashi).]!' |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible      | Thus have I been esrim shanah in thy bais; I served thee arba-esreh shanah for thy two banot, and shesh shanim for thy tzon: and thou hast changed my sachar aseret monim.<br>Except Elohei Avi, Elohei Avraham, and the Pachad of Yitzchak had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty handed. Elohim hath seen mine oni and the toil of my palms, and rebuked thee emesh (last night).  |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for [my share of] your flocks, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and [the Feared One] of Isaac, had not been with me, most certainly you would have sent me away now empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and humiliation and the [exhausting] labor of my hands, so He rendered judgment and rebuked you last night.”                          |
| The Expanded Bible         | I [was in your house and] worked like a slave for you for twenty years—the first fourteen to get your two daughters and the last six to earn your flocks. During that time you changed my pay [wages] ten times. But the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the God [Fear; a title for God; Prov. 1:7] of Isaac, was with me. Otherwise, you would have sent me away with nothing. But he saw the trouble [affliction] I had and the hard work I did, and last night he corrected [admonished; reprov[ed]] you.” |

## Kretzmann's Commentary

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. As one commentator says: The strong feeling and the lofty self-consciousness which utter themselves in his speech impart to it a rhythmical movement and poetic forms. " Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, that is, the God whom Isaac feared, the object of his reverence or veneration, 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. The service of Jacob in the house of Laban is an example of true faithfulness, which is here throughout contrasted with the selfishness of the older man. A true believer will be diligent, faithful, conscientious, careful not to neglect or to waste aught of the goods entrusted to him, anxious to serve God and his neighbor with the work of his hands.

## NET Bible®

This was my lot [*Heb* "this to me."] for twenty years in your house: I worked like a slave [*Heb* "served you," but in this accusatory context the meaning is more "worked like a slave."] for you – fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, but you changed my wages ten times! If the God of my father – the God of Abraham, the one whom Isaac fears [*Heb* "the fear of Isaac," that is, the one whom Isaac feared and respected. For further discussion of this title see M. Malul, "More on pahad yitschaq (Gen. 31:42,53) and the Oath by the Thigh," VT 35 (1985): 192-200.] – had not been with me, you would certainly have sent me away empty-handed! But God saw how I was oppressed and how hard I worked [*Heb* "My oppression and the work of my hands God saw."], and he rebuked you last night."

## The Pulpit Commentary

Thus have I been—literally, this to me (or for myself, vide infra)—twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle. The majority of expositors understand the twenty years referred to in 1Samuel 17:38 to be the same as the twenty spoken of here as consisting of fourteen and six. Dr. Kennicott, regarding the twenty years of 1Samuel 17:38 as having intervened between the fourteen and the six of 1Samuel 17:41, makes the entire period of Jacob's sojourn in Padan-aram to have been forty years. In support of this he contends—

(1) that the particle *רַן*, twice repeated (in 1Samuel 17:38 and in 1Samuel 17:41), may be legitimately rendered, "This (one) twenty years I was with thee" (1Samuel 17:38), i.e. taking care of thy flocks; and "this for myself (another) twenty years in thy house," i.e. serving for thy daughters and thy cattle (cf. Exodus 14:20; Job. 21:23, Job. 21:25; Eccles. 6:5);

(2) that on this hypothesis more time is afforded for the birth of Jacob's family, viz. twenty-seven years instead of seven; and

(3) that it relieves the narrative of certain grave chronological difficulties in connection with Judah and his family, which, on the supposition of the shorter period, subsequently emerge, such as that Judah and his sons must have been quite children when they married (vide Genesis 38:1–11). But, on the other hand, in favor of the accepted chronology it may be urged—

(1) that the interposition of a second twenty years in the middle of the first is unnatural;

(2) that, though legitimate, the proposed rendering of *רַן* does not at first sight suggest itself as that which Jacob intended;

(3) that it is not impossible for Jacob's family to have been born in the short space of seven years (vide Genesis 27:1; Genesis 30:35);

(4) that in reality the difficulties connected with Judah and his sons are not removed by the hypothesis of a forty years' sojourn in Padan-aram any more than by a sojourn of only twenty years, since Judah must have married either after the sale of Joseph, in which case only twenty-two years remain for the birth and marriage of Er and Onan, for Pharez and Zarah, Judah's children by Tamar, to grow to manhood, and for Pharez to have two sons, Hezron and Hamul, before descending

to Egypt, unless indeed, as Kurtz supposes, Judah's grandchildren were born in Egypt; or before the sale of Joseph—indeed, if Hezron and Hamul were born in Canaan, before the birth of Joseph, i.e. while Judah was yet in Padan-aram, which is contrary to the narrative (vide Genesis 38:1, Genesis 38:2). For these reasons, though adopted by some excellent authorities (Bishop Horsley, Adam Clarke, 'Speaker's Commentary,' Inglis), the computation of Dr. Kennicott does not appear of sufficient weight to set aside the ordinary reckoning, which is followed by interpreters of equal credit (Keil, Kalisch, Kurtz, Lange, Murphy, Wordsworth).

**And thou hast changed my wages ten times** (vide 1Samuel 17:7). **Except** (לֹא־אִם, if not, i.e. unless, introducing the protasis of the sentence) **the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac**,—i.e. the object of Isaac's fear, not "terror", viz. God; אֱלֹהֵי being used metonymically of that which inspires reverence or fear, like σέβας and σέβασμα. The entire clause is a periphrasis for Jehovah of 1Samuel 17:3, which is usually ascribed to the Jehovist, while the present verse belongs, it is alleged, to the fundamental document—**had been with**—or, for (cf. Psalm 124:1, Psalm 124:2)—**me** (during the whole period of my sojourn in Padan-aram, but especially during the last six years), **surely** (כִּי, then, commencing the apodosis) **thou hadst sent me away now empty** (as by thy stratagem in changing my wages thou didst design; but) God hath seen mine affliction (cf. Genesis 29:32; Exodus 3:7) **and the labor**—especially that which is wearisome, from a root signifying to toil with effort so as to become fatiguing (cf. Job. 39:11)—**of my hands, and rebuked**—i.e. reprov'd, sc. thee, as in Genesis 21:25 (LXX; Vulgate, A.V; Calvin, Ainsworth, Lange, Kalisch, and others); or judged, sc. it, i.e. mine affliction, in the sense of pronouncing an opinion or verdict on it, as in 1Chronicles 12:17 (Keil, Murphy); or proved, sc. it, viz. that he had seen my affliction (Dathius, Poole); or decided, sc. betwixt us, as in 1Chronicles 12:37 (Furst, Gesenius) thee yester-night.

The Voice

**[Jacob:]** For 20 years, I have been in your household. I served you 14 of those years in return for your two daughters, and six years for your flock. And you have altered my payment 10 times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God knows my plight and how hard I've labored for you, and it was He who reprimanded you last night!

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

- Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...this is to me twenty years in your house, I served you fourteen years with two of your daughters and six years with your flocks and you changed my payment ten times, unless the powers of my father, the powers of Avraham <sup>[Father lifted]</sup> and the awe of Yits'hhaq <sup>[He laughs]</sup> existed for me given that now is an emptiness, you sent me my affliction and the toil of my palms, Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> saw and he convicted last night,...
- Concordant Literal Version This, for me, was twenty years in your household. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and vary did you my hire at ten countings. Unless the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham, and the Awe of Isaac had come to be with me, then now you would have sent me away empty-handed. The humiliation and the weariness of my palms the Elohim sees, and correcting you was He yesternight.
- Emphasized Bible* This, hath been my lot twenty years in thy house,—I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, And six years for thy sheep—And thou didst change my wages ten times:— But that the God of my father—The God of Abraham, and the Dread of Isaac—Proved to he mine, Surely even now, empty, hadst thou let me go? My humiliation and the wearying toil of my hands, God had seen, And therefore gave sentence last night!

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Modern English Version | I have been twenty years in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, surely you would have sent me away empty now. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.”                 |
| NASB                   | These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night.” |
| Young’s Updated LT     | This <i>is</i> to me twenty years in your house: I have served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock; and you changed my hire ten times. Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been for me, surely now empty you had sent me away; my affliction and the labour of my hands has God seen, and reproves yesterday.”                 |

**The gist of this passage:** Jacob says that this has been his life for the past 20 years—14 of them working for Laban’s daughters and the other 6 working for his flock. Jacob credits God with overseeing it all and crediting Him for giving Jacob justice, as Laban (presumably) would have sent him away with nothing.

41-42

| <b>Genesis 31:41a</b>  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong’s #                        |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]   | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>   | masculine singular demonstrative adjective   | Strong’s #2088, 2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                                 | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>     | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix                     | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #510                 |
| ‘es <sup>e</sup> rîym (עֲשָׂרִים) [pronounced ‘ges <sup>e</sup> -REEM] | <i>twenty</i>   | plural numeral adjective   | Strong’s #6242<br>BDB #797                |
| shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW]                                  | <i>year</i>   | feminine singular noun   | Strong’s #8141<br>BDB #1040               |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                       | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity   | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #88                  |
| bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced BAH-yith]                                  | <i>house, residence; household, habitation as well as inward</i>                                    | masculine singular noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix                      | Strong’s #1004<br>BDB #108                |
| ‘âbad (עָבַד) [pronounced ‘gaw <sup>b</sup> -VAHD]                     | <i>to work, to serve, to labor; to be a slave to</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong’s #5647<br>BDB #712                |

**Translation:** This has been my life [lit., *this to me*]: [for] the 20 years I have served you... Jacob has spent a great deal of his most productive years working for Laban. He surely understands what he has gained, and he will state that here.

Laban nowhere disputes Jacob's hard work; so we may take Jacob's testimony here as an accurate self-appraisal.

| Genesis 31:41b  |   |  |                             |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
| ʾarbaʿ (עָבָרָא) [pronounced ahr <sup>e</sup> -BAHQ]            | <i>four</i>   | masculine singular noun; numeral   | Strong's #702<br>BDB #916   |
| ʾâsar (אֲסַר) [pronounced ġaw-SAWR]                             | <i>ten; –teen</i> [resulting in numbers 11–19]  | masculine/feminine singular noun   | Strong's #6240<br>BDB #797  |
| shânâh (שָׁנָה) [pronounced shaw-NAW]                           | <i>year</i>   | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #8141<br>BDB #1040 |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]                | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88    |
| sh <sup>e</sup> nêy (שְׁנַיִם) [pronounced sh <sup>en</sup> -Ā] | <i>two, two of, a pair of, a duo of; both of</i>  | dual numeral construct   | Strong's #8147<br>BDB #1040 |
| bath (בָּת) [pronounced bahth]                                  | <i>daughter; village</i>  | feminine plural noun with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123  |

**Translation:** ...—14 for your two daughters... He worked for 14 years for Laban's two daughters. I don't think that he is stating this with bitterness at all, but just as a matter of fact. You will recall the Laban slipped Leah into Jacob's tent on their wedding night, when he was expecting Rachel, the woman he loved.

Jacob is unloading on Laban, but he does not take this particular problem any further. He does not say, "And you gave me Leah to marry, when you know I had chosen Rachel!" So, why doesn't he? Now is the time to unload, why not begin at the beginning? Here's why—Leah and Rachel are right there. He is married to both women and he takes full and complete responsibility for both of them. There is no complaining about this particular thing, as he wants and needs both women on his side. His line now consists of sons of Leah and sons of Rachel (and sons of their personal maids). Jacob cannot make it seem as if he is bitter about that. After all, most of his children were born of Leah.

Is there a spiritual dimension here? Does Jacob realize that God has begun to fulfill His promises through Jacob's children? At this point, it is hard to tell. I don't think that Jacob fully appreciates that until he is in Egypt at the end of his life.

| Genesis 31:41c  |   |                           |                             |
|---|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology          | BDB and Strong's #          |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction    | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251   |
| shêsh (שֵׁשׁ) [pronounced shaysh]                               | <i>six</i>  | masculine form of numeral | Strong's #8337<br>BDB #995  |
| shânîym (שָׁנַיִם) [pronounced shaw-NEEM]                       | <i>years</i>  | feminine plural noun      | Strong's #8141<br>BDB #1040 |

| Genesis 31:41c                                   |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                             | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ] | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88   |
| tsôḥ (צֹהַן) [pronounced tzohn]                  | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>   | feminine singular<br>collective noun with the<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine<br>singular suffix | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |

**Translation:** ...and 6 for your flock. Jacob continued to work. We previously discussed how his wages were determined; and this was changed from time to time.

Certain animals of the flock would belong to Jacob, as has already been discussed.

Laban is angry about this, but he has no reason to be. He accepted Jacob's original agreement, and then he unilaterally changed it. But, no matter what he did, God overruled him. Laban wanted more animals to be born to his flock to belong to him, but God continued to give a significant percentage<sup>688</sup> to Jacob.

Interestingly enough, we are never actually told the actual percentage born to Jacob and born to Laban. I would say at least 50%, but that is an educated guess. Although 100% going to Jacob would really make the point, let me suggest that God continued to allow Laban to be blessed by association.

Men, because of their own sin nature, often do not recognize what is going on around them. Laban already knows that he is blessed because God blesses him through Jacob; but, because of his own personal greed, he has pushed Jacob away from him. Purely on the basis of a desire to increase his own wealth and the wealth of his sons, Laban should have been kind toward Jacob and kept to their original agreement. When his sons began to look at Jacob with envy, Laban should have told them that it is God who blessed them, but he did not.

I want to remind you how this chapter began: Gen. 31:1–2 **Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, "Jacob has taken all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has gained all this wealth." And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him with favor as before.** (ESV). Who is listed first? Laban's sons. Let me suggest that his sons—who are teenagers—are impacting the way that Laban thinks. They complain so that Jacob can hear; so there is no doubt that Laban hears their complaints.

What Laban ought to have done is set his sons straight. "God is blessing us through Jacob, and your anger and envy will make things

That feeling when you're overthrowing capitalism but just can't resist taking a selfie on your iPhone 7



<sup>688</sup> We are never actually told the percentage. I would say at least 50%, but that is an educated guess.

worse.” But he does not do that. Jacob looks at Laban and he can see himself that Laban no longer likes or appreciates him.

Whereas, a friendship and an alliance with Jacob would work to his benefit, Laban and his sons allow the thinking of sin call the shots. They are doing the exact opposite of what would have benefitted them. They do not see the irony in what they do and say.

This reminded me of this supporter of socialism, who is fighting capitalism by rioting against it; and he preserves that moment using his iPhone to take a selfie. His sinfulness and his total lack of awareness uses his iPhone (a product of capitalism) to record his fight against capitalism. **Using iPhone to Record You Overthrowing Capitalism** (a photograph); taken from [Know Your Meme](#); accessed November 6, 2017. He is filled with sin and anger; and has no self-awareness about what he is doing. He was organized by using the internet, possibly using his facebook page or an email blast; and he records it on his iPhone, all of which are a result of capitalism.

Since most readers here will not know this, there was a time when the United States government was in charge of our phones. I don't recall if this was done through state or federal agencies, but it seemed logical for something for the government to control. The phone was under government control for a very long time. The invention of the telephone is credited to Alexander Graham Bell, in 1876 (although it is much **more complicated than that**). AT&T takes over telephones in America in 1889. Telephones spread all over the United States (as they did all over the world); and there were two great innovations between 1920 and 1969—the princess phone (a design change) and touch tone telephones. Eventually, AT&T became a large number of private companies (it completes the divestiture of its local operating companies in 1984); and then, innovation began. Few young people know this, but the government owned your phone, and when you ended your phone service due to a move, you also turned in your phone. After that, phones became private property and free enterprise began to design, develop and sell phones. The result is the amazing iPhones of today (and their competitors, of course).

| Genesis 31:41d  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                                   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| châlaph (חָלַף) [pronounced <i>chaw-LAHF</i> ]                            | <i>to change, to interchange, to alter; to cause to revive; to sprout forth</i>     | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect            | Strong's #2498<br>BDB #322 |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                                      | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>                              | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object            | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| mas <sup>e</sup> kôreth (מַשְׂכֹּרֶת) [pronounced <i>mahs-KOH-rehth</i> ] | <i>wages; reward</i>  | feminine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #4909<br>BDB #969 |
| 'asârâh (אַשָּׂרָה) [pronounced <i>gah-saw-RAW</i> ]                      | <i>ten</i>  | feminine numeral   | Strong's #6235<br>BDB #796 |
| mônîym (מִנְיָם) [pronounced <i>moh-NEEM</i> ]                            | <i>times; parts, portions</i>   | masculine plural noun  | Strong's #4489<br>BDB #584 |

Recall that Jacob told his wives this back in v. 7.

**Translation:** *Yet you have changed my wages 10 times.* One of the things which particularly has Jacob upset is, he served faithfully, and yet Laban, over and over, adjusted to terms to Laban's benefit. Whether *10 times* is the actual number of times, or whether that is an exaggeration, we do not know. But Laban changed his wages quite a number of times, and always with his own benefit in mind.

Have you ever been mad at someone (or had any strong feeling of any sort towards someone), and you have these imaginary conversations with them in your head. Once in a great while, you have a chance to express what you are thinking to such a person. That is what happens here for Jacob. The results are not always good. Here, however, I believe that Jacob makes a series of valid points.

Remember that Jacob has been stewing about his situation for a long time and he has had seven days of travel to think about what he would say if he ever ran into Laban again. You know that during those seven days, he rehearsed parts of this speech over and over again. We don't even know if Laban is even listening. He is concerned about his household deities, which hold the key to what will be done with his inheritance<sup>689</sup> (which can be a carrot held out in front of someone or a club to beat someone with).

Jacob lists the dedicated service that he has provided and along side this list names where Laban has come up wanting as his supervisor. He saw to it that the animals in Laban's flock were well-taken care of so that none of them had problems giving birth. He did not kill those animals important in breeding for a feast. When an animal was killed, Jacob did not take this animal to Laban for credit. He buried the animal (or ate of it) and absorbed the loss.

Jacob served Laban seven years each for his two daughters, one of whom he did not want (although, he does not mention that here—by this time it doesn't matter); and he continued to serve Laban for another six years, although during this period of time, Laban continued to dink with his wages. That is, they would agree upon one method of payment, then Laban would change his mind. Then they would try another method of payment and Laban would change his mind again. These weren't raises by any means. Each time his wages were changed, it was Laban feeling as though he got the short end of the stick so he tried to extort more production from and less payment to Jacob.

**Genesis 31:41** *And I have been twenty years in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six for your flocks. And you have changed my wages ten times.*

*House* here actually refers to a *compound*. They probably lived on the same land, but all in their own tents (as we have already seen—v. 33). There is no telling from the text how close or how far away these tents were from one another.

It clear seems that Laban is a shifty, dishonest and greedy boss. However, he seems to have moderated himself, to some degree, during the time that he recognized that his blessing from God came through Jacob. However, he has allowed his own sinfulness to be influenced by his sons.

Jacob was with Laban for 20 years. Although we only witnessed the negotiation of wages once, Laban reworked the wages 10 times for Jacob (or, many times). Jacob was to keep all of the flock who were born not all white. Once a large number of the flock were born that were not all white, Laban changed it to this type or to that type; and God would continue to bless Jacob under those circumstances. So, if Jacob's wages were to be the spotted newborn, God would see to it that there would be a large number of spotted newborn.

Jacob's goofy scheme with almond branches put in front of the animals when they were feeding had nothing to do with it. This was typical of Jacob's approach. God was there and God blessed Jacob in spite of his own actions. As we have seen over and over again, what Jacob did by way of his personal schemes never contributed anything to his blessing.

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<sup>689</sup> This is one theory.

Remember that (1) Jacob took advantage of Esau when he was hungry, and traded a meal for his birthright; (2) he deceived his own father in order to receive the blessing meant for Esau; and (3) he came up with some scheme to affect the outcome of the breeding of his animals. (4) And now, Jacob has sneaked away from Laban. These are examples of human works; and, as you can see, they contribute absolutely nothing to the plan of God; nor did those things cause anything to accrue to Jacob's personal benefit. Jacob was *never* better off as the result of any of his schemes. He did not gain even the smallest thing by means of his own schemes. Nevertheless, God remained faithful to Jacob (and to Abraham), despite Jacob's scheming. None of Jacob's schemes resulted in him being better off than before; only God's blessing saw to that. In v. 42, Jacob will acknowledge God's hand in his blessing.

**Application:** Human works contribute nothing to the plan of God. God's plan moves forward, regardless of what we do.

Most people have had the experience of putting a tremendous amount of effort into doing this or that; and then realizing that, at the end, all this effort was all for naught. This describes much of what Jacob has done.

Both men have profited by their relationship. Both men will walk away from their association the better for it. Laban's livestock was increased dramatically; Jacob's life was improved dramatically. Laban gave Jacob a peaceful, guided existence and Jacob gave Laban 20 years of faithful service. Jacob comes away with great wealth and a very large family. Both men should be thanking one another, yet neither man appears to recognize this.

Although Jacob has shown some spiritual growth, both men could stand to develop some genuine gratitude. One thing that I have noticed with some people is, they ought to recognize that they have been greatly blessed in their lives (which is true of many people that I know), and yet, they do not feel blessed, they are not satisfied and they are not grateful for their lives. This means that they have no capacity for life (which is provided for believers through Bible doctrine). I could go item by item with these people, one blessing after another; and yet, they do not see it.

A nice example of this would be the angry **riot hipster**, using the iPhone to record his opposition to capitalism. He has absolutely no appreciation for the benefits of capitalism despite making use of them every day. I write this in 2017 and China and Russia have both been communist states for a long time (although they are loosening up somewhat). Tell me the great car built by China or built by Russia that you wish that you owned. Tell me any technological thing which is built by Russia or China that you desperately want to have. Both nations, for decades, have depended upon western technology and invention, which they will then get a hold of and copy. What is the difference? Capitalism versus communism. Yet Antifa, anarchists, and other anti-capitalism groups have absolutely no appreciation for the products of capitalism which they use each and every day.

I am a big fan of applesauce; and when I go to my capitalist store, I appreciate that I can choose between 3 brands (or more) of applesauce, each of which produces at least 2 or 3 kinds of applesauce; and it is sold by these companies in a variety of sizes. I appreciate that; it gives me a choice and I recognize that as a good thing; a blessing if you will.

It is freedom and free enterprise which lead to innovation and invention. Do you use a cell phone designed in China or Cuba? Do you drive a car manufactured in Russia or in Venezuela? Is there anything in your home which was invented, designed or innovated in any communist/socialist country? This is another reason why we do not want socialized, government-run healthcare; innovation and invention will gradually disappear.

I have been a believer for about 45 years and on doctrine nearly that entire time. I have a great appreciation for my life and my freedom and all that God has given me. I would like to continue my work of writing commentary for a very long time; but I also realize that there are logical limits to this (I will only live so long). But I have had a wonderful and blessed life, and Bible doctrine has given me the ability to appreciate all that God has done for me. Similarly, I recognize that when it comes to whatever problems I may have in life, most of them are related to things which I do. Like pretty much every other person on this planet, I am my own worst enemy.

Now, what Jacob can rightfully stand upon is his work ethic and his faithfulness to Laban as his boss. He is even able to testify to God's faithfulness in his own life.

| Genesis 31:42a   |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| lûwlêy (לוֹלַי) [pronounced loo-LAY]   | <i>otherwise, except that, if not (for), unless</i>   | preposition   | Strong's #3884<br>BDB #530 |
| This is not a common preposition; but this is the first time it is found in the Bible. |   |   |                            |
| ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]   | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural construct  | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]   | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3         |
| ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]   | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural construct  | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| ʾAb <sup>e</sup> râhâm (אֲבִרָאָם) [pronounced ahb <sup>ve</sup> -raw-HAWM]            | <i>father of a multitude, chief of a multitude; transliterated Abraham</i>                            | masculine singular proper noun  | Strong's #85<br>BDB #4     |

**Translation:** *If not for the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham...* Jacob closes out with the reason why he has been properly blessed, according to his works. Jacob was held up by the God of Isaac, the God of Abraham. This is the God Who spoke to Jacob when he was coming to Paddan-Aram. Jacob is saying, if not for this God...and then he will add to this thought.

This, by the way, shows spiritual growth and spiritual insight on the part of Jacob. He is not spiritually mature but he has certainly enjoyed some spiritual growth over the past 20 years.

| Genesis 31:42b  |   |                                |                                 |
|---|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology               | BDB and Strong's #              |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced weh]                       | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>     | simple wâw conjunction         | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251       |
| pachad (פָּחַד) [pronounced PAH-khahd]  | <i>fear, terror, dread, a thing which is feared, that which is feared</i> | masculine singular construct   | Strong's #6343<br>BDB #808      |
| Apart from the book of Job, this is the first occurrence of this word in Scripture. |   |                                |                                 |
| Yis <sup>e</sup> châq (יִשְׁחַק) [pronounced yihs <sup>e</sup> -KHAWK]              | <i>he laughs; laughing; transliterated Isaac</i>                          | masculine singular proper noun | Strong's #3327 & #3446 BDB #850 |

## Genesis 31:42b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| E. W. Bullinger: <i>Figure of speech Metonymy (of Adjunct)...fear put for the God Whom Jacob worshipped.</i> <sup>690</sup>   |  |  |                            |
| Dr. Bob Utley: <i>This phrase "the fear of Isaac" is unique to this chapter and is used twice (cf. Genesis 31:53). It may refer to the Deity Isaac respects or awes. An American archeologist, Albright, says that the word "fear" is related to the use of "kinsmen" in the Cognate languages (Aramaic, Arabic, and Ugaritic) and should be translated the "kinsmen of Isaac," another way of expressing "the God of my fathers." However, this is uncertain.</i> <sup>691</sup> |  |  |                            |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]  | to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass                      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                             | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]  | to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

**Translation:** ...and the fear-respect of Isaac being mine,... Jacob was also taught the worship of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, which was often referred to as *fear*. This did not mean that believers of that era hid and covered in corners and were easily startled; but that they thought about, concentrated on, respected and feared God.

This tells us that Isaac did teach his son Jacob the fear/respect of Y<sup>e</sup>howah. So, even though the Bible paints a portrait where it appears that Jacob spent all of his time with his mother; and Esau spent all of his time with Isaac; that was not the case. The parents did have favorites; but Isaac apparently taught the worship and respect of God to both of his sons.

Genesis 31:42 "If it were not for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the teaching of my father Isaac about this God, you would have found a way to send me away empty-handed. However, God has seen both my affliction and the work of my hands; consequently, when He came to you in that dream, He resolved our conflict."

### The Fear of Isaac (many commentators)

The Kaplan translation made a brilliant observation here: *Since Isaac was still alive, Jacob would not call Him 'God of Isaac.'*<sup>692</sup>

The New Simplified Bible had an interesting take on this: *If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, out of respect for Isaac, had not been with me, you would have sent me away empty-handed by now.*

<sup>690</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:42.

<sup>691</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:42.

<sup>692</sup> From [Bible.ort.org](http://Bible.ort.org); accessed November 20, 2016.

## The Fear of Isaac (many commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett makes the assertion: *"The God (Elohim) of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac."* Each patriarch had his own description of Yahweh. To Abraham he was 'the God', the Almighty (El Shaddai), because of what he had done for him and promised to him, to Isaac he was 'the Fear', the One to be held in awe. Isaac never forgot his rare experiences of the manifested presence of God. (The alternative translation 'kinsman' has been suggested which would emphasise his close relationship with his God). To Jacob He was 'the Mighty One' (49:24), possibly partly because of this incident. He had protected Jacob when he was defenceless. We can compare with this how easily Abraham can see Yahweh as El Elyon (14:22) which demonstrates that Yahweh can be given different titles.<sup>693</sup> I am going to take this under advisement and think about it. It does make sense that the different patriarchs may have had a different way of referring to God.

The Cambridge Bible: *the Fear of Isaac*] Cf. Genesis 31:53. A remarkable phrase, denoting the personal God who was the object of Isaac's worship. Cf. Isaiah 8:13, "Neither fear you [all] their fear. The Lord of Hosts ... let him be your fear." It clearly shows not that Isaac was regarded as a deity; but that He whom Isaac feared was the true God of Jacob.<sup>694</sup>

Clarke: *The fear of Isaac - It is strange that Jacob should say, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, when both words are meant of the same Being. The reason perhaps was this; Abraham was long since dead, and God was his unalienable portion for ever. Isaac was yet alive in a state of probation, living in the fear of God, not exempt from the danger of falling; therefore God is said to be his fear, not only the object of his religious worship in a general way, but that holy and just God before whom he was still working out his salvation with fear and trembling, fear lest he should fall, and trembling lest he should offend.*<sup>695</sup>

Gill: *One and the same God is meant, who was the God of his father Isaac, and before him the God of Abraham, and now the fear of Isaac, whom he feared and served with reverence and godly fear, being at this present time a worshipper of him: now Jacob suggests, that unless his father's God had been on his side, and had protected and preserved him, as well as before blessed and prospered him.*<sup>696</sup>

Matthew Poole: *The fear of Isaac, i.e. the God whom my father Isaac worships with reverence and godly fear, as appears by comparing Genesis 31:53. The act is here put for the object, as it frequently is; and particularly God is called our fear, Isaiah 8:13. And fear is one of God's names amongst the rabbins. He calls him not Isaac's God, but his fear, because Isaac was yet alive, and in the state of probation, and served God with fear and trembling: see Genesis 27:33. The Jews observe, that God is not called the God of any particular person, as of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, till after their death.*<sup>697</sup>

Trapp: *The fear of Isaac.] God, the proper object of fear; whence he is absolutely called "The fear". {Psalm 76:11} "Bring presents to fear"; that is, to him, to whom all dread is due.*<sup>698</sup>

Whedon: *Jacob speaks of God as the God of his father, intimating that he thought himself unworthy to be thus regarded, but was beloved for his father's sake. He calls him the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac: for Abraham was dead, and gone to that world where there is no fear; but Isaac was yet alive, sanctifying the Lord in his heart as his fear and his dread.*<sup>699</sup>

<sup>693</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:36–42.

<sup>694</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:42.

<sup>695</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:42.

<sup>696</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:42.

<sup>697</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:42.

<sup>698</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:42.

<sup>699</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:42.

## The Fear of Isaac (many commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The expression “the fear of Isaac” refers to the fact that Isaac reverentially worshipped God and had a relationship and close intimate fellowship with God who has ruled in Jacob’s favor.*<sup>700</sup>

Is Jacob inadvertently establishing a relationship between the fear of Isaac (Who is God) and his fear of Laban?

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

In every instance, Jacob credits God with blessing him. Even though I would certainly not yet credit Jacob with being in spiritual maturity, still he has grown some. He has worked hard for Laban; and he has been an honest and faithful worker. Laban has prospered by his relationship with Jacob. Further, Jacob recognizes that it is God, and not his own schemes, Who has prospered him. This is certainly a more spiritually mature Jacob than the man who came to Haran with nothing 20 years previous, right after an attempt to deceive his own father.

### Genesis 31:42c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong’s #          |
|--|--|---|-----------------------------|
| kîy (כי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]  | <i>when, that, for, because, at that time, which, what time</i>  | explanatory conjunction; preposition  | Strong’s #3588<br>BDB #471  |
| ‘attâh (הַתַּע) [pronounced <i>ghaht-TAWH</i> ]  | <i>now, at this time, already</i>  | adverb of time  | Strong’s #6258<br>BDB #773  |
| Together, kîy ‘attâh (יַכְהַתַּע) [pronounced <i>kee-ghaht-TAWH</i> ] mean <i>and now, but now; for in this case, for then; and after a protasis, surely then, indeed, indeed now.</i> |  |   |                             |
| rêyqâm (רַקְיָם) [pronounced <i>ray-KAWM</i> ]   | <i>empty, empty-handed; in vain, to no purpose; without cause, without purpose, rashly</i>   | adverb  | Strong’s #7387<br>BDB #938  |
| This adverb is only found 18 times in the Word of God. Apart from the book of Job, this is the first time this adverb occurs.  |  |   |                             |
| shâlach (שָׁלַח) [pronounced <i>shaw-LAKH</i> ]  | <i>to send, to send off, to send away, to dismiss, to give over, to cast out, to let go, to set free, to shoot forth [branches], to shoot [an arrow]</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel perfect with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong’s #7971<br>BDB #1018 |
| This is in contrast to v. 27, where Laban speaks of the manner in which he wanted to send Jacob away.  |  |   |                             |

**Translation:** ...you would have sent me away empty-handed. If it were not for those things, Laban would have sent Jacob away with nothing. This is to be seen as being in contrast with the way that Laban said he wanted to send Jacob away.

Genesis 31:41–42c This is what my life has been under you: I have served you for 20 years. I worked 14 years for your daughters and an additional 6 years for some of your sheep and cattle. Yet, throughout this time, you arbitrarily changed my wages 10 times. If it were not for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the teaching of my father Isaac about this God, you would have found a way to send me away empty-handed.

<sup>700</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 505); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Jacob tells why he secretly left (commentators/discussion)

J. C. Gray: *[Y]et [Jacob] could not go away openly. Laban would have hindered him, or have prevented his carrying away the whole of his property (Genesis 31:42).*<sup>701</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *This response bears all the earmarks of truth, being exactly the protest against outrageous injustice that the situation demanded. Note that Jacob in no way toned down the injustices previously reported to his wives, but that he expanded and elaborated them in the presence of Laban.*<sup>702</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *[Jacob] got his college degree at the college of hard knocks. Uncle Laban was president and dean of the school. At graduation, this boy Jacob gave a pitiful valedictorian address. It took him twenty years to get his degree, and he certainly worked for it. Old Laban changed the requirements ten times. Every two years, Jacob had a new contract with Uncle Laban, and it was always to Jacob's disadvantage. This was the experience of this man.*<sup>703</sup>

I believe that this was Jacob's actual concern. I think that Jacob left in secret primarily to hold onto the animals which were rightfully his. Jacob was more concerned with losing his wealth; and by leaving secretly, he thinks himself better able to do that. Bear in mind, that is speculation on my part.<sup>704</sup>

Jacob's claim that he worried that Laban would keep his daughters was a false concern, in my opinion. First of all, God is going to give the land of Canaan to Jacob and his descendants. Well, that cannot happen if Jacob's family is living in Paddan-aram. Secondly, it would be illogical for Laban to take back his daughters and grandchildren. That would be a massive cost to him, and without any real benefit (he cannot sell his daughters again to marriage; no one would marry them).

On the other hand, Laban and his sons were mad that Jacob had so much by way of blessing; so it is realistic to assume that Laban may try to take some of that back. But, Jacob is not putting 2 and 2 together here. God gave him this blessing. Can Laban take away the blessing which God gave to Jacob in the first place? You do the math.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. makes an interesting observation: *Jacob's experience in Paddan Aram with Laban foreshadows his descendants, the nation of Israel experience in Egypt under Pharaoh. Jacob's experience of servitude for the hard taskmaster Laban and the blessing he received while in service to Laban as well as his deliverance from this servitude by God anticipates and foreshadows the experience his descendants, the nation of Israel, will experience while in Egypt under Pharaoh.*<sup>705</sup>

Wenstrom continues: *Just as Jacob served a cruel and hard master, Laban, so Jacob's descendants, the nation of Israel will serve Pharaoh of Egypt. Just as Jacob was blessed by God during this time of servitude to Laban so Israel will be blessed during their time of servitude in Egypt. Just as Jacob was commanded by God to leave Laban and was thus delivered from his servitude so Israel was commanded by God to leave Egypt and was thus delivered from the hardship of Egypt and the hard taskmaster, Pharaoh.*<sup>706</sup>

<sup>701</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22–42 (Slightly edited).

<sup>702</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>703</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) accessed March 10, 2019 (Ch. 32).

<sup>704</sup> Jacob has given two reasons why he sneaked away: Laban would repossess his wives and Laban would send him away with nothing. Since the former would have been of no actual benefit to Laban, I reject it as a real possibility. The latter is certainly a possibility.

<sup>705</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (pp. 505–506); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>706</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 506); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Genesis 31:42d

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                    | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| 'ôñîy (עָנִי) [pronounced <i>gon-EE</i> ]                                   | <i>affliction, poverty, humility, humiliation</i>  | masculine singular substantive with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #6040<br>BDB #777 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וְ, or וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]    | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| 'êth (אֵת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object                    | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i> ]   | <i>hand; figuratively for strength, power, control</i>   | feminine singular construct  | Strong's #3027<br>BDB #388 |
| y <sup>e</sup> gîya <sup>c</sup> (עֲגִיבָה) [pronounced <i>yehg-EE-ag</i> ] | <i>toil, work, product, product of one's toil, that which is produced; acquired property [as a result of work]</i> | masculine singular construct   | Strong's #3018<br>BDB #388 |

This noun only occurs 16 times in the Scriptures. Besides the book of Job, this is the first occurrence of this word.

|                                      |  |  |                            |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| kaph (כַּף) [pronounced <i>kaf</i> ] | <i>palm, hollow or flat of the hand, sole of the foot; bowl, spoon</i> | feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #3709<br>BDB #496 |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|

These nouns are tied together because of the fact that they are concave.

I do not know if the plural changes the meaning of this word in any way.

|  |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| râ'âh (רָאָה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ] | <i>to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to observe; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906 |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|

**Translation:** Indeed, Elohim has seen [both] my affliction and the work of my hands;... Jacob knows that God has been there and God has observed his affliction and humility in working for Laban. God also took note of all the work that Jacob did.

The word that many translate *humility* here is 'ôñîy (עָנִי) [pronounced *gon-EE*], which means, *affliction, poverty, humility, humiliation*. So, I do not think that Jacob is saying, "I am humble; I am grace orientated." This is more like he is saying that he is overworked, afflicted and humiliated by Laban.

Jacob is saying that there was more to it than simple sight or omniscience. He is not saying only that God was paying attention to what was happening.

H. C. Leupold: *In true faith Jacob confesses God to be the Disposer of the affairs of men and the Judge of evildoers. At the same time Jacob charges Laban with having been ready, but for God's intervention, to send his son-in-law away empty-handed (reqam).*<sup>707</sup>

Matthew Poole: *God has seen my affliction, with compassion and intention of good to me for it. God's seeing is oft used for his relieving and helping, as Genesis 16:13 29:32 Exodus 3:7,9.*<sup>708</sup>

It was God, and not Jacob's goofy plans to affect the breeding of the sheep which prospered the animals which were to belong to Jacob. Even Jacob finally recognizes this. He never speaks of his breeding schemes ever again. We saw *what* Jacob did in order to influence the breeding of his animals; and we discussed how that was simply energy of the flesh on Jacob's part. He never speaks of it again, because it is energy of the flesh. What God does is permanent; what we do by our own works is not.

| Genesis 31:42e                       |   |   |                            |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                 | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (וַ) [pronounced wah]     | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| yâkach (יָכַח) [pronounced yaw-KAHK] | <i>when there is a dispute involved: to hammer out a decision or an agreement to resolve a conflict, to render a decision; to argue, to dispute</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect | Strong's #3198<br>BDB #406 |
| 'emesh (עֵמֶשׁ) [pronounced EH-mesh] | <i>yesterday, last night; figuratively recently; night, evening</i>   | adverb  | Strong's #570<br>BDB #57   |

**Translation:** ...consequently, He resolved [our conflict] last night [when He spoke to you in a dream].” Jacob leaves this thought unfinished, allowing his Uncle Laban to complete it in his mind. This is known as ellipsis. Jacob and Laban are in conflict. The verb used here is a word of judgment, where someone reviews a conflict and makes a judgment. Jacob is saying that, when God came to Laban the night before, this was to indicate God's judgment on the matter. “You experienced it; you talked to God. Therefore, you know God's thinking on this matter.” This is what is more or less left out of the text due to ellipsis.

Genesis 31:42 “If it were not for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the teaching of my father Isaac about this God, you would have found a way to send me away empty-handed. However, God has seen both my affliction and the work of my hands; consequently, when He came to you in that dream, He resolved our conflict.”

### “God settled the matter when He spoke to you” (various commentators)

Gill: [I]n a dream, charging him to say neither good nor evil to Jacob, which he himself had confessed, Genesis 31:29.<sup>709</sup>

<sup>707</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>708</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:42 (slightly edited).

<sup>709</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:42.

## “God settled the matter when He spoke to you” (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *By the warning given to Laban, God pronounced sentence upon the matter between Jacob and Laban, condemning the course which Laban had pursued, and still intended to pursue, towards Jacob; but not on that account sanctioning all that Jacob had done to increase his own possessions, still less confirming Jacob's assertion that the vision mentioned by Jacob (Genesis 31:11, Genesis 31:12) was a revelation from God. But as Jacob had only met cunning with cunning, deceit with deceit, Laban had no right to punish him for what he had done.*<sup>710</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *Jacob declares that God has seen his affliction and his hard work and has rendered judgment in favor of Jacob. At the end of v.42, Jacob add that God has rendered judgment against you last night. Literally in Hebrew, Jacob says God rebuked you yesterday. Jacob is referring to the dream God gave Laban telling him not to speak good or bad to Jacob. Jacob is interpreting that dream to be a sign that God is working for Jacob to protect him.*<sup>711</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In Genesis 31:36-42, Jacob has presented evidence that the real thief in his relationship with Laban is not himself but rather Laban. Jacob states that even though Laban has been unjust in his treatment of him, God has not and has blessed him despite Laban's unscrupulous behavior. Even though Laban had not rewarded him for his hard work, God had done so. God overruled Laban's intention to send Jacob away empty handed.*<sup>712</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Jacob boldly closes with the assertion that God had finally taken a hand in the matter and reproved Laban.*<sup>713</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Jacob concluded with a testimony that God had been with him, and that He had seen his diligent labor as well as the unscrupulous way in which Laban had dealt with him. Jacob's increasing prosperity had been due to the Lord's blessings, and now God had confirmed all this by His sharp rebuke to Laban the night before. Jacob pointed out that the God who had protected and intervened for him was the God who had led Abraham away from Haran in the first place.*<sup>714</sup>

Jacob is saying, “God spoke to you; you have admitted that. Therefore, that should be the end of this matter.”

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

The College Press Bible Study sums up Jacob's strong response: *Jacob's pent-up emotions for years now breaks forth boldly and bluntly with mounting wrath. He challenges Laban to set forth before all their kinsmen whatsoever of his own he may have found in the course of his search. The kinsmen could serve as arbiters to render a fair public verdict in the presence of representatives of both parties to the altercation. “This challenge must have embarrassed even thick-skinned old Laban.” “Although he [Jacob] had given Laban permission to make the search, it was because he thought that one of the servants might have stolen the teraphim. Now that they were not found, he suspected that the story of the theft was merely a pretext to enable him to make a general search” (SC, 184).*

The College Press Bible Study continues: *[So now,] Jacob pours out his own recriminations: (1) the hardships of his twenty years' service, and (2) the attempts to defraud him of his hire. All the submerged suffering and frustration for twenty years now comes to the surface. First of all he was deceived about Leah and Rachel. He had not been in the home of his uncle Laban a month before he was put to work (Genesis 29:15). His industriousness had been unfaltering. His wages had been changed ten times, and we may be sure they were not raised each time. “Jacob's twenty years with*

<sup>710</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:42.

<sup>711</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>712</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 505); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>713</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>714</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; pp. 488–489.

Laban had taught him that God's man cannot live by cleverness." "The children of this world are . . . wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8).<sup>715</sup>

Again, let me suggest that Jacob, for the past 6 years and particularly the past 7 or 10 days, has been thinking about Laban and all of the things he should have said to him; and now he had the chance to unload. That is what we have been studying.

Gen. 31:36–37 Then Jacob became angry and berated Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? For you have felt through all my goods; what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.

Gen 31:38–41 These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

Gen 31:42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night." (ESV)

### Jacob is blessed and Laban is cursed (a discussion)

Verse-by-verse Ministries makes some good observations at this point: *Notice though that Jacob has made a fundamental mistake in understanding why God did what he did. Jacob believes that he is prevailing in this struggle with Laban because he was worked hard and done the right things. And since Laban has done bad things, God is passing judgment against Laban. Is this how God's favor works? Is God favoring Jacob because Jacob is a man who does the right things? And has God chosen to leave Laban at a disadvantage because he is a dishonest man?*<sup>716</sup>

God has an entire plan laid out for the sons of Israel and He has laid out the overall plan to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All of them know about this plan. What is Jacob treated as he is and Laban treated as he is? God's plan moves forward with Jacob and Jacob's sons. God's plan is going nowhere with Laban.

Laban's plan was all for Laban and nothing for Jacob. Jacob was prospered only because God allowed him to be prospered. God, being a righteous judge, gave Jacob what was due. You can tell that Jacob had been holding all of this in for a long time and probably appreciates the chance to let fly.

God was on Jacob's side. Matthew Henry: *The care of providence for the protection of injured innocence, Genesis 31:42. God took cognizance of the wrong done to Jacob, and repaid him whom Laban would otherwise have sent empty away, and rebuked Laban, who otherwise would have swallowed him up. Note, God is the patron of the oppressed; and those who are wronged and yet not ruined, cast down and yet not destroyed, must acknowledge him in their preservation and give him the glory of it. Observe, 1. Jacob speaks of god as the God of his father, intimating that he thought himself unworthy to be thus regarded, but was beloved for the father's sake. 2. He calls him the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac; for Abraham was dead, and had gone to that world where perfect love casts out fear; but Isaac was yet alive, sanctifying the Lord in his heart, as his fear and his dread.*<sup>717</sup>

<sup>715</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; The Altercation, (Genesis 31:26–42).

<sup>716</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

<sup>717</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:36–42.

How do we know that God's attitude towards Jacob is all grace? Simple: Rachel stole her father's idols, which is wrong. This is a place where Laban is right and Rachel is wrong. Then Rachel lies to her father about her period. Yet God let's this go. Why? Grace. Rachel is bound to Jacob; and her son Joseph has a great destiny.<sup>718</sup>

This does not, in any way, condone Rachel's stealing. Will her early death be related to this? There are too many unknowns at this point. We have two things which God the Holy Spirit does not speak directly to: (1) Joseph's unique upbringing (he is the only child brought up exclusively by Rachel) and (2) the reason for Rachel's early death. If (1) is true, then it is unlikely that Rachel would die due to the sin unto death.

There is another possibility, which I have not suggested before. Perhaps Rachel did die the sin unto death; and then Jacob gave all of his time to raising Joseph. The problem with this theory is, Jacob also raised Benjamin and, regardless of how nice a guy Benjamin grew up to be, his life was unspectacular, as God the Holy Spirit saw no reason to record any details exclusive to Benjamin.

I am already on this tangent, so let's take it further. Is there a way that Rachel's training could have been very beneficial to Joseph; and yet, she die the sin unto death? That is certainly possible. However, apart from Rachel not being buried with the rest of the family in Abraham and Sarah's tomb, there is nothing else to suggest to us that Rachel's early death was related to divine discipline. A better argument, I believe, could be made for her death occurring as a natural process; and her burial place as a matter of expediency.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

"I am right, in all of this," Jacob alleges, "and God told you that I was right when He spoke to you!" Where the greed of man is, so is the grace of God.

*Lange: We here learn that Laban's prosperity was not very great before Jacob's arrival. The blessing first returns to the house with Jacob's entrance. But this blessing seemed to become to Laban no blessing of faith. His conduct toward the son of his sister and his son-in-law, becomes more and more base. He seizes eagerly, therefore, the terms offered to him by Jacob, because they appear to him most favorable, since the sheep in the East are generally white, while the goats are black. His intention, therefore, is to defraud Jacob, while he is actually overreached by him. Besides, this avails only of the mere form; as to the thing itself, Jacob really had claims to a fair compensation.<sup>719</sup>*

*Verse-by-verse Ministries: So what does Jacob conclude in reflecting on how the past twenty years have transpired? In v.42 he says that if the God of Abraham & Isaac had not also been for Jacob, Jacob would have had nothing to show for his 20 years. We can fairly assume that no man had ever out-smarted Laban before. He was a true scoundrel who took every advantage, yet he hadn't found a way to best Jacob. And when Jacob "finally had enough and left Laban, Laban was intent on following Jacob, and destroying him with any excuse he could find."<sup>720</sup>*

Gen. 31:38–40 [Jacob testifies to Laban] "These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not eaten the rams of your flocks. What was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it myself. From my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

<sup>718</sup> One could reasonably argue that Rachel would deeply influence Joseph's destiny because he is the only child who would have been brought up by Rachel.

<sup>719</sup> The Rev. Dr. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*; 1857–1864; in the Public Domain; from E-sword; Genesis 30:25–31:3 (Doctrinal and Ethical).

<sup>720</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017 (slightly edited).

Gen. 31:41–42 These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night." (ESV)

### A Summary of Jacob's Position (Dr. Peter Pett)

Jacob's arguments are:

- 1) Laban has failed to prove the charge of theft as the remainder have witnessed.
- 2) Jacob had paid well for what he has, both in wives and flocks and herds, by long and faithful service in which he endured much hardship. The hardship of the shepherd's life is well depicted. Indeed Laban had demanded recompense for any failure to the full and constantly changed the terms of the contract, yet Jacob bore with it. Animals taken by wild beasts did not normally need to be accounted for (Exodus 22:10–14).
- 3) He has not taken advantage of his position. While as shepherd he had the right to eat of the flock he has not taken the fat rams. And he has tended the ewes at birth so that there was no failure in the birth process. This may suggest that not all shepherds were so fastidious.
- 4) Nevertheless when he left Laban would have sent him away with nothing apart from his own personal possessions and would still do so were it not for God's intervention.
- 5) God has passed judgment on the situation, having seen what he has put up with and the price he paid, and has justified Jacob.

These arguments were important. The remaining confederacy leaders (mainly Laban's sons and relatives) need to be aware of the justice of his position, for the fact was that he had still absconded from the confederation of tribes with his possessions as Laban now argues.

Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:36–42.

[Chapter Outline](#)

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Jacob's position against Laban was quite strong, except for his wife stealing her father's teraphim.

### Jacob's Position (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

1. He challenges proof of his dishonesty. He asserts that there was no ground for these accusations. Nothing was found in his possession that he had wrongly taken. (Genesis 31:37).
2. He appeals to many many years of faithful and honest service. He had been scrupulous in his attention to every duty. Throughout his long service he had maintained a high sense of justice, and had even suffered loss himself rather than run the risk of committing a wrong, (Genesis 31:38–39). He had led a hard and trying life. (Genesis 31:40). And all this was the more praiseworthy, as it was for a bad and unthankful master. Jacob, in truth, owed nothing to Laban. He had fairly earned all that he had received. He had served Laban for twenty years, fourteen years of these for his two daughters, and six for the cattle. And all this time Laban had treated him with manifest injustice, changing his wages as often as he had the chance. (Genesis 31:41). And only for the special favour of God, Jacob would have nothing, even now. (Genesis 31:42). He could appeal to the fact that God was on his side, who had seen his affliction and rebuked his oppressor. (Genesis 31:42).

*The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Main Homiletics of the Paragraph.—Genesis 31:22–42.

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**Genesis 31:42** Unless the God of my fathers, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac had been with me, surely you would have sent me away now empty. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night.”

Jacob recognizes that God has been with him. God has spoken to him only two times, but Jacob fully understands that the whole time, God has been with him.

*The fear of Isaac* simply refers to Isaac’s relationship to God. This may possibly be a name for God.

*God rebuking Laban last night* refers to God coming to Laban in a dream and telling him not to make any judgment calls concerning Jacob.

**Individual Spiritual Growth:** One thing that ought to be clear to you, if you are a growing believer: God is with you. You will never have God come to you in a dream; you will never hear God speak to you out of the sky—but if you are experiencing any spiritual growth, then the fact of God in your life becomes more and more real.

To be more specific, if you have been a believer in Jesus Christ for 5 or 10 years, and you do not feel any different than you did at the beginning; if you do not think differently than before; or you don’t have a stronger faith in God, then there is something wrong with your spiritual life. Most of the time, this comes down to two things: (1) rebound (naming your sins to God); and (2) spiritual growth through the study of God’s Word under a pastor who teaches accurately and with authority. If you do not rebound and if you are not growing regularly (daily) by means of the teaching of the Word of God, then you probably do feel as if your spiritual life is at a standstill. These two things are absolutely necessary in order for the Christian believer to advance.

Spiritual growth does not occur in any other way. You cannot sing spiritual hymns to get you to spiritual maturity. You cannot do works around a church and become spiritually mature in that way. You cannot try really, really hard not to sin, and that effort result in spiritual maturity (although the fewer sins you commit, the better life you will have). You cannot give away all of your money to the poor in order to become spiritually mature. You cannot even read your Bible and expect to mature that way (with very few exceptions). One of the keys in spiritual growth is authority orientation. Where does the believer first learn authority orientation? He places his learning under the guidance of a pastor-teacher. He respects the authority of that pastor.

Apart from the intake of Bible doctrine, there are no combination of behaviors which result in your spiritual growth.

David Guzik: *It isn’t hard to see these words building up in Jacob for 20 years. He has practiced this speech over and over again in his mind.*<sup>721</sup> I have a very similar view. Jacob has had a lot of things to say to Laban, and no doubt, he has had imaginary conversations with Laban while leaving Paddan-aram.

Let me add that, Jacob editing some things out. At one point, Jacob would have started his complaint with, “On my wedding night, you gave me the wrong sister!” But, now, at this point, he does not say that. This was a complaint which Jacob had for several years (at least). However, as his family grew, and he recognized that Leah was a big part of that, let me suggest to you that he began to appreciate her. Furthermore, when he called for Rachel *and Leah* to come to him in the field to discuss the situation, he is recognizing Leah’s important contributions to their marriage. Obviously, there are children; but, even though it is not specified, let me suggest to you that Leah did more than just bear children.

In some way, Jacob recognizes that he and Rachel and Leah are a family unit. That will remain true for the rest of their lives.

<sup>721</sup> David Guzik’s *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:36–42.

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:36–42 Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, ( to contend, to strive, to argue, to strive with words, forensically to plead a cause, hence to defend oneself verbally--with Laban--and Jacob answered and said to Laban) "What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen that they may decide between us two. These twenty years I have been with you; you ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. (to make childless, can occur in a number of ways, but sense here is abortion or miscarriage--and rams of your flocks I did not eat) That which was torn of beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. (to bear the blame for something, to take the consequences for something. Habitual imperfect, action which is repeated.) You required it from my hand whether being stolen during the day or being stolen at night. This is the way it became with me; during the day the heat ate me up, and the frost ate me at night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. If the god of my father, the god of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so he rendered judgment last night."

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:36–42

1. After standing by and absorbing Laban's harangue about his alleged stupidity and Laban's superiority, Jacob has had enough.
2. Beyond all the blustering and posturing, Laban has angrily gone about and turned Jacob's camp inside out looking for his missing gods.
3. Jacob's long pent-up emotions find expression in this section where he gives words to his righteous indignation over the way Laban has conducted himself over the years.
4. He first protests his complete innocence and states that he has never broken faith with Laban, and has neither guilt nor sin.
5. He has certainly not done anything which should cause Laban to angrily pursue after him like some kind of criminal.
6. There is no doubt that God was even protecting Jacob in this situation, because if Laban had found the idols Jacob would have been adjudged guilty by all present, although he was completely innocent.
7. He points out that Laban has turned his goods inside out and has found nothing, not his idols, not the least thing which came from Laban's house.
8. He challenges Laban to set anything before their relatives, and let them render a decision in the matter.
9. Jacob next launches into a brief but comprehensive summary of his 20 years with Laban.
10. He reminds Laban of the fact that no losses were suffered in his flocks due to miscarriages, which is largely to be attributed to the careful oversight of the shepherd.
11. He points out that he did not take any rams from the flock for his own use from time to time, although this was the accepted custom of that day.
12. This he avoided, since he knew the type of person Laban was and knew that Laban would hold it over his head later.
13. Jacob demonstrates that he has a completely clear conscience in regard to Laban and the way he did his job.
14. Jacob was not perfect, but over 20 years no legitimate charge could be leveled against him.
15. The custom of the middle east also allowed a shepherd who worked for another to bring the carcass of an animal in to the owner if it was torn apart by wild animals.
16. This demonstrated two facts:
  - 1) The shepherd had been brave enough to drive the animal away.
  - 2) The loss was accounted for to the owner.
17. Jacob was not afforded even this customary consideration by Laban, he was held accountable for any dead animal.
18. Although Jacob made good for any loss due to predators, it was also Laban's policy to make Jacob responsible for losses due to rustlers.
19. For twenty years Jacob worked for this unfair reversionist, who gave no real consideration to a very

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:36–42

- loyal and faithful employee.
20. Beyond that Jacob cites the physical deprivation which went along with the life of a shepherd.
  21. The construction of vs 40 brings emphasis to the emotion with which Jacob is speaking.
  22. The more intense the heat is by day in the region, the more acute the cold is at night.
  23. Out in the open country where he performed his service, he was exposed to the elements at all times.
  24. The job of the shepherd also required that sleep be short, as he had to keep watch over the flock during the day and during the night as well.
  25. Jacob states that he had served for a period of 20 years with Laban, acquiring his two wives and a flock.
  26. During the last six years, Jacob became wealthy despite the unfairness of his boss, demonstrating that God can prosper the believer in spite of his adverse circumstances.
  27. Laban not only imposed unfair and unrealistic demands on Jacob, he was consistently trying to cheat him out of what was his rightful salary.
  28. Jacob charged Laban with attempting to alter their agreement no less than 10 times, the first of which was the foisting of Leah on him.
  29. In spite of his faithful, diligent service, Jacob was rewarded with a boss who constantly sought to cheat him out of his salary.
  30. Not too terribly different from what we often get today on our jobs.
  31. Yet Jacob hung in there and grew up spiritually during this time, under the worst of circumstances.
  32. Laban had constant pressure on him on his job, and there was constant pressure applied on the domestic front by his two sinful trend of Adam dominated wives.
  33. Add to all this the pressure of raising 11 boys and an unspecified number of daughters.
  34. It was during this time that all the doctrine that Jacob had heard or been taught began to be applied, and the result was spiritual growth, so that he is now on the verge of MAJG (maturity adjustment to the justice of God).
  35. Jacob now attributes his prosperity to its real source, the omnipotent God, whom Abraham and Isaac worshiped.
  36. He now acknowledges that God is the one Who rules over the affairs of men, and He exalts or judges as men adjust or maladjust to Him.
  37. He states that God is and has been for him, expressing the fact that he recognized his own positive volition and God's grace.
  38. He, in essence says, "I am positive and God is for me, and you are negative, and He is not for you."
  39. This is quite a rebuke to the old idol worshiping, monetary reversionist.
  40. Jacob goes so far as to say that if it were left solely up to Laban, he would cheat Jacob out of everything and leave him empty-handed.
  41. This does not give much credence to Laban's loud and long expressions of his love for his children and grandchildren.
  42. Jacob is very bold with Laban and points out that God has made it quite clear who He supports in their disputes.
  43. The dream which Laban had not only made it obvious to Laban that God was for Jacob, it made it obvious to Jacob, which partially explains his willingness to speak so frankly.
  44. God has observed the pressure and misery which Laban brought to bear on Jacob, as well as the excellent job Jacob did under these adverse circumstances.
  45. Each believer should emulate Jacob in terms of doing your job as unto the Lord and faith-resting the results.
  46. You must keep in mind that you are not working for men but for the Lord, who will more than compensate you, no matter how your company may treat you. Col. 3:22-24
  47. This knowledge makes your job much more than just a job, it makes it a place of great potential SG3.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:36–42 Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me? "Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.

"These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. That which was torn of beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. You required it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

"These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times. "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night."

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:36–42

#### Jacob Airs His Grievances (vv. 36-42)

1. Following the careful but futile search for the stolen teraphim, Jacob strikes back with his fiercest diatribe.
2. Jacob, feeling fully vindicated over the fact (false) the no one in his party was responsible for Laban's lost teraphim, he unloads twenty years of pent-up frustrations in this speech.
3. At this juncture in the sparing dialogue between the two antagonists, Jacob pours out his years of grievance against his father-in-law.
4. Jacob's non-sinful anger explodes in a flurry of accusation against the man who treated him like an enemy rather than a beloved son-in-law who had brought him prosperity and grandchildren (v.36).
5. The verb "contended" (ribh) is used elsewhere of arguing a lawsuit, but is used of simple conflict between contesting parties.
6. Jacob's speech is replete with parallelism and balance lines.
7. Parallelism is not simply a feature exclusive to Hebrew poetry but is seen in prose as well; especially when the speech is elevated.
8. In the opening verse (36) Jacob begins the verbal assault with "What is my transgression/crime?"/"What is my sin?"
9. The noun "trespass" is used of a serious sin that civilized society would regard as heinous.
10. It could be rendered "crime."
11. It is used in 50:17 of the sin of Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery.
12. It is used of property offenses as well as offenses against persons.
13. Jacob accuses Laban of treating him like a common criminal in pursuing him so hotly.
14. "Hotly pursue" is used of soldiers pursuing a defeated enemy (1Sam. 17:53; Lam. 4:19).
15. In v. 37 Jacob goes on to confront Laban with the fact that not only did he not find his precious household gods, but that after rummaging through his property did the search not turn up even one item that fell into the category of Laban's "household goods."
16. Beginning with v. 38 Jacob reviews the twenty years of his employment with Laban starting with Jacob's fastidious care of Laban's flocks.
17. With the advent of Jacob managing Laban's livestock operation there was a very low incident of animals miscarrying.
18. This is attributable to Jacob's care of the females of the flock during pregnancy and birthing and of course God's blessing upon him.
19. Laban would have been the first to notice the dramatic change in this regard during the Jacob years.
20. Add to this the fact that Jacob never slaughtered any of the rams of Laban's flock.
21. A missing ram here and there might not be noticed, but Jacob did not succumb to this temptation even during the hard years when his family went without.
22. Of course during the second seven year period when Jacob's family was growing by leaps and bounds, Laban never offered any assistance to benefit his daughters and grandchildren.
23. In Jacob's day shepherds were held responsible for losses due to predators and in some case not even

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:36–42

- responsible for animals lost to thieves.
24. This is illustrated by the ancient Near Eastern text which reads: "If a visitation of god has occurred or a lion has made a kill, the shepherd shall prove himself innocent in the presence of god" (I.H 266).
  25. Also, there is the statute of Ex. 22:13 which reads: "If (an animal) is torn by beasts, let him (the herdsman) bring it as evidence; he shall not make restitution..."
  26. In some places animals lost during the daylight hours were charged to the herdsmen but not those lost at night.
  27. But with Jacob during his years of employment none of this applied; all losses were absorbed by Jacob while Laban suffered no losses.
  28. It would appear then, that Laban is the thief and cheat.
  29. Again, he does this to his own "bone and flesh" (cf. 29:14).
  30. Avarice ruled Laban to such a degree that he had no compassion on even his own family if it meant a shekel left his pocket.
  31. In v. 40 Jacob tells Laban of the rigors he suffered during those years of his employment.
  32. It needs to be understood that laboring in the area of the world that he did that the days could be brutally hot and the nights extremely cold do to the fact that the climate was not affected by the moderating influence of the sea.
  33. Jacob's watch and care of Laban's flock meant that he suffered long hours and missed much needed sleep.
  34. The reader of Genesis can surmise that this smooth-skinned rich boy who had his mother as his pet was toughened up considerably during his tenure with Laban.
  35. He is now the match for his hairy open-aired brother, Esau.
  36. This part of the speech applies to the entirety of his twenty year tenure including the years of growing prosperity.
  37. Laban the initial beneficiary of Jacob's work ethic never offered Jacob even the most minimal of material support or encouragement (maybe just words).
  38. In v. 41 Jacob restates what he charged Laban with back in v. 7, namely that he changed his wages ten times.
  39. In this chapter it is thrown in Laban's face.
  40. Laban is the scoundrel and cheat who due to his own STA predilection showed no mercy.
  41. Clearly, Laban is the man of dishonor.
  42. At no point did Laban ever make amends for his treatment of his son-in-law.
  43. Jacob's concluding remarks to his father-in-law in this listing of grievances provides the authoritative word on the whole Jacob-Laban experience (v. 42).
  44. This concluding statement supplies the doctrinal/spiritual read-out on the upshot of Jacob's long and arduous experience in a foreign land.
  45. Jacob expands on his statement to his wives: "But God has not allowed him to harm me."
  46. God saw His servant's plight and made sure that in the end Jacob was vindicated for his diligence and faith.
  47. Had Laban had his way he would have sent Jacob away "empty-handed."
  48. Even a slave who had served his master six years under the Law was not to be sent away empty-handed (see Deut. 15:13-14), how much more so a man in Jacob's position.
  49. But God overruled his cruelty in the final six years of Jacob's tenure when he tweaked the genetics of the mating flock so the newborn would be according to the most recent agreement.
  50. And so, Jacob bears witness to the One who overturned Laban's greed and made Jacob a rich man.
  51. The phraseology here is of quite special.
  52. Compare the words of God during the vision of the stairway to heaven back in 28:13, "I am the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac."
  53. There these words were spoken to a fleeing Jacob.
  54. Here and elsewhere these are words of generational and providential protection.
  55. Most recently God had preempted Laban from doing Jacob any harm the very night before this confrontation.

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:36–42

56. Laban is confronted with the reality of the Abrahamic covenant (doctrine) which he had no interest in and in the end found himself as one of those who cursed a heir of that covenant.
57. God sees and takes note of the oppression/affliction of one of His positive saints (cf. Leah in 29:32) and vindicates them accordingly.
58. In this articulation Jacob brings to the fore the two, and to date, the only representatives of God under covenant blessing, Abraham and Isaac.
59. Of special interest is the expression "the fear of Isaac."
60. The term is better rendered "the dread of Isaac."
61. The story behind this is Isaac's traumatic experienced when he was deceived but stood his ground even in the face of a crying favorite son.
62. When push came to shove, Isaac put his love for God over his love for his negative firstborn.
63. Jacob during those many years of exile has had time to process all he had learned and experienced.
64. He knew by intimate experience the integrity of God's promise at Bethel to be with him and give his success.
65. Isaac's experience scared him to his very foundation and so here that same experience of the divine scared Laban the night before.
66. God made good on His promise to be "really with him [Jacob]" during his tenure out of the land even as He did in the most recent dream/vision just before Jacob exited Haran.
67. V. 42 provide a perfect conclusion to Jacob's speech of self-justifications.
68. Laban was boxed into a corner with nothing left to him but verbal bravado (see below).
69. The very last sentence in our Bible sums Jacob's experience with his pathetic uncle, "God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rendered judgment [against you] last night."
70. So Jacob bears witness to the God who, based on His overruling will, turned the tables on the man with all the power to do harm.
71. This then explains the whole meaning of Jacob's time out of the land in terms of his preservation and wealth.

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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### Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant

Jacob has worked for his father-in-law Laban for the past 20 years, and after being treated poorly and dishonestly, Jacob slipped away with his wives and children. Laban, when he realized that Jacob was gone, pursued him and has caught up to him at this point in the narrative.

Laban has two basic complaints: (1) Jacob left without allowing Laban to say goodbye to his daughters and grandchildren; and (2) someone stole some idolatrous figurines from Laban which were possibly valuable. Neither Jacob nor Laban realize that Rachel, Jacob's wife and Laban's daughter, stole these figurines. Laban was unable to find these figurines because they were in the pocket of a saddle upon which Rachel sat and would not move.

At this point, Laban has no additional complaints; and he has nothing in Jacob's possession which was taken from him. So, from this point forward, Laban really has nothing which he can complain about. He has aired his greatest complaints—none of which actually stuck. So Laban will make a statement of sorts, and then suggest that they agree to a non-aggression pact.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *[T]hese two relatives, after having given utterance to their pent-up feelings, came at length to a mutual understanding, or rather, God influenced Laban to make reconciliation with his injured nephew (Proverbs 16:7).*<sup>722</sup>

NEV commentary: *[W]e too are unwise to 'take up' every issue of false accusation and unreasonable treatment. We have to allow a saving of face and be pragmatic, with peace for God's true seed as the desired final outcome.*<sup>723</sup>

Then Laban points out some facts which, on the surface, will seem difficult to dispute:

**And so answers Laban and so he says unto Jacob, "The daughters [are] my daughters; and the sons [are] my sons; and the flock [is] my flock. And all that you are seeing to me these. And to my daughters, what can I do to these the day or to their sons whom they have borne? And now come; let us cut a covenant—I and you. And he will be a witness between me and between you."**

Genesis  
31:43–44

**Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters [are] my daughters; the sons [are] my sons; and the flocks [are] my flocks. Furthermore, all that you see—[all] this—[belongs] to me. And, my daughters, what can I do this day? Also, their sons, whom they have given birth to [what can I do for them?]. Now then, come [and] let us make a covenant—you and I. It will be a witness between you and I."**

**Laban answer Jacob, saying, "Those young women are my daughters; those young boys are my grandsons; all the flocks and cattle you see—they belong to me. My daughters and my sons, what can I do for you today? Now then, come here and let's make a covenant together. It will be a witness between you and I."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so answers Laban and so he says unto Jacob, "The daughters [are] my daughters; and the sons [are] my sons; and the flock [is] my flock. And all that you are seeing to me these. And to my daughters, what can I do to these the day or to their sons whom they have borne? And now come; let us cut a covenant—I and you. And he will be a witness between me and between you."   |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Laban answered and said to Jakob, The daughters are my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the sheep are my sheep, and all whatsoever thou seest is mine; and to these, my daughters, what can I do this day, or unto their children which they have born? And now come, let us enter into a covenant, I and thou, and it shall be for a witness between me and thee.   |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Laban answered and said to Jakob, The children whom thou hast received of thy wives are my children, and the children whom they may bear will be reputed as mine, and the sheep are my sheep and all that thou seest is mine. And for my daughters what can I do this day, and for the soils which they have borne? And now come, let us strike a covenant, I and thou, and it shall be for a witness between me and thee. |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | Laban answered him: The daughters are mine and the children, and your flocks, and all things that you see are mine: what can I do to my children, and grandchildren? Come therefore, let us enter into a league: that it may be for a testimony between me and you.  |

<sup>722</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:40.

<sup>723</sup> From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Laban answered Ya'aqub, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine: and what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have borne? Now come, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be for a witness between me and you."  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. and all that you see is mine; and what can I do this day for these my daughters, or for their children whom they have borne? Now therefore come then, let us make a covenant, I and you; and let it be for a witness between me and you.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Laban answered and said to Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the cattle are my cattle, and all things which you see are mine, and the property of my daughters; what shall I do to them to-day, or their children which they bore? Now then come, let me make a covenant, both I and you, and it shall be for a witness between me and you; and he said to him, Behold, there is no one with us; behold, God is witness between me and you.         |
| Significant differences: | <i>And said unto Jacob</i> is missing from the Latin and it appears to be missing from the Aramaic (it is in one English translation and absent in the other). The targums paraphrase some of what Jacob says. After the first set of things Jacob says, the second are somewhat confusing; but the translations are still quite close. The Latin appears to be missing words here and there; but that may be the fault of the English translator, which is not a careful translation. |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Easy English                | Laban replied 'These women are my daughters. Their children are my children. The animals are my animals. But what can I do today about my daughters or about their children? Let us make a promise between you and me. And let it show what has happened between us.'   |
| Easy-to-Read Version—2006   | <b>Jacob and Laban's Treaty</b><br>Laban said to Jacob, "These women are my daughters. These children belong to me, and these animals are mine. Everything you see here belongs to me, but I can do nothing to keep my daughters and their children. So I am ready to make an agreement with you. We will set up a pile of stones to show that we have an agreement."                         |
| Good News Bible (TEV)       | <b>The Agreement between Jacob and Laban</b><br>Laban answered Jacob, "These young women are my daughters; their children belong to me, and these flocks are mine. In fact, everything you see here belongs to me. But since I can do nothing to keep my daughters and their children, I am ready to make an agreement with you. Let us make a pile of stones to remind us of our agreement." |
| International Children's B. | <b>Jacob and Laban's Agreement</b><br>Laban said to Jacob, "These girls are my daughters. Their children belong to me, and these animals are mine. Everything you see here belongs to me. But I can do nothing to keep my daughters and their children. Let us make an agreement. Let us set up a pile of stones to remind us of our agreement."  |
| <i>The Message</i>          | Laban defended himself: "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flock is my flock—everything you see is mine. But what can I do about my daughters or for the children they've had? So let's settle things between us, make a covenant—God will be the witness between us."  |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Contemporary English V. | Laban said to Jacob, "Leah and Rachel are my daughters, and their children belong to me. All these sheep you are taking are really mine too. In fact, everything you have belongs to me. But there is nothing I can do to keep my daughters and their children. So I am ready to make an agreement with you, and we will pile up some large rocks here to remind us of the agreement." |
| The Living Bible        | Laban replied, "These women are my daughters, and these children are mine, and these flocks and all that you have—all are mine. So how could I harm my own daughters and grandchildren? Come now and we will sign a peace pact, you and I, and will live by its terms."  |
| New Berkeley Version    | Laban replied to Jacob, "Mine are the daughters and the children; mine are the flocks, mine is everything you see. And what can I now do to these my daughters or to the children they have borne? Come now, let us make a covenant, I and you, and let it be for a witness between me and you."   |
| New Century Version     | <b>Jacob and Laban's Agreement</b><br>Laban said to Jacob, "These girls are my daughters. Their children belong to me, and these flocks are mine. Everything you see here belongs to me, but I can do nothing to keep my daughters and their children. Let us make an agreement, and let us set up a pile of stones to remind us of it."   |
| New Life Version        | Laban answered Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters. The children are my children. And the flocks are my flocks. All that you see is mine. But what can I do today to these my daughters or to their children who were born to them? So come now, let us make an agreement, you and I. And let us do something to show we have an agreement between us."                             |
| New Living Translation  | <b>Jacob's Treaty with Laban</b><br>Then Laban replied to Jacob, "These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine. But what can I do now about my daughters and their children? So come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment."                          |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | Then Laban replied: 'These are my daughters and my sons... the cattle are mine and everything that you see belongs to my daughters and me! However, what should I do to them today... or to their children? Come; let's conclude a treaty between you and me that will serve as a witness between us. Look, nobody else is here, so {Look!} God will serve as the witness between you and me.'  |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | And Laban answered, These are my daughters, these boys are mine, as your flocks, and all you see before you, are mine; something I must do to protect my own daughters, my own grandchildren. Come, let us make a covenant, which shall stand on record between us.   |
| Translation for Translators | <b>Jacob and Laban made a solemn promise not to harm each other</b><br>Laban replied, "These two women are my daughters, and their children are my grandchildren, and the animals are my animals. Everything you see here is mine [HYP]! But what can I do today to keep my daughters or the children they have given birth to [RHQ]? I cannot do anything in order to keep them, so hey, we should make a peace agreement, you and I, and do something that will remind us about our agreement." |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible | Laban was to answer, and was to say to Jacob: The daughters are my daughters, the sons are my sons, and the small cattle are my small cattle, that being seen here - was I to effect this day, for my daughters, or to their sons, that they are to have bore forth? - Be coming out, be cutting a pledge with me, for a testimony. |
|--------------------|---|

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Conservapedia           | Laban said to Jacob in answer, "These daughters are my daughters, and these sons my sons, and these cattle my cattle, and everything you see is mine. Now what can I do this day to my own daughters, or to their children to whom they have given birth? So come: you and I should cut a covenant and let that be for a testimony between me and you."   |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible     | But Laban answered ; and said to Jacob; " The girls are my girls, and the children my children, and the sheep my sheep ; and all that you see is mine ; and for the girls what shall I do for them or the children which they have borne ? However, now, come on, and let you and I make a settlement, and let it be a witness between Myself and You."   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Laban answered and said unto Jacob: the daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the sheep are my sheep, and all that you see is mine. And what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? Now therefore come on, let us make a bond, I and you together, and let it be a witness between you and me.   |
| H. C. Leupold           | <b>(c) The Treaty (v. 43-54)</b><br>And Laban answered and said to Jacob: The daughters are my daughters and the children are my children and the cattle is my cattle and all that thou seest belongs to me; and, as for my daughters, what can I do to them this day or to their children which they have borne? And now come let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for a witness between me and thee. |
| Tree of Life Version    | In response Laban said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the sons are my sons, and the flocks are my flocks. Everything you see is mine. But what can I do for these, my daughters, today, or for their sons to whom they've given birth? So now, come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."   |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | Then Laban replied and said to Jacob, these daughters are my daughters and these children are my children, and these flocks are my flocks and all that you see is mine. So what can I do today for my daughters, or to their children that they have gendered? Let us now carve out for ourselves a pledge, you and me and let it be for a witness between us.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Laban answered to say to Jacob: "The daughters of my house, and the sons of my kin, and the sheep of my flock, and everything you see, to me belong; and to my daughters, what shall I do for them today? Or for their sons, which they have born? And now, let us bind in a compact, you and me, and my sons and your sons will serve as witnesses."   |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| The Heritage Bible        | And Laban answered, and said to Jacob, These daughters <i>are</i> my daughters, and these children <i>are</i> my children, and these flocks <i>are</i> my flocks, and all that you see <i>is</i> mine; and what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children which they have born? And now walk; let us cut a covenant, I and you; and let it be a witness between me and you.   |
| New American Bible (2002) | Laban replied to Jacob: "The women are mine, their children are mine, and the flocks are mine; everything you see belongs to me. But since these women are my daughters, I will now do something for them and for the children they have borne. Come, then, we will make a pact, you and I; the LORD shall be a witness between us."<br>[43-54] In this account of the treaty between Laban and Jacob, the Yahwist and Elohist sources are closely interwoven. The mound or cairn of stones comes from the Yahwist source, the memorial stone or stele comes from the Elohist one. <sup>724</sup> |

<sup>724</sup> Most of the references to the *Yahwist* and *Elohist* sources have been removed from the 2011 Bible; but not all of them.

- New American Bible (2011) [31:43–54] In this account of the non-aggression treaty between Laban and Jacob, the different objects that serve as witness (sacred pillar in v. 45, cairn of stones in v. 46), their different names (Jegar-sahadutha in v. 47, Mizpah in v. 49), and the two references to the covenant meal (vv. 46, 54) suggest that two versions have been fused. One version is the Yahwist source, and another source has been used to supplement it.  
Laban replied to Jacob: "The daughters are mine, their children are mine, and the flocks are mine; everything you see belongs to me. What can I do now for my own daughters and for the children they have borne? \* Come, now, let us make a covenant, you and I; and it will be a treaty between you and me."  
[31:44–54] The treaty is a typical covenant between two parties: Jacob was bound to treat his wives (Laban's daughters) well, and Laban was bound not to cross Jacob's boundaries with hostile intent.
- New Jerusalem Bible Laban replied to Jacob, 'These daughters are my daughters and these children are my children, this livestock is my livestock: everything you see belongs to me. But what can I do today about my daughters here or about the children they have borne? So come, let us make a pact, you and me . . . , and let that serve as a witness between us.'
- Revised English Bible Laban answered Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks; all you see is mine. But what am I to do now about my daughters and the children they have borne? Come, let us make a pact, you and I, and let there be a witness between us."

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

- Complete Jewish Bible **(vii)** Lavan answered Ya'akov, "The daughters are mine, the children are mine, the flocks are mine, and everything you see is mine! But what can I do today about these daughters of mine or the children they have borne? So now, come, let's make a covenant, I and you; and let it stand as a testimony between me and you."
- The Complete Tanach And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the sons are my sons, and the animals are my animals, and all that you see is mine. Now, what would I do to these daughters of mine today, or to their children, whom they have borne?  
**Now, what would I do there?:** How could I entertain the thought of harming them?  
So now, come, let us form a covenant, you and I, and may He be a witness between me and you."  
**may He be a witness:** [I.e.] the Holy One, blessed be He [will be a witness].
- exeGeses companion Bible And Laban answers and says to Yaaqov,  
These daughters are my daughters  
and these sons my sons  
and these flocks my flocks;  
and all you see is mine:  
and what work I this day to these my daughters,  
or to their sons whom they birthed?  
And now come,  
let us cut a covenant - I and you;  
to be a witness between me and you.
- Kaplan Translation Laban interrupted Jacob. 'The daughters are my daughters! The sons are my sons! The flocks are my flocks! All that you see is mine! But my daughters....what can I do to them today? Or to the children they have born? Now come! Let's make a treaty - you and I. Let there be a tangible evidence of it between you and me.'

Orthodox Jewish Bible And Lavan answered and said unto Ya'akov, These banot are my banot, and these banim are my banim, and this tzon is my tzon, and all that thou seest is mine; yet what can I do today about these my banot, or about their banim which they have born?  
Now therefore come thou, let us cut a brit, I and thou; and let it be for an ed between me and thee.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible*

#### The Covenant of Mizpah

Laban answered Jacob, "These women [that you married] are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, these flocks are [from] my flocks, and all that you see [here] is mine. But what can I do today to these my daughters or to their children to whom they have given birth? So come now, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between you and me."

The Expanded Bible

#### Jacob and Laban's Treaty

Laban said to Jacob, "These girls [The daughters] are my daughters. Their children belong to me [The sons are my sons], and these flocks are mine [the flocks are my flocks]. Everything you see here belongs to me, but I can do nothing to keep [what can I do about...?] my daughters and their children. Let us make [Come, let us cut] an agreement [a covenant/treaty; 6:18], and let us set up a pile of stones to remind us of it [it be a witness between us]."

Kretzmann's Commentary

#### Verses 43-55

##### The Covenant on Mount Gilead

And Lavan 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? Although Laban still speaks with an unwarranted boastfulness, referring to his superior power and assuming rights which he no longer possessed, yet his words also show that Jacob's rebuke has had its effect. He realizes that any attempt against the life or well-being of Jacob would hurt also his children and grandchildren. At the same time the fear arises in him that Jacob might some day return to Mesopotamia at the head of a mighty band and avenge his wrong. Now, therefore, come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee. This proposal was largely an outgrowth of selfishness, but it served the purpose

NET Bible®

Laban replied [*Heb* "answered and said."] to Jacob, "These women [*Heb* "daughters."] are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren [*Heb* "children."], and these flocks are my flocks. All that you see belongs to me. But how can I harm these daughters of mine today [*Heb* "but to my daughters what can I do to these today?"] or the children to whom they have given birth? So now, come, let's make a formal agreement [*Heb* "cut a covenant."], you and I, and it will be<sup>97</sup> proof that we have made peace [*Heb* "and it will become a witness between me and you."]."

The Pulpit Commentary

And Lavan answered and said unto Jacob,—neither receiving Jacob's torrent of invective with affected meekness (Candlish), nor proving himself to be completely reformed by the angry recriminations of his "callous and hardened son-in-law (Kalisch); but perhaps simply owning the truth of Jacob's wants, and recognizing that he had no just ground of complaint (Calvin), as well as touched in his paternal affections by the sight of his daughters, from whom he felt that he was about to part for ever. These daughters—literally, the daughters (there)—are my daughters, and these (literally, the) children are my children, and these (literally, the) cattle are my cattle; and all that thou seest is mine. Not as reminding Jacob that he had still a legal claim to his (Jacob's) wives and possessions (Candlish), or at least

possessions (Kalisch), though prepared to waive it, but rather as acknowledging that in doing injury to Jacob he would only be proceeding against his own flesh and blood (Calvin, Rosenmüller, Gerlach, Alford). **And what can I do this day unto these my daughters**,—literally, and as for (or to) my daughters, **what can I do to these this day?** The LXX; connecting "and to my daughters" with what precedes, reads, καὶ πάντα ὅσα σὺ ὄρα? ἵνα εἰμὶ ἐν σὶ καὶ τῶν θυγατέρων μου—**or unto their children which they have born?**—i.e. why should I do anything unto them An ego in viscera mea saevirem (Calvin). **Now therefore** literally, and now, νῦν οὖν (LXX.)—come thou,—לָךְ, imperf; of לָךְ—age, go to, come now (cf. Genesis 19:32)—**let us make a covenant**,—literally, let us cut a covenant, an expression which, according to partitionists (Tuch, Stahelin, Delitzsch, et alii), is not used by the Elohist until after Exodus 14:8; and yet by all such authorities the present verse is assigned to the Elohist (cf. Keil's 'Introduction,' part 1. § 2; div. 1. § 27)—**I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.**

The Voice

**Laban:** The daughters *you speak of* are my daughters; the children are my grandchildren; the flocks are my flocks; all you see is mine. But what can I do today about these daughters of mine and the children from their wombs? Come, let's make a covenant between us, you and me, and let there be a witness to our agreement.

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Benner's Mechanical Trans. ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> answered and he said to Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup>, the daughters are my daughters and the sons are my sons and the flocks are my flocks and all which you are seeing, he belongs to me and what will I do this day to my daughters or to their sons which they brought forth, and now walk, we will cut a covenant, I and you and he will exist for a witness between me and you,...

Concordant Literal Version And answering is Laban and saying to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the flock my flock, and all that you are seeing, mine is it, and my daughters'. What shall I do for these today, or for their sons which they have borne? Yet now, go. Contract will we a covenant, I and you, and it will become a witness between me and you. And saying is he to him, "Behold! No one is with us. Behold! The Elohim is Witness between me and you.

NASB **The Covenant of Mizpah**

Then Laban replied to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

New King James Version **Laban's Covenant with Jacob**

And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "*These* daughters *are* my daughters, and *these* children *are* my children, and *this* flock *is* my flock; all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me."

New European Version **Laban and Jacob Make a Covenant**

Laban answered Jacob, The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine: and what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their children whom they have borne? Now come, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be for a witness between me and you.

Young's Updated LT

And Laban answers and says unto Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the flock my flock, and all that you are seeing is mine; and to my daughters—what do I to these today, or to their sons whom they have born?"

And now, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and it has been for a witness between you and me.”

**The gist of this passage:** Laban points out that all of what Jacob sees is from Laban: his daughters, his grandchildren, his livestock. Then Laban calls to strike a covenant between the two of them.

43-44

### Genesis 31:43a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| ʿânâh (עָנָה) [pronounced <i>ġaw-NAWH</i> ]                     | <i>to answer, to respond; to speak loudly, to speak up [in a public forum]; to testify; to sing, to chant, to sing responsively</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect      | Strong's #6030<br>BDB #772 |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]         | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                      | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                         | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| ʾâmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]                      | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect      | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced <i>eh</i> ]                               | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>                               | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39   |
| Yaʿăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ġuh-KOH<sup>b</sup>V</i> ] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun   | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |

This parallels a portion of v. 36, where Jacob answers and says unto Laban.

**Translation:** Laban answered and said to Jacob,... Both men were fuming at first and both men believe that they are right in their assessment of this situation. However, in this exchange, Jacob speaks respectfully to Laban and Laban speaks respectfully to Jacob.

What Jacob said seemed measured and logical. Let me suggest that Laban has calmed down somewhat. He still has some points to make, but they are mostly emotional pleas.

### Genesis 31:43b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology                               | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced <i>bahth</i> ] | <i>daughter; village</i> | feminine plural noun with the definite article | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |

## Genesis 31:43b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced <i>bahth</i> ]                                  | <i>daughter; village</i>  | feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix  | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                           | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>    | masculine plural noun with the definite article                       | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |
| bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                           | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>    | masculine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |

**Translation:**...“The daughters [are] my daughters; the sons [are] my sons;... To Laban, this is quite simple; it is cut and dried. These daughters are his daughters. They came from him. Furthermore, because these are his daughters, their sons are his grandsons (the Hebrew uses the same word for both).

No matter what you think, it cannot be argued that these are his children and grandchildren. Now, to simply snatch them up in the middle of the night—even by their husband—is, at the least, an ill-mannered thing to do.

On the other hand, Laban has become more and more distant from his daughters; he sold them like slaves to Jacob; and it does not appear that he has done anything for them insofar as an inheritance is concerned.

Once you sell something, it is no longer yours. I had some valuable comic books, and I sold them for a pittance at a very young age. However, even if I could track them down, I could not boldly assert, “These are my comics!” At best, I could say, “These used to be my comics.” That is the flaw in all the Laban says.

## Genesis 31:43c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i> ]                                 | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>                   | feminine singular collective noun with the definite article                       | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |
| tsô'n (צֹאן) [pronounced <i>tzohn</i> ]                                 | <i>small cattle, sheep and goats, flock, flocks</i>                   | feminine singular collective noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #6629<br>BDB #838 |

**Translation:** ...and the flocks [are] my flocks. Laban began his various flocks and herds. He originally purchased the animals; he began a breeding program. He decided how to split the animals up and how to mix them and breed them.

However, he also came to an agreement with Jacob as to which animals would be Jacob's. So, the animals that Jacob is driving belong to Jacob. The came from Laban's flock, but they do not belong to Laban.

| Genesis 31:43d  |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]           | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                           | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| kôl (כֹּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ]; also kôl (כָּל) [pronounced <i>kohl</i> ] | <i>all, all things, the whole, totality, the entirety, everything</i>                           | masculine singular construct; noun that follows lacks the definite article                                | Strong's #3605<br>BDB #481 |
| 'ăsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                                    | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied  | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| 'attâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>aht-TAW</i> ]                                    | <i>you</i> (often, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun   | Strong's #859<br>BDB #61   |
| râ'âh (רֹאֶה) [pronounced <i>raw-AWH</i> ]                                      | <i>seeing; observing; understanding; a seer, perceiver</i>                                      | Qal active participle   | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> ']   | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i> | directional/relational preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix                        | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| hûw' (הוּוּ) [pronounced <i>hoo</i> ]   | <i>he, it; himself</i> as a demonstrative pronoun: <i>that, this (one); same</i>                | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> , is implied | Strong's #1931<br>BDB #214 |

**Translation:** Furthermore, all that you see—[all] this—[belongs] to me. Now, remember what Jacob, that smart-ass said. “You find anything that belongs to you? Then just lay it all out before our respective peoples and let them decide.” So Laban begins to point to everything that they see. “Those young women? Those are *my* daughters. See those young boys? Those are *my* grandchildren. See all the cattle and flocks? They are mine. Look around you. *Everything* that you see belongs to me.” So, do you see, Laban listened carefully to Jacob. Laban knew that he had nothing among Jacob’s items which were stolen from him; but he could certainly point to everything and say, “This is mine!” It is a debater’s technique.

Jacob thought, “I didn’t steal a damn thing; you haven’t found a damn thing. So, you lay out everything that you found that I stole, and then we will discuss it.”

Laban doesn’t have anything like that. But, that is not how he sees it. Those are his daughters, those are his grandsons, and all of those animals are his. Do you see how each man, in his own eyes, is right?<sup>725</sup>

However logical Laban’s position, we must bear in mind that Jacob paid for everything that is with him. He paid for Laban’s daughters. There is no indication that Laban has done anything on behalf of his grandchildren; and clear indication, based upon the words of his daughters, that he has set nothing aside for them. So, it is not as if he has an inheritance set aside for his daughters or his grandchildren.

Furthermore, even though his flocks were the parents of the goats and sheep which Jacob owns; what Jacob owns is by mutual consent. In fact, it appears that Laban even cut back on this agreement with Jacob on several occasions.

<sup>725</sup> This, incidentally, is the theme of the book of Judges.

In a manner of speaking, all that Jacob has ultimately come from Laban; however, all of it was earned by a mutual agreement. You may work for a company for 10 years, and that company makes it possible, by means of its salary allotment, for you to put enough money aside to purchase a home. So, if you purchase a home, ultimately it is based upon what you have made in salary from your company; but it is actually your money and your house (well, yours and the mortgage company's).

Wenstrom is a bit more harsh about this than I would be

### **“All that you see is mine” (Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.)**

Now that Laban has been publicly exposed by Jacob's testimony recorded in Genesis 31:35-42, Laban pitifully attempts to cover his loss of face with empty rhetoric, hypocrisy, and self-righteous arrogance and emotion.

Laban attempted once again to turn the tables on Jacob and make him out to be the bad guy by diverting attention from Jacob's embarrassing facts by changing the subject.

Laban's first claim, “the daughters are my daughters” is a true statement but they are now married to Jacob and are no longer under his authority but Jacob's since he is husband of both Rachel and Leah now.

Laban's second claim, “the children are my children” is true only in the sense that Jacob's children are Laban's grandchildren but that does not give Laban the right to take these children back with him.

Laban's third claim, “the flocks are my flocks” is also false since it totally ignores the contract that he made with Jacob in which he agreed to Jacob's proposal that Jacob would receive all the “striped, spotted, speckled” sheep and goats and dark colored sheep that were born of Laban's solid colored animals (See Genesis 30:25-43).

Laban's claim “the flocks are my flocks” demonstrates Laban's failure to acknowledge that God had blessed Jacob and was responsible for Jacob's prosperity from this contract (See Genesis 31:11-12).

Laban's fourth claim, “all that you see is mine” is also totally false and therefore another lie from his lips since all the prosperity that Jacob had, came from God and not Laban.

As we saw in Genesis 30:25-36, Laban had provided Jacob with nothing and had given him no property and had cheated Jacob on his wages. The property that Jacob left Paddan Aram with was accumulated during his last six years of service to Laban and was part of the contract that Laban agreed to with Jacob, which is recorded in Genesis 30:25-36. Therefore, the truth of the matter is that Laban gave Jacob nothing and that God had prospered Jacob and had given Jacob everything.

Laban has been attempting to make himself appear as the reason for Jacob's success and so in effect he is saying to Jacob, “you were nothing until you met me and worked for me!”

Laban's rhetorical question, which demands a negative response, “But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?” expresses Laban's frustration at not being able to take revenge on Jacob since God had warned Laban in a dream to not harm Jacob, which is recorded in Genesis 31:24 and acknowledged by Laban as recorded in Genesis 31:29.

From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 506); accessed October 18, 2017.

| Genesis 31:43e  |  |   |                            |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                              | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]                                      | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced <i>bahth</i> ]                                  | <i>daughter; village</i>   | feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix                              | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |
| mâh (מַה) [pronounced <i>maw</i> ]                                      | <i>what, how, why</i>  | interrogative; exclamatory particle   | Strong's #4100<br>BDB #552 |
| ‘âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced <i>gaw-SAWH</i> ]                            | <i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i>   | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]                                      | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| ’êlleh (אֵלֶּה) [pronounced <i>ALE-leh</i> ]                            | <i>these, these things</i>   | demonstrative plural adjective with the definite article (often the verb <i>to be</i> is implied) | Strong's #428<br>BDB #41   |
| yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced <i>yohm</i> ]                                   | <i>day; time; today (with a definite article)</i>  | masculine singular noun with the definite article   | Strong's #3117<br>BDB #398 |
| ’ôw (אוּ) [pronounced <i>oh</i> ]                                       | <i>or, or rather, otherwise, also, and; if, perchance; except, or else; whether, not the least</i> | conjunction   | Strong's #176<br>BDB #14   |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>leh</i> ]                                      | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bânîym (בָּנִים) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                          | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>                                 | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine plural suffix                      | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |
| ’âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                            | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>   | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied                                      | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81   |
| yâlad (יָלַד) [pronounced <i>yaw-LAH</i> ]                              | <i>to give birth, to bear, to be born, to bear, to bring forth, to beget</i>                       | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect; pausal form   | Strong's #3205<br>BDB #408 |

**Translation:** *And, my daughters, what can I do this day? Also, their sons, whom they have given birth to [what can I do for them?]. Then he speaks to his daughters: “What can I do today [to make everything right]?” To his grandsons, he says, “What can I do today, to make everything right?”*

Dr. John Gill gives a different interpretation which seems to be good: *and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? I cannot find in my heart to do them any hurt, or wrong them of anything, and am therefore willing all should be theirs.*<sup>726</sup>

Genesis 31:43–44 Laban answer Jacob, saying, “Those young women are my daughters; those young boys are my grandsons; all the flocks and cattle you see—they belong to me. My daughters and my sons, what can I do for you today? Now then, come here and let’s make a covenant together. It will be a witness between you and I.”

### Laban’s response to Jacob (various commentators)

H. C. Leupold: *Laban skilfully avoids the issue, which centres on the question whether Jacob has ever treated him unfairly, and substitutes another, namely, whether there is any likelihood of his avenging himself on Jacob and his family. In a rather grandiose fashion he claims that all that Jacob has—household and cattle—is his own. The only use he makes of this strong claim is that, naturally, these being his own family, he would not harm them. It hardly seems that he has been “cut to the quick” by the justice of Jacob’s defense.*<sup>727</sup>

David Guzik: *Laban lays claim to all this that is already out of his hand. He says, “It is mine, but Jacob, out of the generosity of my heart, I’ll let you have it.”*<sup>728</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Laban’s reply, consisting of the claim of complete parental control over Leah and Rachel and their children and their husband’s flocks, is no sort of reply to Jacob’s complaint.*<sup>729</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *these daughters are my daughters: though your wives, they are my own flesh and blood, and must be dear to me; so pretending strong natural affections for them: and these children are my children; his grandchildren, for whom also he professed great love and affection: and these cattle are my cattle; or of my cattle, as the Targum of Jonathan, sprung from them, as indeed they did. and all that you see is mine; all this he observed in a bragging way, that it might be thought that he was generous in not insisting upon having it, but giving all back to Jacob again.*<sup>730</sup>

I think that this was a speech that Laban rehearsed when chasing after Jacob. I don’t see it as bragging; but it certainly has some notes of insincerity. Jacob, by saying, “Put whatever is yours right there, and then let our brothers judge” gave him the perfect opening.

Matthew Henry: *These daughters are my daughters. When Laban cannot excuse what he has done, he does, in effect, own what he should have done; he should have treated them as his own, but he had counted them as strangers, Genesis 31:15...It is common for those who are without natural affection to pretend much to it when it will serve a turn.*<sup>731</sup>

Matthew Poole: *He pretends that to be an act of his natural affection and kindness which was indeed the effect of his fear.*<sup>732</sup>

<sup>726</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43.

<sup>727</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017.

<sup>728</sup> *David Guzik’s Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:43–50.

<sup>729</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:43.

<sup>730</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43 (slightly edited).

<sup>731</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55 (slightly edited).

<sup>732</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43.

## Laban's response to Jacob (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett makes some interesting observations: *Laban's case is based on recognised tribal custom. As head over the confederacy all that is in the confederacy is 'his', that is, belongs to the confederacy, and he is responsible for it. This is especially true in this case when they had all been personally his. While Jacob by his service has obtained certain proprietary rights over them they are still the confederacy's and should remain within the confederacy. Indeed Laban as the patriarch has the responsibility for their protection and must watch over them, which he cannot do if they leave the confederacy. Compare how Delilah remains in her father's house when married to Samson (Judges 14:2 on; 15:1). But because God has spoken to him so vividly he is now prepared for these rights to be overridden.*<sup>733</sup>

L. M. Grant: *Laban had little that he could say in defence of himself in answer to Jacob's tirade, but he does use the one argument that he considered valid, "These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock" (v.43). Leah and Rachel had been his daughters, but Laban had sold them. The children were actually Jacob's children, though grandchildren of Laban (at least those from Leah and Rachel). As to the flocks, while they had been bred from Laban's flocks, yet they were the wages Laban had agreed to give Jacob for his labor.*

Grant continues: *Since Leah and Rachel were his daughters, he thought (wrongly) that they were his possession and he had the right to sell them. They were not his own to begin with, let alone after he had sold them. But this verse loudly proclaims the fact that a merely possessive character loses what he tenaciously seeks to hold. Laban found that he was left poorer in various respects when Jacob left him.*<sup>734</sup>

One has to recall that, only moments before, Laban was searching the tents of his daughters for his gods. Would he have executed his daughters, as Jacob allowed in v. 32?

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Matthew Henry: *Laban...could neither justify himself nor condemn Jacob, but was convicted by his own conscience of the wrong he had done him; and therefore desires to hear no more of the matter. He is not willing to own himself in a fault, nor to ask Jacob's forgiveness, and make him satisfaction, as he ought to have done.*<sup>735</sup>

**Genesis 31:43** And Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the flocks my flocks. All that you see is mine. And what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their sons which they have borne?"

Laban makes a semi-valid point. Jacob's wives are his daughters. All of Jacob's flocks came from Laban's flocks. All that Jacob could see originally came from Laban. Laban, therefore, has both a stake and an emotional investment in them.

Jacob may have worked hard for Laban, but Laban provided the base for all that Jacob built up. Quite obviously, God provided the increase.

In any case, from Laban's point of view, Jacob has really given him the short shrift.

However, Laban, because God came to him the previous night and issued some warnings, has decided not to get angry or violent with Jacob. He seems to have held back, apart from searching their entire campsite.

Jacob, on the other hand, does not really recognize his indebtedness to Laban. Jacob cannot get past the fact that Laban is a conniving sonuvabitch, much like himself. Jacob, like many of us, cannot get past the way that

<sup>733</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:43.

<sup>734</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/lmg/genesis-31.html> accessed October 26, 2017.

<sup>735</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

Laban has treated him. He does not recognize that Laban still had trusted Jacob with his daughters and his wealth (his livestock). Jacob, because God overruled the wrong the Laban did to Jacob, was greatly blessed and very prosperous. Laban was never able to overrule the hand of God. However, it is clear that Jacob cannot get past this emotionally; and it is likely that Jacob does not even recognize how much God has blessed him.

Most of us are far more blessed than we realize. It is our lack of spiritual growth and often our mental attitude sins which keep us from recognizing just how much God has blessed us.

If Jacob had true capacity for life, he would recognize that all of his family and wealth are a result of his life with Laban, and this would be a good time and place for him to thank Laban.

Jacob is not there yet in his spiritual life. He is not yet grace oriented. However, his son Joseph, will be. His son Joseph will face a number of circumstances and people which would appear to negatively impact his life, but Joseph will, a few chapters into the future, give us the Old Testament version of Romans 8:28 (**And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.**—ESV; capitalized).

Jacob should have been able to both hear and agree with his father-in-law Laban. “**The daughters are my daughters, and the sons my sons, and the flocks my flocks. All that you see is mine. And what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their sons which they have borne?**” God gave Jacob the blessing, but all of this ultimately came from Laban. As I have asserted before, Jacob should be able to have a true appreciation for Laban—he married his daughters. And Laban ought to have a true appreciation for Jacob—he has taken on the responsibility for raising his daughters.

In life, we do not meet any perfect people. We do not know people who always do the right thing. We will run into people, from time to time, who will do us wrong. However, bear in mind that God is in control, and God works all things for good.

Gen. 31:43 **Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day for these my daughters or for their children whom they have borne? (ESV)**

Laban seems to be giving his rebuttal. However, he does not allow this to be cross-examined, perhaps because he recognizes some weakness in these assertions or perhaps because he is using this point of view to lead into the next verse (his request for a covenant). “As I see it,” Laban contends, “Everything you see here ultimately came from me. However, you are leaving my ranch, so what can I do for my daughters and my grandchildren, whom I will never see again?”

At this point, both men had aired out their grievances with one another; and it is not clear whether Jacob understood Laban’s anger or vice versa. They both made reasonable points; but Jacob’s arguments were the strongest.

They are at an impasse. Jacob is clearly not going to return the Haran; and it is very likely that Laban would prefer that he didn’t. Both men have aired out their disagreements and grievances. Because Jacob has nothing which actually belongs to Laban, there is no final decision or judgment to be made in either man’s favor.

It appears that Laban is beginning to consider his young daughters moving away from him (perhaps he even realizes that he is, in part, responsible for this); and his grandchildren will all live in a far-away land. And so Laban asks aloud, “**And what can I do this day to these my daughters, or to their sons which they have borne?**” As a result—perhaps he is thinking outloud—Laban proposes is a covenant (a contract, an agreement between the two men). This is what he can do for his family that he will no longer be with. This suggests to me that Laban has calmed down considerably; and Jacob’s response to what Laban proposes suggests that he is at an even keel as well.

Laban continues speaking to Jacob, suggesting that which is quite reasonable:

| Genesis 31:44a  |   |  |                                     |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251           |
| 'attâh (הָתָע) [pronounced <i>gaht-TAWH</i> ]   | <i>now, at this time, already</i>                                       | adverb of time   | Strong's #6258<br>BDB #773          |
| Together, kîy 'attâh (יִכ הָתָע) [pronounced <i>kee-gaht-TAWH</i> ] mean <i>and now, but now; for in this case, for then; and after a protasis, surely then, indeed, indeed now.</i>  |   |  |                                     |
| hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ]   | <i>go, come, depart, walk; advance</i>                                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative            | Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229 |
| kârath (כָּרַת) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAHTH</i> ]  | <i>to cut off, to cut down; to kill, to destroy; to make a covenant</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural, Qal imperfect with the cohortative hê | Strong's #3772<br>BDB #503          |
| The cohortative expresses volition. In the English, we often render this with <i>let</i> or <i>may</i> ; in the plural, this can be <i>let us</i> . The cohortative is designed for the 1 <sup>st</sup> person, it can express a wish or a desire or purpose or an intent. It is found in conditional statements. Generally there is the hê suffix to indicate this. This might be called <i>apocopated</i> in Owen's <i>Analytical Keys to the Old Testament</i> . |   |  |                                     |
| E. W. Bullinger: <i>make. Hebrew cut (Compare Genesis 15:10, Genesis 15:18) = solemnize.</i> <sup>736</sup>   |   |  |                                     |
| b <sup>e</sup> rîyth (בְּרִית) [pronounced <i>b<sup>e</sup>reeth</i> ]  | <i>covenant; pact, alliance, treaty, alliance, contract</i>             | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #1285<br>BDB #136          |
| 'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced <i>aw-NEE</i> ]   | <i>I, me; in answer to a question, it means I am, it is I</i>           | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, personal pronoun                    | Strong's #589<br>BDB #58            |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251           |
| 'attâh (הָתָא) [pronounced <i>aht-TAW</i> ]   | <i>you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>                           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun          | Strong's #859<br>BDB #61            |

**Translation:** *Now then, come [and] let us make a covenant—you and I.* Laban calls for Jacob to join with him to make a covenant, where they can set out all of the terms of their separation. It is possible that—and I could be wrong here—that Laban is actually looking at this from Jacob's point of view. It is if he recognizes that they are at a standstill, that his daughters and grandsons are going to be gone, no matter what. He may not agree with Jacob in any way, but may he ought to try to settle things here. "Let's come to an agreement; you and I. Let's try to patch this up; let's try to part as friends."

They cannot simply leave things as they are. Both men have valid points in their disagreements; and there may not be a way for them to ever come together on these things. A covenant or an agreement will allow them to walk away from this meeting in peace, likely never to meet again.

James Burton Coffman considers what Laban may have had in mind: *Laban had probably intended violently to plunder Jacob, perhaps kill him, and return everything to Haran, but the natural concern*

<sup>736</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:44.

he had for his daughters and their children, and the remembrance of the warning God had specifically given him the night before restrained him. He admitted his inability to do anything about the situation and proposed, instead, the making of a covenant.<sup>737</sup>

Coffman brings up an interesting possibility. I don't know that there is enough in this chapter to indicate that this is Laban's intention or whether it was on the table at any point in Laban's psyche. This would have been quite an irrational move, seeing as how Laban would then be financially on the hook of his daughters and all of his grandchildren if he killed Jacob. On the other hand, people do and think irrational things.

| Genesis 31:44b   |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]  | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW]   | to be, is, was, are; to become, to come into being; to come to pass   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                | Strong's #1961<br>BDB #224 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]   | to, for, towards, in regards to   | directional/relational preposition                                    | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| The NET Bible: <i>The verb הָיָה (hayah) followed by the preposition ל (ly) means "become."</i> <sup>738</sup> |   |   |                            |
| ʿêd (עֵד) [pronounced gayde]   | witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Genesis 31:48 Deut. 31:19) | masculine singular noun   | Strong's #5707<br>BDB #729 |
| This is the first occurrence of this word in Scripture; apart from the book of Job.                            |   |   |                            |
| bêyn (בֵּינַם) [pronounced bane]   | in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between   | preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix           | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh]  | and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| bêyn (בֵּינַם) [pronounced bane]   | in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between   | preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107  |

**Translation:** *It will be a witness between you and I.* This is something hidden here that I cannot explain. The verb here is a masculine singular verb. Whatever it will be is a *witness* between Jacob and Laban. However, it logically refers back to a feminine singular noun (covenant). The only explanation which makes sense is, the covenant (a feminine singular noun) is being matched with a masculine singular noun, a *witness*; and because that word is a masculine singular, then it is reasonable for the verb to also be one. This could be the way that is legitimate to say, and it could reveal a weakness in Laban's Hebrew (assuming that he is speaking in Hebrew).

<sup>737</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>738</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 20, 2016.

The Cambridge Bible is aware of this problem and suggests: *This word gives the keynote to the transaction, and introduces the play on the word Gilead in Genesis 31:47. But “a covenant” is not “a witness.” Surely some words have dropped out. Several commentators suggest: “And let us make a heap, and let it be for a witness.”*<sup>739</sup> I do not recall anyone else mentioning that there is not a match here to the word *covenant*.

Laban has not thought about his replies as Jacob has. He was certain that he would find the household deities and then be able to go on and on about them. However, he did not; so he was almost at a loss for words. Those were his daughters and their children, in a way, were his. Since Jacob came to him with nothing, in a way, all the flocks were also his. He probably realizes that Jacob did work a great deal for him and was due remuneration; but, neither he nor Jacob are into naming their own shortcomings and faults; nor would one really concede to the argument of the other. Jacob's argument sounds better because (1) he is right and (2) he has thought about it for a long time.

This is interesting that what Laban says is somewhat poetic.

### Laban’s almost poetic discourse (by Whedon)

[Laban] hastens to propose a covenant, to which Jacob readily agrees. Laban’s words may be rendered as follows:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;">The daughters my daughters,<br/>And the sons my sons,<br/>And the flock my flock,<br/>And all which thou seest<br/>Mine it is!</p> <p>And to my daughters, what shall I do to them today?<br/>Or to their sons, which they have borne?<br/>And now come, let us cut a covenant,<br/>I and thou;<br/>And let it be for a witness<br/>Between me and thee.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">"The daughters are my daughters,<br/>the children are my children,<br/>the flocks are my flocks,<br/>and all that you see is mine.</p> <p>But what can I do this day for these my daughters<br/>or for their children whom they have borne?<br/>Come now, let us make a covenant,<br/>you and I.<br/>And let it be a witness<br/>between you and me."</p> |
|---|--|

I am assuming that this is the KJV.

ESV (but divided up)

*Whedon’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:43 (appended).

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Laban didn't think over the various possibilities and the things which could have occurred when he caught up to Jacob, so he had less to say. This covenant is somewhat of a truce; a point at which they could get on with their own lives and have basically a nonaggression pact signed between them. Insofar as the basic idea behind it; a peace agreement, this is not unlike our agreement with God the Father based upon the work of god the Son; and God has made a covenant between Himself and us—a covenant of peace.

Matthew Henry: *Laban could neither justify himself nor condemn Jacob, therefore desires to hear no more of that matter. He is not willing to own himself in fault, as he ought to have done. But he proposes a covenant of friendship between them, to which Jacob readily agrees.*<sup>740</sup>

<sup>739</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

<sup>740</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

Genesis 31:43–44 Laban answer Jacob, saying, “Those young women are my daughters; those young boys are my grandsons; all the flocks and cattle you see—they belong to me. My daughters and my sons, what can I do for you today? Now then, come here and let’s make a covenant together. It will be a witness between you and I.”

### Laban proposes a covenant (commentators/discussion)

Leupold views this covenant rather harshly: *[B]eing a suspicious character, Laban fears that Jacob might eventually do what he apparently would have done under like circumstances, namely, after arriving home and having grown strong, he may come with an armed band to avenge all the wrongs of the past. To forestall this he suggests a "covenant." This covenant might serve to deter Jacob, of whose justice and fairness he is convinced, and who, Laban trusts, will keep a covenant inviolate.*<sup>741</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *Let us be good friends, and enter into an alliance for mutual safety, and make an agreement for each other's good. Laban perceiving that Jacob's God was with him, and blessed him, and made him prosperous, and protected him, was fearful, lest, growing powerful, he should some time or other revenge himself on him or his, for his ill usage of him; and therefore was desirous of entering into a covenant of friendship with him.*

Gill continues: *and let it be for a witness between me and you; that all past differences are made up, and former quarrels subside, and everything before amiss is forgiven and forgotten, and that for the future peace and good will subsist; of which a covenant made between them would be a testimony.*<sup>742</sup>

I don't see Laban and Jacob as becoming *good friends*; that does not seem to be the intent of this covenant. I see them parting as no longer enemies, with no future intent to harm the other.

Leupold: *Laban skillfully avoids the issue, which centers on the question whether Jacob has ever treated him unfairly, and substitutes another, namely, whether there is any likelihood of his avenging himself on Jacob and his family. In a rather grandiose fashion he claims all that Jacob has—household and cattle—is his own. The only use he makes of this strong claim is that, naturally, these being his own family, he would not harm them. It hardly seems that he has been 'cut to the quick' by the justice of Jacob's defense. He is merely bluffing through a contention in which he is being worsted. But being a suspicious character, he fears that Jacob might eventually do what he apparently would have done under like circumstances, namely, after arriving home and having grown strong, he may come with an armed band to avenge all the wrongs of the past. To forestall this he suggests a 'covenant.' This covenant might serve to deter Jacob, of whose justice and fairness he is convinced, and who, Laban trusts, will keep a covenant inviolate.*<sup>743</sup>

The College Press Bible Study: *"These words of Jacob's 'cut Laban to the heart with their truth, so that he turned round, offered his hand, and proposed a covenant'" (K-D, 299). "Neither receiving Jacob's torrent of invective with affected meekness, nor proving himself to be completely reformed by the angry recriminations of his 'callous and hardened' son-in-law (Kalisch); but perhaps simply owning the truth of Jacob's words, and recognizing that he had no just ground of complaint (Calvin), as well as touched in his paternal affections by the sight of his daughters, from whom he felt he was about to part for ever . . . not as reminding Jacob that he had still a legal claim to his (Jacob's) wives and possessions, or at least possessions, though prepared to waive it, but rather as acknowledging that in doing injury to Jacob he would only be proceeding against his own flesh and blood" (Whitelaw, PCG, 384)...Laban was so cut by the severe and well-founded reproaches of Jacob, that he saw the necessity of an immediate surrender, or, rather, God influenced him to make reconciliation with his injured nephew, Proverbs 16:7" (Jamieson, CECG, 212).*<sup>744</sup>

<sup>741</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 27, 2017 (slightly edited).

<sup>742</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:44 (slightly edited).

<sup>743</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Laban's response (Gen. 31:43-44).

<sup>744</sup> *The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series*; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Laban's response (Genesis 31:43–44).

## Laban proposes a covenant (commentators/discussion)

Dr. Peter Pett: *This change of heart of Laban, who had originally intended to drag Jacob and his household back to Paddan-aram, has already been explained as arising from his vivid experience of the awesome presence of God (Genesis 31:29; Genesis 31:42). Thus he does not exert his rights but ensures the safety and status of his daughters by means of covenant. Such a covenant was seen as solemnly binding in the sight of the gods of both parties (Genesis 31:53) who would exact revenge if it was broken. Its terms are found in verses Genesis 31:49–52.*<sup>745</sup>

I must admit that, based upon my study so far, I don't know what Laban actually intended to do. I think much of what he was going to do was predicated upon finding his idolatrous statuettes. When he did not find them, he was thrown for a loop.

Bush: *Laban wishes to adjust matters in the best way he can. He cannot help prefacing his wish, however, by another sample of vain boasting and affected generosity. He attempts no defence against the charge of having repeatedly altered the terms of contract with Jacob, nor will conscience allow him to deny his secret purpose of sending him away empty. But this strange mixture of avarice, cunning, and effrontery is not without its parallel in every age and country.*<sup>746</sup>

When Laban is unable to find his gods among Jacob and his family, perhaps he recognizes that, whatever he expected to find and do is not going to happen. Obviously, they are going to part, with Laban going one way and Jacob the other. Given their mutual animosity, what is more logical than a contract between them?

Dr. Bob Utley: *It is interesting to me that Laban really takes this opportunity to blast Jacob in all the stipulations he puts on him in the presence of their relatives, which seems to be totally inappropriate. An example of this would be his not marrying other wives. It is Jacob who has shown a concern for Leah and Rachel, as seen in Genesis 31:31, and not Laban.*<sup>747</sup>

I don't know that I would interpret this as *Laban blasts Jacob*. Let me suggest, instead, that Laban comes back to his senses and simply states his concerns, which are not necessarily an attack on Jacob.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *By proposing a covenant, Laban is in effect capitulating to Jacob and acknowledging his defeat in his case against Jacob. A foundational concept of a covenant is the notion of a legal contract, which was developed to establish and regulate a relationship where none previously existed. Therefore, we see Laban seeking to establish and regulate a peaceful coexistence between himself and Jacob where one previously did not exist.*<sup>748</sup>

The Old Testament is filled with covenants. It is simply a contract or an agreement between two men or two entities.

It is important that this covenant is seen as having been witnessed by God. Each man will keep to his part of the covenant, knowing that this covenant is done before God.

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Genesis 31:43–44 Laban answer Jacob, saying, “Those young women are my daughters; those young boys are my grandsons; all the flocks and cattle you see—they belong to me. My daughters and my sons, what can I do for you today? Now then, come here and let's make a covenant together. It will be a witness between you and I.”

<sup>745</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

<sup>746</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:43 (suggestive comments).

<sup>747</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:49.

<sup>748</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 506); accessed October 18, 2017.

## The Substance of the Covenant (Various Commentators)

Matthew Henry: *The substance of this covenant. Jacob left it wholly to Laban to settle it. The tenour of it was, (1.) That Jacob should be a good husband to his wives, that he should not afflict them, nor marry other wives besides them, Genesis 31:50. Jacob had never given him any cause to suspect that he would be any other than a kind husband; yet, as if he had, he was willing to come under this engagement. Though Laban had afflicted them himself, yet he will bind Jacob that he shall not afflict them. (2.) That he should never be a bad neighbour to Laban, Genesis 31:52. It was agreed that no act of hostility should ever pass between them, that Jacob should forgive and forget all the wrongs he had received and not remember them against Laban or his family in after-times.*<sup>749</sup>

Benson: *[A] covenant...was made and ratified with great solemnity, according to the usages of those times. 1st, A pillar was erected, a heap of stones raised to perpetuate the memory of the thing, writing being then not known. 2nd, A sacrifice was offered, a sacrifice of peace-offerings. 3rd, They ate bread together, jointly partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice. This was in token of a hearty reconciliation. Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together.*<sup>750</sup>

T. H. Leale makes these claims: *Laban's covenant with Jacob*

- I. *It was forced upon him by circumstances.*
  1. *His long journey in pursuit of Jacob.*
  2. *The Divine warning.*
  3. *His failure to criminate Jacob.*
  4. *The overwhelming force of Jacob's self-defence.*
- II. *IT SHOWED AN IMPERFECT SENSE OF RELIGIOUS DUTY AND OBLIGATION.*
  1. *The natural love of kindred may exist apart from piety. The social affections are beautiful in themselves, but they may be exercised by those who have very imperfect notions of religion, or who even set it aside altogether.*
  2. *The forms of religion may be used with but an imperfect recognition of their real significance. The setting up of this pillar, and the pious motto attached to it, seemed to indicate a most sacred friendship and a solemn regard to the realities of religion. The all-pervading presence and the power of God were recognized. God is regarded as One to whom men are ultimately accountable. But this transaction, though employing the sanctions of religion, shows but a very low apprehension of its nature. This heap was set up by enemies who called upon God to protect them, each from the encroachments of the other.*<sup>751</sup>

I think Leale expects too much from this covenant. This is simply a covenant between two very imperfect men. Given Jacob's response to Laban, I don't think that Jacob was afraid or felt backed into a corner. I think that this was a reasonable thing to do, given the circumstances.

This will be discussed in further detail when we come to **vv. 52–53**.

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James Burton Coffman proposes an interesting theory: *Jacob promptly agreed to the making of a covenant. It afforded a face-saving way out of the impasse for all concerned.*<sup>752</sup>

This may be an accurate appraisal of the situation, as Laban sets all of the conditions for their covenant, and Jacob agrees to them. Don't misunderstand this to mean, Jacob looks at Laban and thinks, "Yeah, whatever."

<sup>749</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>750</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–44 (slightly edited).

<sup>751</sup> *The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:43–48.

<sup>752</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

He begins by setting up stones and a pillar, to mark this event (something that Jacob did previously when God spoke to him at Bethel). So, Jacob does not take this covenant lightly.

**Genesis 31:44** And come now, let us make a covenant, you and I. And let it be for a witness between you and me.”

Laban knows that God is involved in all of this, as God has spoken to him. Part of the reason the Jacob took off without a word to Laban was Laban’s treatment of Jacob.

As readers, we ought to see that both men have a case; both men have a viewpoint. Laban is not all wrong and Jacob is not all right (or, vice versa).

They have decided to part with some mutual respect, with a contract or an agreement drawn up between them. Essentially, Laban is going to make some reasonable demands on Jacob and Jacob will agree to them.

**And so takes Jacob a stone and so he raises her up a pillar. And so says Jacob to his brothers, “Gather stones.” And so they take stones and so they make a heap. And so they eat there upon the heap.**

Genesis  
31:45–46

**Jacob then took a stone and raised it up [to be] a pillar. Jacob told his servants [lit., *brothers*], “Gather up [some] stones.” So they took the stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap.**

**Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that is was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, “Gather up some stones.” Therefore, they took a number of stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so takes Jacob a stone and so he raises her up a pillar. And so says Jacob to his brothers, “Gather stones.” And so they take stones and so they make a heap. And so they eat there upon the heap.   |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Jakob took a stone, and set it up as a pillar. And Jakob said to his brethren, Collect stones; and they took stones, and made a mound [Degura, "a cumulus or mound;" from deger, Heb. dagar, "to collect, pile up."], and ate there upon the mound.  |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Jakob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. And Jakob said to <u>his sons, whom he called</u> his brethren, Collect stones. And they collected stones, and made a mound, and they ate upon the mound.   |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a <u>title</u> : And he said to his brethren: Bring hither stones. And they gathering stones together, made a heap, and they ate upon it.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Ya'aqub took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. Ya'aqub said to his relatives, "Gather up stones." They took stones, and made a heap. They ate there by the heap.  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | So Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said to his brethren. Gather stones; and they took stones, and made a heap; and they did eat there upon the heap.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Jacob having taken a stone, set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said to his brethren, Gather stones; and they gathered stones and made a heap, and ate there upon the heap; <u>and Laban said to him, This heap witnesses between me and you to-day.</u> The underlined section is v. 47a in the Hebrew. |

Significant differences: One of the targums has additional text.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Easy English              | So Jacob took a large stone and made it stand up. He said to his relatives, 'Go and get some stones.' So they went and got some stones. They put them together on the ground. Then they all ate a meal together, near the heap of stones. When people made a promise, they often ate a meal together. |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006 | So Jacob found a large rock and put it there to show that he had made an agreement. He told his men to find some more rocks and to make a pile of rocks. Then they ate beside the pile of rocks.  |
| God's Word™               | Jacob took a stone and set it up as a marker. Then Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." They took stones, put them into a pile, and ate there by the pile of stones.  |
| The Message               | Jacob took a stone and set it upright as a pillar. Jacob called his family around, "Get stones!" They gathered stones and heaped them up and then ate there beside the pile of stones.  |
| NIRV                      | So Jacob set up a stone as a way to remember. He said to his relatives, "Get some stones." So they took stones and put them in a pile. And they ate there by it.  |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible   | So Jacob took a stone, set it up as a sacred pillar, and said to his relatives, "Gather stones." So they took stones, made a mound, and ate there near the mound. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. V. 47 is included for context. |
| New Berkeley Version   | So Jacob took a stone and set it up for a memorial pillar; he also told his kinsmen, "Gather stones"; so they brought stones together and formed a cairn. There stop the cairn they ate together.   |
| New Century Version    | So Jacob took a large rock and set it up on its end. He told his relatives to gather rocks, so they took the rocks and piled them up; then they ate beside the pile.  |
| New Life Version       | So Jacob took a stone and set it up in honor of the agreement. Then Jacob said to the men of his family, "Gather stones." So they took stones and put them on top of each other. And they ate there by all the stones.  |
| New Living Translation | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. Then he told his family members, "Gather some stones." So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal.                   |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| American English Bible      | Then Jacob found a [large] stone and erected it as a pillar. 46 And Jacob told his family: 'Gather some stones.' So they brought stones and made a pile; then they [shared bread] on top of the pile.                                   |
| Beck's American Translation | Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And he told his men, "Gather some stones." They gathered stones and made a heap of them. Then they ate on the heap.   |
| International Standard V    | So Jacob took a stone and raised it as a pillar. Then Jacob told his relatives, "Go gather some stones." So they picked up stones and stacked them one on top of the other. Then they had a meal together there by the stack of stones. |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | So Jacob took a stone, and set it up there as a monument; he said, too, to his kinsmen, Bring stones here. And they gathered stones, and made them into a heap; and over that heap they took food together.                             |

Translation for Translators So Jacob took a *large* stone and set it on its end. Then Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they gathered some rocks and put them in a heap, and they ate some food there near the heap.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | Jacob was to take a stone, and was to lift it up, onto a pillar. Jacob was to say to his brothers: Be gathering stones. They were to take stones and make a heap, and they were to eat on the heap.  |
| Conservapedia           | Jacob took a stone and raised it up as a monument. Jacob then said to his kinfolk, "Pick up stones." And they took stones, and built a mound of them, and ate there on the mound.  |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible     | Then Jacob took a stone and set it up with both his hands, and Jacob said to his father-in-law, "Let them collect stones." So they collected stones and made a heap. Then they feasted on the heap there, and Laban called it for himself, "The Heap of Witnesses," but Jacob called it for himself "The Heap of Evidence." V. 47 is included for context. |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)   | Then took Jacob a stone and set it up on end, and said unto his brethren, gather stones. And they took stones, and made an heap, and they ate there upon the heap. And Laban called it Zegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called Gilead. V. 47 is included for context.  |
| H. C. Leupold           | And Jacob took a stone and raised it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen: Gather stones. And they gathered stones and made a heap and they ate there upon the heap; and Laban called it Jegar-sahadhutha, but Jacob called it Galed. V. 47 is included for context.  |
| Lexham English Bible    | And Jacob took a stone and set it up [as] a stone pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a pile of stones, and they ate there by the pile of stones.  |
| NIV, ©2011              | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap.   |
| Unlocked Literal Bible  | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a pile. Then they ate there by the pile.   |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | So Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. Then Jacob said to his relatives, gather stones and they took stones, and made a mound and they ate a meal there on the mound.  |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Jacob took a stone, and lifted it as a monument. And Jacob said to his kinfolk to gather stones, and they took the stones and made a crest, and they ate there on the crest.   |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| The Heritage Bible        | And Jacob took a stone, and raised it up as a memorial column. And Jacob said to his brothers, Gather stones, and they took stones, and made a heap; and they ate there on the heap.  |
| New American Bible (2011) | Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a sacred pillar [Gn 28:18; 35:14]. Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they got stones and made a mound; and they ate there at the mound.   |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | Jacob then took a stone and set it up as a memorial. Jacob said to his kinsmen, 'Collect some stones,' and gathering some stones they made a cairn. They had a meal there, on the cairn, and Laban called it Jegar-Sahadutha while Jacob called it Galeed. V. 47 is included for context. |

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| New European Version  | So Jacob chose a great stone and set it upright as a sacred pillar. Then he told his kinsmen to gather stones, and they took them and built a cairn, and there beside the cairn they ate together.. |
| Revised English Bible | So Jacob chose a great stone and set it up as a sacred pillar. Then he told his kinsmen to gather stones, and they took them and built a cairn, and there beside the cairn they ate together.       |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Complete Jewish Bible | Ya'akov took a stone and set it upright as a standing-stone. Then Ya'akov said to his kinsmen, "Gather some stones"; and they took stones, made a pile of them and ate there by the pile of stones. |
| The Complete Tanach   | So Jacob took a stone and set it up [as] a monument. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones," and they took stones and made a pile, and they ate there by the pile.                          |

**to his kinsmen:** [lit., to his brothers.] They are his sons, who were to him like brothers, drawing near him for trouble or for war (Gen. Rabbah 74:13).

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| exeGesés companion Bible   | And Yaaqov takes a stone and lifts it for a monolith:<br>and Yaaqov says to his brothers, Glean stones!<br>- and they take stones and work a heap:<br>and they eat there on the heap.  |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)          | Thereupon Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a mound; and they partook of a meal there by the mound.                                 |
| Kaplan Translation         | Jacob took a boulder and raised it as a pillar. 'Gather stones!' he said to his relatives. They took stones and made a large mound. They ate there on top of the mound [Or, 'by the mound.' Cf. Genesis 24:13. (Artscroll)]. |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible      | And Ya'akov took an even, and set it up for a matzevah (pillar).<br>And Ya'akov said unto his achim, Gather avanim; and they took avanim, and made a gal (heap, mound); and they did eat there upon the gal.                 |
| <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998 | So Ya'aqob took a stone and set it up as a standing column. And Ya'aqob said to his brothers, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.   |

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a [memorial] pillar. Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a mound [of stones], and they ate [a ceremonial meal together] there on the mound [of stones].  |
| The Expanded Bible         | So Jacob took a large rock and set it up on its end [as a pillar]. He [Jacob] told his relatives [brothers] to gather rocks, so they took the rocks and piled them up [made a pile/mound/heap]; then they ate [feasted] beside the pile [treaties were often celebrated by a feast]. Laban named that place in his language A Pile to Remind Us [Jegar-sahadutha; he spoke Aramaic], and Jacob called the place Galeed [the Hebrew version of the Aramaic name]. V. 47 is included for context. |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar, this stone being the monument of the settlement, of the peaceful separation, to which he assented. And Jacob said unto his brethren, his kinsmen that had come with Laban, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap; and they did eat there upon the heap, which designated the friendly communion.  |
| NET Bible®                 | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial pillar. Then he [Heb "Jacob"; the proper name has been replaced by the pronoun ("he") in the translation for stylistic  |

reasons.] said to his relatives, “Gather stones.” So they brought stones and put them in a pile. They ate there by the pile of stones.  
 The Pulpit Commentary And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar—or Matzebah, as a memorial or witness of the covenant about to be formed (Genesis 31:52); a different transaction from the piling of the stone–heap next referred to (of. Genesis 28:18; Joshua 14:1–15:27).  
 And Jacob said unto his brethren,—Laban’s kinsmen and his own (vide Genesis 31:37)—Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap:—Gal, from Galal, to roll, to move in a circle, probably signified a circular cairn, to be used not as a seat (Gerlach), but as an altar (Genesis 31:54), a witness (Genesis 31:48), and a table (Genesis 31:54), since it is added—and they did eat there—not immediately (Lange), but afterwards, on the conclusion of the covenant (Genesis 31:54)—upon the heap.  
 The Voice So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. He told his relatives to gather up more stones. So they all took stones and made a large pile of them. Then they ate there by the pile.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Benner’s Mechanical Trans. ...and Ya’aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> took a stone and he raised her a monument, and Ya’aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> said to his brothers, pick up the stones, and they took the stones and they made a mound and they ate there upon the mound,...

Darby Translation And Jacob took a stone, and set it up [for] a pillar. And Jacob said to his brethren, Gather stones. And they took stones, and made a heap, and ate there upon the heap.

Modern English Version So Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar. Jacob said to his kinsmen, “Gather stones.” So they took stones and made a pile, and they ate there on the pile.

New King James Version So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. Then Jacob said to his brethren, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.

Young’s Updated LT And Jacob takes a stone, and lifts it up for a standing pillar. And Jacob says to his brothers, “Gather stones,” and they take stones, and make a heap; and they eat there on the heap.

**The gist of this passage:** Jacob stands up a stone on end as a pillar, and other stones are gathered by his men and made into a heap. They all take a meal by the heap of stones.

45-46

| Genesis 31:45a  |  |  |                            |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                      | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong’s #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                           | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wâw consecutive  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #253  |
| lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]                     | to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong’s #3947<br>BDB #542 |
| Ya’ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-ăuh-KOH <sup>BV</sup> ] | supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong’s #3290<br>BDB #784 |

## Genesis 31:45a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                            | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology       | BDB and Strong's #     |
|---|---|------------------------|------------------------|
| 'eben (אֶבֶן) [pronounced EH <sup>B</sup> -ven] | <i>a stone [large or small] [in its natural state, as a building material]; stone ore; used of tablets, marble, cut stone; used of a tool or weapon; a precious stone, gem; rock; a weight of the balance</i> | feminine singular noun | Strong's #68<br>BDB #6 |

**Translation:** *Jacob then took a stone...* I believe that this gives us a much better idea how these pillars were set up. Now, there is nothing magical or holy about them, and there is no reason for you to set up such a pillar. But there is enough information here for us to form a reasonable idea how it was done.

Here, Jacob does not just choose any stone. This would be a large and probably long stone *laying on its side*. When the stone is propped up, then it stands out. It is then apparent that this is something done by men.

The Cambridge Bible: *The name "Jacob" is here almost certainly a gloss. We should read either "and he took a stone," or "and Laban took a stone." In Genesis 31:51 Laban says that he set up the pillar or maṣṣêbah. Laban erects the pillar; Jacob makes the heap of stones.*<sup>753</sup> I believe that the Cambridge Bible is basing this opinion entirely upon v. 51.

This is the second time that Jacob has done this. I don't see any reason to assume that it is Laban as the subject here. All of the ancient translations have *Jacob's* name here.

## Genesis 31:45b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #              |
|--|--|--|---------------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                                    | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253       |
| rûwm (מור) [pronounced room]                                       | <i>to raise, to lift up [something], to make high; to elevate, to exalt; to erect, to build a house; to take away; to offer sacrifices</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular suffix | Strong's #7311<br>BDB #926      |
| matstsêbâh (הַבְּצֵמָה) [pronounced mahtz-tzay <sup>b</sup> -VAWH] | <i>pillar, sculpted images</i>   | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #4676 & #4678 BDB #663 |

**Translation:** *...and raised it up [to be] a pillar.* Jacob then raises up the stone. This stone is going to stand out, because a stone normally sits in a way so that little movement will occur. He stands the stone up, so that it is like a pillar. A stone cannot and does not do this by itself. It can only be stood up so that it is standing by a man who does it that way.

I would suppose that Jacob does not do this on his own, even though the masculine singular verb is used. He had a number of servants, as has been previously testified to. So, even though they have not been mentioned, they

<sup>753</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:45.*

are there, they were probably *his kinsmen, his brothers*; and they might do most of the work to stand the stone (pillar) upright.

Genesis 31:45 Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that it was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, "Gather up some stones."

**Raising up the stone pillar (various commentators)**

Dr. John Gill: *To show his readiness to agree to the motion, he immediately took a large stone that lay upon the mount, and set it up on one end, to be a standing monument or memorial of the agreement now about to be made between them.*<sup>754</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: "Pillar" is the noun *matstsevah* (מַטְסֵבָה) (*mats-say-vaw*), which denotes a single upright stone pillar set up as a monument and a memorial to mark the boundaries between Laban on the north and Jacob on the south.

Wenstrom continues: *Jacob erected three pillars in his life to mark the three great turning points in his life: (1) His first encounter with the Lord at Bethel (Genesis 28:18) (2) Departure from Laban and return to Canaan (Genesis 31:45) (3) His second encounter with the Lord at Bethel (Genesis 35:14).*<sup>755</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Because Laban suggested the making of the covenant, it would seem that he should have made the witnessing pillar and heap. So sure of this are some critics that they call the word "Jacob" at the beginning of v. 45 a mistake. Historical evidence must be judged according to its face value not by subjective expectations. The objective facts indicate Jacob's personal readiness to preserve peace and harmony, showing that he even took the initiative in sealing a treaty that he might well have resented.*<sup>756</sup>

Jacob himself is partial to pillars; so we do not know if this was a part of a covenant in this era; or if the pillar was a part of a covenant made by Jacob.

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Genesis 31:45 And Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial pillar.

Probably, this is an oblong stone which is set on end, so that it stands out. Even though it says that Jacob set this up; Jacob may have ordered some of his servants to set it up. This may have involve a number of men.

Jacob did this back in Genesis 28:18.

**Genesis 31:46a**

| Hebrew/Pronunciation             | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #        |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wāw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |
| 'amar (אמר) [pronounced aw-MAHR] | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55  |

<sup>754</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:45.

<sup>755</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 507); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>756</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

| Genesis 31:46a   |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב)<br>[pronounced yah-ăuh-KOH <sup>B</sup> V] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun   | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                       | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'achîym (אֲחִיִּם)<br>[pronounced awhk-EEM]                  | <i>brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen</i>   | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26   |
| lâqaṭ (לָקַט) [pronounced law-BAHT]                          | <i>gather, gather up, pick up</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperative                       | Strong's #3950<br>BDB #544 |
| 'eben (אֲבֵן) [pronounced EH <sup>B</sup> -ven]              | <i>a stone [large or small] [in its natural state, as a building material]; stone ore; used of tablets, marble, cut stone; used of a tool or weapon; a precious stone, gem; rock; a weight of the balance</i> | feminine plural noun  | Strong's #68<br>BDB #6     |

**Translation:** *Jacob told his servants* [lit., *brothers*], “*Gather up [some] stones.*” Jacob has no actual relatives with him, besides his sons. His brother *Esau* is not there. There is no indication at any time that *Esau* came there to him (in fact, *Esau* will meet *Jacob* later); and there is no indication that there are any actual brothers of *Jacob* there. So, these men must be his servants and/or relatives (those who came with *Laban*). *Jacob* tells these men to gather a number of stones. We are probably talking 10 to 40 substantial stones.

The Cambridge Bible: *his brethren* [i.e. *his followers and companions*; see *Genesis 31:23; 32.*<sup>757</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *Not to his sons, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi; these would not be called brethren, and were not fit, being too young to be employed in gathering large stones, as these must be, to erect a monument with; rather his servants, whom he employed in keeping his sheep under him, and might so call them, as he did the shepherds of Haran, Genesis 29:4; and whom he could command to such service.*<sup>758</sup>

| Genesis 31:46b                           |   |  |                            |
|--|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                     | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                             | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו)<br>[pronounced wah]       | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive                              | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| lâqach (לָקַח)<br>[pronounced law-KAHKH] | <i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>                         | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal imperfect | Strong's #3947<br>BDB #542 |

<sup>757</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, *Genesis 31:46*.

<sup>758</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, *Genesis 31:46*.

## Genesis 31:46b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                            | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology     | BDB and Strong's #     |
|---|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| 'eben (אֶבֶן) [pronounced EH <sup>B</sup> -ven] | <i>a stone [large or small] [in its natural state, as a building material]; stone ore; used of tablets, marble, cut stone; used of a tool or weapon; a precious stone, gem; rock; a weight of the balance</i> | feminine plural noun | Strong's #68<br>BDB #6 |

**Translation:** *So they took the stones...* Jacob's servants go out and find stones. They gather them together near this oblong stone which has been set up.

## Genesis 31:46c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                 | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology                             | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]      | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>              | wâw consecutive                              | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âsâh (עָשָׂה) [pronounced gaw-SAWH] | <i>to do, to make, to construct, to fashion, to form, to prepare, to manufacture; accomplish</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal imperfect | Strong's #6213<br>BDB #793 |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced gahl]         | <i>a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring</i>        | masculine singular noun; pausal form         | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164 |

The NET Bible: *The Hebrew word for "pile" is גַּל (gal), which sounds like the name "Galeed" (גַּלְעָד, gal'ed). See v. 48.*<sup>759</sup>

**Translation:** *...and made a heap...* Jacob's servants pile these stones up. It would make sense for them to be piled up all around the pillar stone. This would keep the stone on its end, to keep it from falling over.

Genesis 31:45–46 *Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that it was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, "Gather up some stones." Therefore, they took a number of stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap.*

### A dual purpose for the stones (various commentators)

Clarke: *גַּל gal, translated heap, signifies properly a round heap; and this heap was probably made for the double purpose of an altar and a table, and Jacob's stone or pillar was set on it for the purpose of a memorial.*<sup>760</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *[T]hey made it like a table, and set their food on it, and ate off of it; or they "ate by" it (o), it being usual in making covenants to make a feast, at least to eat and drink together, in token of friendship and good will.*<sup>761</sup>

<sup>759</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 20, 2016.

<sup>760</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:46.

<sup>761</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:46.

### A dual purpose for the stones (various commentators)

H. C. Leupold: *Jacob goes a step farther: he summons his kinsmen to make the memorial more substantial by gathering stones. These were, perhaps, heaped around the one stone which stood up pillar-like. Such a heap is called gal. Here apparently the gal served as a kind of table upon which the covenant feast was eaten. For to the full sealing of a covenant belonged a solemn covenant feast.*<sup>762</sup>

On the one hand, there is nothing in this final section which indicates to us that they used these stones to eat upon. On the other hand, it may have been a convenient place upon which to eat.

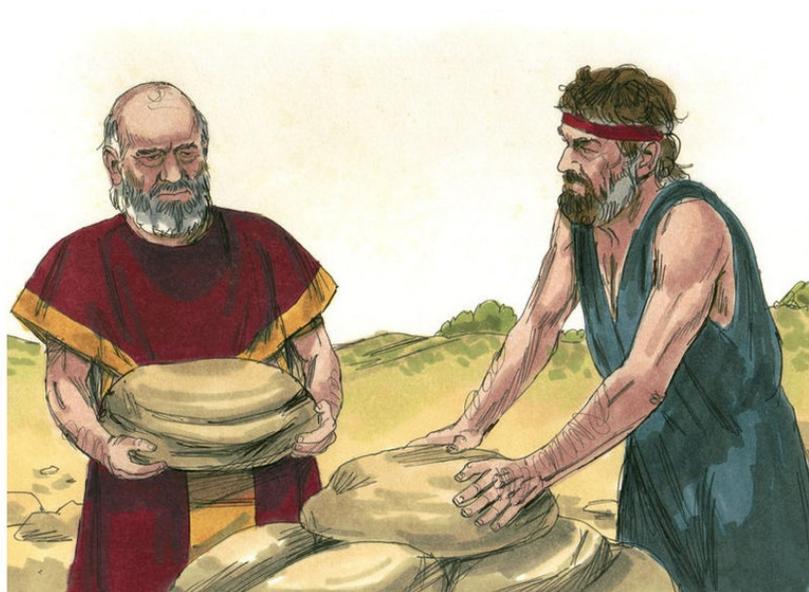
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This becomes a landmark, when Jacob and Laban can refer to, as a witness to their agreement. They remember this stone standing on edge; they recall all of the other stones gathered up and holding that stone up; and everyone with them also remembers these exact events. People can see this stone standing up and all of the stones piled up around it and they understand that this was man-made or caused by men. Since Jacob has done something like this before, I would assume that this was somewhat of a tradition—at least for his period of time.

**Laban and Jacob Stacking Rocks** (a graphic by Jim Padgett); from [Wikimedia](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

All of these men—Jacob’s men and Laban’s men—are witnesses to the agreement made by Jacob and Laban. The upright pillar stone and the stones gathered around it marks the spot where this agreement was made. This is something which is not usually done. It helps to mark this day in the minds of all the men who are with Jacob and Laban. The idea is for everyone to remember the terms of their agreement; and that these terms will stick in their heads, just like the unusual pillar with stones placed all around them. This makes it a day like no other day for these men.



Matthew Henry: *A heap of stones was raised, to keep up the memory of the event, writing being then not known or little used.*<sup>763</sup>

### Genesis 31:46d

| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                             | BDB and Strong’s #        |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]    | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wāw consecutive                              | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #253 |
| ’âkal (אָכַל) [pronounced aw-KAHL] | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>                                    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal imperfect | Strong’s #398<br>BDB #37  |

<sup>762</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>763</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

## Genesis 31:46d

| Hebrew/Pronunciation          | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
|-------------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| shâm (שׁם) [pronounced shawm] | there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing                                  | adverb of place   | Strong's #8033<br>BDB #1027 |
| ʿal (עַל) [pronounced ʿahl]   | upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside                                 | preposition of relative proximity                               | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752  |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced gahl]  | a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring | masculine singular noun; with the definite article; pausal form | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164  |

**Translation:** ...and then ate there next to the heap. And, so that this entire day is impressed on their minds, and so that they can come to an easy agreement, everyone sits down for a meal near these stones.

Genesis 31:45–46 Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that it was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, "Gather up some stones." Therefore, they took a number of stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap.

### Eating the covenant sacrifices (various commentators)

E. W. Bullinger: *[They ate] of the covenant sacrifices. Compare Genesis 26:30. Exodus 24:5, Exodus 24:11.*<sup>764</sup>

Matthew Henry: *A sacrifice of peace offerings was offered. Peace with God puts true comfort into our peace with our friends. They did eat bread together, partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice. In ancient times covenants of friendship were ratified by the parties eating and drinking together.*<sup>765</sup> Although it seems logical that peace offerings were offered up, that is not actually a part of the text. However, at the end of this passage, Jacob will offer up an animal sacrifice (v. 54).<sup>766</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *"They ate there by the heap." The eating was a solemn recognition of the peaceful nature of the covenant, as necessary a part of the process as the setting up of the stones. This was probably a ceremonial eating at the setting of the stones, a preliminary to the feast, although it is possible that it simply parallels the feast described later in verse 54, mentioned here as part of the ceremony.*<sup>767</sup>

Although an animal sacrifice is not mentioned until v. 54, most of the time, animal sacrifices are offered first, and then the meal is the eating of those sacrifices. Given the size of these two groups, only one or two large animals would have been offered up.

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Genesis 31:45–46 Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that it was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, "Gather up some stones." Therefore, they took a number of stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap.

<sup>764</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:46.

<sup>765</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>766</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:46.

<sup>767</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:46.

## The heap of stones (various commentators)

Matthew Poole: *They did eat there upon the heap*, or rather by or *beside the heap*, as the Hebrew particle *al* is oft understood, as *Psalm 23:2 81:7*.<sup>768</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *an heap*: The word *gal*, rendered "heap," properly signifies a round heap or circle; probably like the Druidical remains in this country, which have been traced in India, Persia, Western Asia, Greece, and Northern Europe. These usually consist of irregular circles of large stones, with a principal one in the midst; the former probably being used for seats, and the latter for an altar; corresponding to the stone set up as a pillar by Jacob, and the heap of stones collected by his brethren. They appear to have been used, as Gilgal undoubtedly was (*Joshua 4:5; Judges 2:1; Judges 3:19; Judges 20:1–48; 1Samuel 7:16; 1Samuel 10:8, 1Samuel 10:17; 1Samuel 11:15; 1Samuel 13:7; 1Samuel 15:33. 2Samuel 19:15, 2Samuel 19:40. 2Kings 2:1*) as temples, and as places for holding councils, and assembling the people. For a satisfactory elucidation of this subject, consult the *Fragments to Calmet*, Nos. 156, 735, 736.<sup>769</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The employment of piled stones serves as an eternal witness against one who would dare to break the treaty made between the parties, a common Near Eastern practice.*

Wenstrom continues: *This treaty was a formal one, employing several elements: (1) The grounds delineated by the treaty (2) Invoking divine witnesses (3) A curse for breaking the agreement, which was insured in the case of Jacob and Laban by the presence of God (4) A meal before the witnessing heap, confirming the acceptance of the terms by both parties.*

Wenstrom concludes: *The stones used in this passage also represent another common ancient Near Eastern legal practice, namely that of establishing boundary stones to demarcate territory. These stones marked the extension of territory under the jurisdiction of a ruler, the extent of a private plot, and in some cases, served as a public proclamation that land had been transferred. Presumably, the boundary marked by the stones was the limit of Jacob's property as Gilead would later become part of the nation of Israel*.<sup>770</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett has the most interesting and logical theory: *This was clearly acceded to by Laban (Genesis 31:51). It is clear that a stone was set up for each person, one for Jacob and a heap for Laban as the leader, and for the heads of sub-tribes involved in the making of the covenant. Thus Jacob first sets up his pillar to represent his side of the covenant, then the remainder set up stones together in a heap to represent their side of the covenant. We can compare the twelve stones for the twelve tribes in Joshua 4. So there are two silent witnesses to the covenant, the pillar and the heap. As we have seen the setting up of stones was a regular method of having a physical reminder of a covenant (compare Genesis 35:14; 1Samuel 7:12; Joshua 4:3; see also 2Samuel 18:18)*.<sup>771</sup>

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**Genesis 31:46** And Jacob said to his brothers, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap. And they ate there upon the heap.

In order to hold an oblong stone up, other stones were probably piled around it. The idea was, to make a monument that is clearly set up by man.

<sup>768</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:46.

<sup>769</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:46.

<sup>770</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 507); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>771</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:45–46.

Genesis 31:45–46 Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that it was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, “Gather up some stones.” Therefore, they took a number of stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap.

### The Ceremony of the Covenant (Various Commentators)

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *The way in which this covenant was ratified was by a heap of stones being laid in a circular pile, to serve as seats, and in the center of this circle a large one was set up perpendicularly for an altar. It is probable that a sacrifice was first offered, and then that the feast of reconciliation was partaken of by both parties seated on the stones around it. To this day heaps of stones, which have been used as memorials, are found abundantly in the region where this transaction took place.*<sup>772</sup>

Matthew Henry: *The...covenant...was made and ratified with great solemnity, according to the usages of those times. (1.) A pillar was erected (Genesis 31:45), and a heap of stones raised (Genesis 31:46), to perpetuate the memory of the thing, the way of recording agreements by writing being then either not known or not used. (2.) A sacrifice was offered (Genesis 31:54), a sacrifice of peace—offerings. Note, Our peace with God is that which puts true comfort into our peace with our friends. If parties contend, the reconciliation of both to him will facilitate their reconciliation one to another. (3.) They did eat bread together (Genesis 31:46), jointly partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice, Genesis 31:54. This was in token of a hearty reconciliation. Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together. It was in the nature of a love-feast.*<sup>773</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *Jacob proceeded at once to give a practical proof of his assent to this proposal of his father-in-law, by erecting a stone as a memorial, and calling upon his relations also (“his brethren,” as in Genesis 31:23, by whom Laban and the relations who came with him are intended, as Genesis 31:54 shows) to gather stones into a heap, which formed a table, as is briefly observed in Genesis 31:46, for the covenant meal (Genesis 31:54).*<sup>774</sup>

Wesley: *was made and ratified with great solemnity, according to the usages of those times. A pillar was erected, and a heap of stones raised, to perpetuate the memory of the thing, writing being then not known. A sacrifice was offered, a sacrifice of peace - offerings. They did eat bread together, jointly partaking of the feast upon the sacrifice. This was in token of a hearty reconciliation. Covenants of friendship were anciently ratified by the parties eating and drinking together.*<sup>775</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

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**And so calls to him Laban Jegar-sahadutha; and Jacob called to him Galeed.**

Genesis  
31:47

**Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha; while Jacob called it Galeed.**

**Laban gave this place the name Jegar-sahadutha; while Jacob called it Galeed.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew) [And so calls to him Laban Jegar-sahadutha; and Jacob called to him Galeed.](#)

<sup>772</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

<sup>773</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>774</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

<sup>775</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Laban called it Yegar Sahadutha ["The Heap of Witness." The oldest specimen of Aramaic extant.], but Jakob called it Gal-Ed [Hebrew, "The heap of Witness."].          |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Laban called it Ogar Sahid but Jakob called it in the holy tongue, Gal-ed.   |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And Laban called it The witness heap: and Jacob, The hillock of testimony: <u>each of them according to the propriety of his language.</u>                                 |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Laban called it Yegar Sahadutha, but Ya'aqub called it Galeed.   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha (the Pillar of Witness); but Jacob called it Galead (Gilead).  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Laban called it the Heap of Testimony; and Jacob called it the Witness Heap.   |
| Significant differences: | The Latin adds some additional explanatory text (this appears to be a comment added by Saint Jerome). Some translations transliterate the words and others translate them. |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English      | And the name Laban gave it was Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob gave it the name of Galeed.  |
| Easy English                | Laban called the place Jegar Sahadutha. Jacob called it Galeed. Jegar Sahadutha are Aramaic words. Galeed is a Hebrew word. Both mean that the stones showed that people made a promise there. |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006   | Laban named that place Yegar Sahadutha. But Jacob named that place Galeed.   |
| International Children's B. | Laban named that place in his language A Pile to Remind Us. And Jacob gave the place the same name in Hebrew.  |
| <i>The Message</i>          | Laban named it in Aramaic, Yegar-sahadutha (Witness Monument); Jacob echoed the naming in Hebrew, Galeed (Witness Monument).   |
| NIRV                        | Laban named the pile of stones Jegar Sahadutha. Jacob named it Galeed.   |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Contemporary English V. | After Jacob had set up a large rock, he told his men to get some more rocks and pile them up next to it. Then Jacob and Laban ate a meal together beside the rocks. Laban named the pile of rocks Jegar Sahadutha. But Jacob named it Galeed. Vv. 45–46 are included for context.                      |
| The Living Bible        | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument, and told his men to gather stones and make a heap, and Jacob and Laban ate together beside the pile of rocks. They named it "The Witness Pile"—"Jegar-sahadutha," in Laban's language, and "Galeed" in Jacob's. Vv. 45–46 are included for context. |
| New Berkeley Version    | Laban named it Jegar-sahadutha and Jacob named it Galeed [Laban gave the Aramaean and Jacob the Hebrew name for Witness-cairn Mizpah means Watchpost.].  |
| New Century Version     | Laban named that place in his language A Pile to Remind Us, and Jacob gave the place the same name in Hebrew.  |
| New Life Version        | Laban gave the stones the name of Jegar-sahadutha. But Jacob gave them the name Galeed.  |
| New Living Translation  | To commemorate the event, Laban called the place Jegar-sahadutha (which means "witness pile" in Aramaic), and Jacob called it Galeed (which means "witness pile" in Hebrew).   |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| American English Bible | And thereafter, Laban said: 'This [pile of stones] is the witnesses between you and me today.' And Laban called it The [Stone] Pile of Testimony, while Jacob referred to it as The Witness [Stone] Pile. V. 46b is included for context. |
|------------------------|---|

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Beck's American Translation | Laban called it Heap-of-Witness, and Jacob called it Heap-of-Witness. In the original text there are two different names. Laban's in the Aramaic and Jacob's in the Hebrew, both meaning the same     |
| International Standard V    | Laban named the place Jegar-sahadutha [The Aram. name <i>Jegar-sahadutha</i> means <i>stack of witness</i> ], but Jacob named it Galeed [The Heb. name <i>Galeed</i> means <i>stack of witness</i> ]. |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | Laban called it the Cairn of Record, and Jacob called it the Witness-heap, each according to the usage of his own tongue.   |
| Translation for Translators | Laban gave the heap the Aramaic name Jegar-Sahadutha, <i>which means "rock-pile to remind us"</i> , but Jacob gave the rock-pile the Hebrew name Galeed, which has the same meaning.                  |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible      | Laban was to call it, Jegar-sahadutha. Jacob is to have called it, Galeed.  |
| Conservapedia           | Laban named the place Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Galeed.   |
| HCSB                    | So Jacob picked out a stone and set it up as a marker. Then Jacob said to his relatives, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a mound, then ate there by the mound. Laban named the mound Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Galeed. Vv. 45–46 are included for context. |
| Urim-Thummim Version    | And Laban named it Jegarsahadutha (witness mound in Chaldee) : but Jacob named it Galeed (witness mound in Hebrew).   |
| Wikipedia Bible Project | And Laban called it Yegar Shahadutha (Jegar Sahadutha), and Jacob called it Gal'ed (Galeed).  |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Christian Community (1988) | Laban called it Jegar-saha du tha, and Jacob called it, Galeed.   |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed. <b>Jegar Sahadutha</b> is Chaldee [also called Syriac, or Aramaic] the language of the area which Laban spoke. Galeed is Hebrew, the language of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Both phrases mean Heap of Testimony. |
| New American Bible (2002)  | Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob named it Galeed. Jegar-sahadutha: an Aramaic term meaning "mound of witness." Galeed: in Hebrew, galed, with the same meaning; also offers an explanation of the regional name Gilead.   |
| New English Bible          | Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha [Aramaic for Cairn of Witness], and Jacob called it Gal-ed [Hebrew for Cairn of Witness].   |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Complete Jewish Bible    | Lavan called it Y'gar-Sahaduta ["pile of witness" in Aramaic], while Ya'akov called it Gal-'Ed ["pile of witness" in Hebrew].                        |
| The Complete Tanach      | And Laban called it Yegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Gal ed.   |
|                          | <b>Yegar Sahadutha:</b> The Aramaic translation of Gal-ed.   |
| exeGesés companion Bible | And Laban calls it Yegar Sahadutha/Heap of Witness: but Yaaqov calls it Gal Ed/Heap of Witness.  |
| Kaplan Translation       | Laban called it Witness Mound (Yegar Sahadutha [Witness Mound in Aramaic, Laban's language.]), but Jacob named it Gal'ed [Witness Mound in Hebrew.]. |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible    | And Lavan called it Yegar Sahaduta; but Ya'akov called it Gale'ed ("Heap of Witness").   |

**Expanded/Embellished Bibles:**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha (stone monument of testimony in Aramaic), but Jacob called it Galeed.  |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha; but Jacob called it Galeed, both names, the first Chaldean, the other Hebrew, signifying the same: Heap of testimony, or witness.  |
| NET Bible®                 | Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha [Jegar Sahadutha. Laban the Aramean gave the place an Aramaic name which means "witness pile" or "the pile is a witness.,"] but Jacob called it Galeed [Galeed also means "witness pile" or "the pile is a witness," but this name is Canaanite or Western Semitic and closer to later Hebrew. Jacob, though certainly capable of speaking Aramaic, here prefers to use the western dialect.].   |
| The Pulpit Commentary      | And Laban called it Jegar sahadutha:—A Chaldaic term signifying "Heap of testimony," βουνὸς τηρῶς μαρτυρίας (LXX.); tumulum testis (Vulgate)—but Jacob called it Galeed—compounded of Gal and 'ed and meaning, like the corresponding Aramaic term used' by Laban, "Heap of witness," βουνὸς μάρτυς (LXX.); acervum testimonii (Vulgate). "It is scarcely possible to doubt," says Kalisch, "that an important historical fact," relating to the primitive language of the patriarchs, "is concealed in this part of the narrative;" but whether that fact was that Aramaic, Syriac, or Chaldee was the mother-tongue of the family of Nahor, while Hebrew was acquired by Abraham in Canaan (Block, Delitzsch, Keil), or that Laban had deviated from the original speech of his ancestors, or that Laban and Jacob both used the same language with some growing dialectic differences (Gosman in Lange, Inglis), Laban simply on this occasion giving the heap a name which would be known to the inhabitants of the district (Wordsworth), seems impossible to determine with certainty. The most that can be reasonably inferred from the term Jegar-sahadutha is that Aramaic was the language of Mesopotamia (Rosenmüller); besides this expression there is no other evidence that Laban and Jacob conversed in different dialects; while it is certain that the word Mizpah, which was probably also spoken by Laban, is not Chaldee or Aramaic but Hebrew. |
| The Voice                  | So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. He told his relatives to gather up more stones. So they all took stones and made a large pile of them. Then they ate there by the pile. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha (Aramaic for "witness-pile") and Jacob called it Galeed (Hebrew for "witness-pile"). Vv. 45–46 are included for context.  |

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans.  | ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> called out to him, Yegar-Sa'haduta <sup>[Fear of a witness]</sup> , and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> had called out to him, Galeyd <sup>[Mound of witness]</sup> ,...  |
| Concordant Literal Version  | And taking is Jacob a stone and is raising it for a monument. And saying is Jacob to his brethren, "Pick up stones. And they are picking up stones and making a mound. And eating are they and drinking there on the mound. And saying to him is Laban, "This mound is witness between me and you today. And calling it is Laban Igr-shedutha. And Jacob calls it Galeed. Vv. 45–46 are included for context. |
| Green's Literal Translation | And Laban called it, Heap of the Testimony. And Jacob called it in Hebrew, Heap of Testimony.   |
| Third Millennium Bible      | And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha [that is, The heap of witness], but Jacob called it Galeed.  |
| World English Bible         | Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.  |
| Young's Updated LT          | And Laban calls it Jegar-Sahadutha; and Jacob has called it Galeed.   |

**The gist of this passage:** Both men called the piles of rocks a *heap of testimony*; but using their own languages.

| Genesis 31:47a   |   |  |                             |
|--|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #          |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]  | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| qârâ' (אָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i> ]   | <i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lâmed]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                                     | Strong's #7121<br>BDB #894  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>                                       | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510   |
| Y <sup>e</sup> gar Sâhâadûwthâ' (יְגַר אֶתְוֹדֻתָּא) [pronounced <i>yeh-GAHR-sah-had-oo-THAW</i> ] | <i>heap of testimony, witness-heap; transliterated, Jegar-Sahadutha</i>   | Aramaic proper noun  | Strong's #8673<br>BDB #1077 |

**Translation:** [Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha](#);... Apparently, Laban lived among the Aramæans and is called an Aramæan; and he has taken up their language. The name, *Jegar-sahadutha*, means a *heap of testimony, a witness heap*.

I don't believe that Laban was born in that region; but I cannot recall for certain. However, it appears that he was raised there.

| Genesis 31:47b  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-ġuh-KOH<sup>BV</sup></i> ]         | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| qârâ' (אָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i> ]                              | <i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lâmed]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                                       | Strong's #7121<br>BDB #894 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l'</i> ]                                       | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>                                       | directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |

## Genesis 31:47b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology      | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Gal <sup>ec</sup> êd (גַּלְעָד)<br>[pronounced gahl <sup>ec</sup> -<br>GAYD] | witness-pile, hill of witness; and<br>is transliterated Galeed, Gilead | proper noun; location | Strong's #1567<br>BDB #165 |

**Translation:** ...while Jacob called it Galeed. Jacob gave it a Hebrew name, Galeed, which means a witness pile.

You may recall that Abraham and his family originally moved to Haran and they lived there for a number of years. However, when Abraham's father died, Abraham left and went to the Land of Promise as God told him to. It is not entirely clear if Laban simply picked up the language of the people around him (that seems most likely); or if the languages of Laban and Jacob diverged after such a long time. The former seems to be the most reasonable explanation.

Genesis 31:47 Laban gave this place the name Jegar-sahadutha; while Jacob called it Galeed.

This is the first time that these two languages are differentiated. There have been hints of a language barrier previously (when Jacob came and spoke with the young shepherds in Haran and their sentences were very short).

### Aramaic and Hebrew (Various Commentators)

Benson: *The name Laban gave it signifies the heap of witness, in the Syrian tongue, which he used, and Galeed signifies the same in Hebrew, the language which Jacob used.*<sup>776</sup>

Barnes: *"Jegar-sahadutha." Here is the first decided specimen of Aramaic, as contradistinguished from Hebrew. Its incidental appearance indicates a fully formed dialect known to Jacob, and distinct from his own.*<sup>777</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *These words are the oldest proof, that in the native country of the patriarchs, Mesopotamia, Aramaean or Chaldaean was spoken, and Hebrew in Jacob's native country, Canaan; from which we may conclude that Abraham's family first acquired the Hebrew in Canaan from the Canaanites (Phoenicians).*<sup>778</sup>

Murphy: *Jegarsahadutha. Here is the first decided specimen of Aramaic, as contra-distinguished from Hebrew. Its incidental appearance indicates a fully formed dialect known to Jacob, and distinct from his own. Gilead, or Galeed remains to this day in Jebel Jel'ad, though the original spot was further north.*<sup>779</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *There has been much discussion over Aramaic vs. Hebrew as the language of the Patriarchs. It seems that Aramaic was spoken in Mesopotamia, the home of Abraham, but as he journeyed to Canaan he picked up a dialect of Aramaic which we know as Hebrew. This moves our linguistic understanding of these languages back in time.*<sup>780</sup>

The Bible Query: *This indicates that Aramaic existed side by side with Hebrew at an early date. Remember, the Arameans were living in Syria where Laban lived. Jacob's wives were from there. Alternately, these may be words common with early Hebrew.*<sup>781</sup>

<sup>776</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47–53.

<sup>777</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–47.

<sup>778</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

<sup>779</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:46–47 (suggestive comments).

<sup>780</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:47.

<sup>781</sup> *Bible Query*; March 2006 version. Copyright (c) Christian Debater(tm) 1997-2006.; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47.

## Aramaic and Hebrew (Various Commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Laban the Syrian (cf. Genesis 31:20, Genesis 28:5) gives an Aramaic name, Jacob the Hebrew gives a Hebrew name. In the region of Gilead, in later times, both languages were probably spoken.*<sup>782</sup>

Clarke: *From this example we may infer that the Chaldee language was nearly coequal with the Hebrew. A gloss made by St. Jerome, and which was probably only entered by him in his margin as a note, has crept into the text of the Vulgate. It is found in every copy of this version, and is as follows: Uterque juxta proprietatem linguae suae, Each according to the idiom of his own tongue.*<sup>783</sup>

Gill: *Laban was a Syrian, as he sometimes is called, Genesis 25:20, wherefore he used the Syrian language; Jacob was a descendant of Abraham the Hebrew, and he used the Hebrew language; and both that their respective posterity might understand the meaning of the name; though these two are not so very different but Laban and Jacob could very well understand each other, as appears by their discourse together, these being but dialects of the same tongue.*<sup>784</sup>

Matthew Poole: *Laban gives the name in the Syrian language; but Jacob, though he had been long conversant in Syria, and understood that language, yet he chose to give it in Hebrew, which was both a secret renouncing of the Syrian manners and religion, together with their language, and an implicit profession of his conjunction with the Hebrews, as in their tongue, so in their religion.*<sup>785</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *This is interesting testimony to the fact that the Arameans spoke an early form of Aramaic while Abraham's family had adopted an early form of Hebrew, which parallels Canaanite, as their mother tongue. Jacob has been using Aramaic but now resorts to Hebrew as testimony to the change that is now taking place. He is no longer an Aramean by adoption, he is an Abrahamite by birth.*<sup>786</sup>

Whedon: *This incidental notice of the naming of their stone memorial shows that already, in Jacob's time, the dialectical differences between the Aramaic and Hebrew tongues were noticeable.*<sup>787</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *That border feuds were waged between Aramaeans and Israelites, and that the boundaries between the two nations were marked by cairns, is indicated in this story.*<sup>788</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Here Moses inserts a notice to the effect that Laban and Jacob each gave a name to the cairn, and each man in his native tongue, that of Laban being Aramaic and that of Jacob Hebrew...it a matter worthy of record that in Mesopotamia Aramaic prevailed; whereas in Canaan Hebrew, perhaps the ancient Canaanite language, was spoken? The exactness of his observation is established by this definite bit of historical information. The two names are not absolutely identical, as is usually claimed, though the difference is slight. Jegar-sakadhutha means "heap of testimony," gal'ed means "heap of witness" or witnessing heap. For "testimony" is an abstract noun, "witness" is a personal noun or name of a person.*<sup>789</sup>

Leupold draws this logical conclusion: *We observe, therefore, that at the beginning of their history the nation Israel came of a stock that spoke Aramaic but abandoned the Aramaic for the Hebrew. After the Captivity the nation, strange to say, veered from Hebrew back to Aramaic.*<sup>790</sup>

<sup>782</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:47.*

<sup>783</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>784</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>785</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>786</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>787</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:47.

<sup>788</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:48.*

<sup>789</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>790</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Genesis 31:47 Laban gave this place the name Jegar-sahadutha; while Jacob called it Galeed.

### Galeed (various commentators)

Barnes: *Gilead or Galeed remains to this day in Jebel Jel'ad, though the original spot was further north.*<sup>791</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *There are two names here. The first is Aramaic (BDB 1094 CONSTRUCT BDB 1113) and the second is Hebrew (BDB 165). They are parallel, referring to the heap of stones. Jacob named the place "Galeed" (BDB 165, "witness-pile"), which is related to where they were camped (i.e., "Gilead," BDB 166, "a circle of stones" or "a circle of mountains").*<sup>792</sup>

Gill: *but Jacob called it Galeed; which in the Hebrew tongue signifies the same, "an heap of witness"; or "an heap, the witness"*<sup>793</sup>

Whedon: *This was probably the origin of the name Gilead, applied to the whole range of mountains running north and south on the east of the Jordan. The particular spot where the covenant was made was probably at the northern end of the range, not at what was later known as Mizpeh of Gilead, (Judges 11:29,) for Jacob, after this, passing southward crossed the Jabbok, (Wady Zerka,) which is itself north of the modern mount Jelad.*<sup>794</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *A popular etymology thus accounted for the name "Gilead" by derivation from "Galeed." Probably, some well-known "cairn" on the hill-frontier of Gilead was the reputed scene of the compact between Laban and Jacob.*<sup>795</sup>

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Genesis 31:47 Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. (ESV)

Even though the Bible speaks of the confounding of languages at the Tower of Babel, very little is said about language after that. This is one of the few places where language is mentioned. Both men give a name to the heap of stones using their own language.

Although brothers Abraham and Nahor would have spoken the same language, their grandchildren, Jacob and Laban, respectively, did not. Laban and Bethuel (his father) are both called *Syrians* (or *Aramæans* in Genesis 25:20). This refers to their location, their language and, to some extent, their culture. Laban probably grew up speaking Syrian as his primary language or as his co-language.

When Abraham moved to Canaan, little is said about the language he speaks. He interacted with a variety of peoples in that land, who certainly did not have a common language (the king of Sodom, Melchizedek of Salem, Abimelech of Gerar); and nothing is ever said about their interaction as speakers of different languages. This is one of the few times where it is suggested that Laban and Jacob clearly have different primary languages.

<sup>791</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–47.

<sup>792</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:47.

<sup>793</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>794</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:47.

<sup>795</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:48.

We have had this hinted at before. If you will recall the original interaction between the Abraham's servant and those he met at the well, the language was very simple and elementary, at first.

**Genesis 31:47** And Laban called it in Syrian, *Heap of the Testimony*, and Jacob called it in Hebrew, *Heap of Testimony*. (MKJV; which is apparently the translation that I have used throughout most of this study)

You may recall when Jacob first met the people at Laban's well, that their speech was stilted and short. There are many similarities between Syriac and Hebrew. However, it is clear here that there were also dramatic differences. In the first v. 47, we have the transliteration from the Hebrew; and in the second v. 47, we have their respective translations (which are identical).

Men speaking these respective languages could communicate with one another; but they probably knew a little about one another's language. Laban spoke Syrian and Jacob spoke Hebrew.

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:43–47 **Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, " the daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. (the daughters, my daughters, and the children, my children, and the sheep, my sheep--and all which you are seeing, to me it) But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me." Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Now laban called it Jegarsahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.**

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:43–47

1. Jacob's words in the preceding verses have cut Laban to the quick.
2. His very even-handed defense of his work, coupled with his affirmations of integrity point out all the more the type of person that Laban has been.
3. His claim to positive volition and the fact that God has blessed him easily lead one to conclude that such is not true of Laban.
4. His final statement that God has shown His hand in the matter through the dream, leaves Laban without defense.
5. To admit that Jacob was right about all these matters would be tantamount to admitting that he was a reversionist.
6. Laban does not want to deal with the ramifications of this thought, so he immediately launches into an attack.
7. He has accused Jacob of stealing his idols, and although he has not found them, he still wants to make Jacob out as a thief.
8. He states that all Jacob has is really his, including his wives, his children, and his flocks, as well as any other wealth he may have with him.
9. Jacob was penniless when he came to Laban, but through hard word and integrity, he has amassed quite a bit of prosperity.
10. Laban claims that hard work and God's blessing is not the reason Jacob has anything, the real reason being that he in essence stole it from Laban.
11. Laban implies that he could take it back, but this would require force, and he is very concerned that none of his family gets hurt.
12. He knows that he had better not do anything to Jacob, and that the dream has frightened him to the point that he will not do anything.
13. Typical of the reversionist, Laban is all talk.
14. He has threatened and insulted Jacob, so now he fears that one day Jacob may come and rectify all the injustices that Laban has done, so he suggests that they make a covenant.
15. Jacob was a peaceful man, and in spite of Laban's oppression, he agrees and sets up a pillar to mark the spot and commemorate this event.
16. He has those with him gather stones, and they make a pile around the pillar, and they sealed the

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:43–47

covenant with a meal.

17. Laban names the heap in the Aramaic tongue, while Jacob names it in Hebrew.
18. The names are not precisely identical in that the Aramaic means "heap of testimony" and the Hebrew means "heap of witness, or witnessing heap"

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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Whedon: *The following verses appear more like an antique song than formal narrative, and may be regarded as an ode composed upon this occasion, or soon after.*<sup>796</sup> To support this notion, (1) what Laban says is poetic and (2) he had a long time to think when he rode in pursuit of Jacob. On the other hand, how much time did he spend angry?

**And so says Laban, "The heap the this [is] a witness between me and between you the day." Upon so he called his name Galeed. And the Mizpah, which he said, "Is watching Y<sup>e</sup>howah between me and between you for we are hidden a man from his associate. If you afflict my daughters and if you take wives upon my daughters, [there is] no man with us, behold Elohim [is] a witness between me and between you."**

Genesis  
31:48–50

**Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore, Jacob [lit., *he*] named it Galeed. Also [Laban called it] the Mizpah, where he said, "Y<sup>e</sup>howah will watch between you and me, when we are absent each one from the other. If you afflict my daughters or if you take wives instead of my daughters, [even though there is] no one [of us] near us, behold [that] Elohim [is] a witness between you and me."**

**Laban said, "This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today." Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed. Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, "Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so says Laban, "The heap the this [is] a witness between me and between you the day." Upon so he called his name Galeed. And the Mizpah, which he said, "Is watching Y<sup>e</sup>howah between me and between you for we are hidden a man from his associate. If you afflict my daughters and if you take wives upon my daughters, [there is] no man with us, behold Elohim [is] a witness between me and between you."

Targum (Onkelos)

And Laban said, This mound testifieth between me and thee to day. Therefore he called the name of it The Heap of Witness, and The Observatory [Sakutha. Chald. from Seka, aspexit, contemplatus est. The Hebrew Mizpeh.]; for he said, The Word of the Lord will observe between me and thee, when we are hidden (each) man from his neighbour. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take wives over my daughters, no man is with us; see, the Word of the Lord is witness between me and thee.

<sup>796</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:48.

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And The Observatory also it was called because he said The Lord shall observe between me and thee when we are hidden each man from his neighbour If thou shalt afflict my daughters, doing them injury, and if thou take upon my daughters, there is no man to judge us, the <u>Word of the Lord</u> seeing is the witness between me and thee.   |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And Laban said: This heap shall be a witness between me and you this day, and therefore the name thereof was called Galead, <u>that is, The witness heap</u> . The Lord behold and judge between us when we shall be gone one from the other. If you afflict my daughters, and if you bring in other wives over them: none is witness of our speech but God, who is present and beholds.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Laban said, "This heap is witness between me and you this day." Therefore it was named Galeed and Mizpah, for he said, "Mar-Yah watch between me and you, when we are absent one from another. If you afflict my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; behold, God is witness between me and you."   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and you this day. Therefore he called its name Galead. And a watchtower; for he said. Let the LORD watch between me and you, because we are parting one from another. If you despise my daughters, or if you shall take other wives besides my daughters, now no man is with us; see, God only is witness between me and you.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | <sup>48</sup> And Laban said to Jacob, Behold, this heap, and this pillar are a witness.<br><sup>48a</sup> For if I should not cross over to you, neither should you cross over to me, for mischief beyond this heap and this pillar.<br><sup>48b</sup> And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and the pillar, which I have set between me and thee; this heap witnesses, and this pillar witnesses; therefore its name was called, the Heap witnesses.<br><sup>49</sup> And the vision of which he said-- Let God look to it between me and you, because we are about to depart from each other,-<br><sup>50</sup> If you shall humble my daughters, if you should take wives in addition to my daughters, see, there is no one with us looking on. God is witness between me and you. |
| Significant differences: | Laban's name is left out of one of the targums. The additional text in the Latin may be another way of stating what the word means. One targum has <i>The Word of the Lord</i> rather than <i>Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i> . The targums also have additional text.   |

There is some additional text in the Greek; it is separated by verses in order to differentiate it from the Hebrew text.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English     | And Laban said, These stones are a witness between you and me today. For this reason its name was Galeed, And Mizpah, for he said, May the Lord keep watch on us when we are unable to see one another's doings. If you are cruel to my daughters, or if you take other wives in addition to my daughters, then though no man is there to see, God will be the witness between us.   |
| Easy English               | Laban said 'These stones show that we made a promise today.' That is why Jacob called that place Galeed. That place also had the name 'Mizpah'. That was because Laban said 'May the Lord watch you and me when we are away from each other. Remember that God is watching you. If you do wrong to my daughters, God will see it. And if you marry any other women, remember this. God is watching you. Even if no one else is with you, God will know.' |
| Easy-to-Read Version--2006 | Laban said to Jacob, "This pile of rocks will help us both remember our agreement." That is why Jacob called the place Galeed.   |

Then Laban said, "Let the Lord watch over us while we are separated from each other." So that place was also named Mizpah.

Then Laban said, "If you hurt my daughters, remember that God will punish you. If you marry other women, remember that God is watching.

Good News Bible (TEV)

Laban said to Jacob, "This pile of rocks will be a reminder for both of us." That is why that place was named Galeed. Laban also said, "May the Lord keep an eye on us while we are separated from each other." So the place was also named Mizpah. Laban went on, "If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other women, even though I don't know about it, remember that God is watching us.

International Children's B.

Laban said to Jacob, "This pile of rocks will remind us of the agreement between us." That is why the place was called A Pile to Remind Us. It was also called Mizpah. This was because Laban said, "Let the Lord watch over us while we are separated from each other. Remember that God is our witness. This is true even if no one else is around us. He will know if you harm my daughters or marry other women.

*The Message*

Laban said, "This monument of stones will be a witness, beginning now, between you and me." (That's why it is called Galeed—Witness Monument.) It is also called Mizpah (Watchtower) because Laban said, "God keep watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. If you mistreat my daughters or take other wives when there's no one around to see you, God will see you and stand witness between us."

Names of God Bible

Laban said, "This pile of stones stands as a witness between you and me today." This is why it was named Galeed and also Mizpah [Watchtower], because he said, "May **Yahweh** watch between you and me when we're unable to see each other. If you mistreat my daughters or marry other women behind my back, remember that **Elohim** stands as a witness between you and me."

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Common English Bible

Laban said, "This mound is our witness today," and, therefore, he too named it Galeed. He also named it Mizpah, because he said, "The Lord will observe both of us when we are separated from each other. If you treat my daughters badly and if you marry other women, though we aren't there, know that God observed our witness."

Contemporary English V.

Laban said to Jacob, "This pile of rocks will remind us of our agreement." That's why the place was named Galeed. Laban also said, "This pile of rocks means that the LORD will watch us both while we are apart from each other." So the place was also named Mizpah. Then Laban said: If you mistreat my daughters or marry other women, I may not know about it, but remember, God is watching us!

The Living Bible

"This pile of stones will stand as a witness against us if either of us trespasses across this line," Laban said. So it was also called "The Watchtower" (Mizpah). For Laban said, "May the Lord see to it that we keep this bargain when we are out of each other's sight. And if you are harsh to my daughters, or take other wives, I won't know, but God will see it.

New Berkeley Version

Laban said, "This cairn today is witness between me and you"; hence the name Galeed; also Mizpah, for he said, "May the LORD watch between me and you when we are out of each other's sight. If you ill treat my daughters; if you take waives in addition to my daughters, although no other is present, see, God is witness between me and you!"

New Century Version

Laban said to Jacob, "This pile of rocks will remind us of the agreement between us." That is why the place was called A Pile to Remind Us. It was also called Mizpah, because Laban said, "Let the Lord watch over us while we are separated from each other. Remember that God is our witness even if no one else is around us. He will know if you harm my daughters or marry other women.

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| New Life Version       | Laban said, "These stones are to stand for the agreement between you and me today." So they were given the name Galeed. They were given the name of Mizpah also. For Laban said, "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are apart from each other. If you hurt my daughters, or if you take wives other than my daughters, no man may see it. But God sees what happens between you and me."   |
| New Living Translation | Then Laban declared, "This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today." This explains why it was called Galeed—"Witness Pile." But it was also called Mizpah (which means "watchtower"), for Laban said, "May the Lord keep watch between us to make sure that we keep this covenant when we are out of each other's sight. If you mistreat my daughters or if you marry other wives, God will see it even if no one else does. He is a witness to this covenant between us. |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| American English Bible      | And Laban said to Jacob: 'Look at this pile and pillar that I've erected between you and me... this Witness [Stone] Pile and this [Stone] Pile of Testimony. We will call them, the [Stone] Pile Witnesses.'<br>And thereafter, [Laban] called this place, The Watchtower; for he said: 'May God keep watch over you and me, because we are about to leave each other. But if you humble my daughters by taking women in addition to them, you will see that someone is with us who is watching. For God is the witness between you and me.'                               |
| International Standard V    | Then Laban said, "This stack will serve as a witness between you and me today." That's how the place came to be named Galeed. It was also called Mizpah [The Heb. word <i>Mizpah</i> means <i>watchtower</i> ], because Laban [Lit. <i>he</i> ] said, "May the LORD watch between you and me, when we are estranged [Or <i>concealed</i> ] from each other. If you mistreat my daughters or if you take other wives besides them, though no one is watching [Lit. <i>with</i> ] us, keep in mind that God stands as a witness between you and me."                         |
| Revised Knox Bible          | Laban called it the Cairn of Record, and Jacob called it the Witness-heap, each according to the usage of his own tongue. Laban had said, Let this heap bear record of our covenant to-day; that is how it came to be called Galaad, the Witness-heap. Let the Lord keep watch, he said, and see justice done between us, when our ways have parted. If you do treat these daughters of mine amiss, and bring home other wives instead of them, there will be no one else to bear witness of what we have said, but God will bear witness; he is here to see us.           |
| Translation for Translators | Laban said to Jacob, "This pile of rocks we have put here today will help us to remember our agreement." That is why Jacob called it Galeed. They also named the place Mizpah, <i>which sounds like the Hebrew word that means "watchtower"</i> , because Laban said, "We will ask Yahweh to watch you and me while we are separated from each other, <i>so that we do not try to harm each other</i> . If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take other women to be your wives, even if no one tells me about it, don't forget that God sees what you and I are doing!" |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible | Laban was to say: This heap is a witness between you and me today. The name of it was to be called, Galeed-Mizpah; that which he is to have said: Jehovah was to keep watch over you, for we were to be screened, a man from his companion. Was you to look down on my daughters? - was you to receive out wives, above my daughters? - was a man to see it? - he of mighty ones is to be the witnesses!" |
| Conservapedia      | Laban said, "This mound is a testimony between me and you this day." So the name of it was called Galeed [The Hebrew <i>עד</i> ( <i>od</i> ) means "testimony" and is part of the noun Galeed.]. And it was also named Mizpah [The name Mizpah contains   |

the root verb meaning "let him watch" (imperfect tense).], because he said, "May the LORD watch between me and you, when we are hidden from one another. If you humiliate my daughters, or take any other wives beside my daughters, there is no man with us. Look! God is a Witness between me and you."

Ferrar-Fenton Bible

Laban also said ; " This heap is a Witness between me and between you to - day; " therefore they called its name Gilad 1 and a "Watch-tower," for he said, "Let the Ever-living watch between me and between you to keep each from evil. If you grieve my daughters, — and if you take wives beside my ' daughters, when we are not together, let God see the Witness between me and you."

God's Truth (Tyndale)

Then said Laban: this heap be witness between you and me this day (therefore is it called Gilead) and this toot hill which the Lord sees (said he) be witness between me and you when we are departed one from another: that you shall not vex my daughters neither shall take other wives unto them. Here is no man with us: behold, God is witness between you and me.

H. C. Leupold

And Laban said: This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. That is why he called its name Galed, and also Mizpah (Watch); for he said: May Yahweh watch between me and thee when one of us cannot see the other. If thou shouldest treat my daughters harshly, or if thou shouldest take other wives in addition to my daughters, with no man to check up on us, may God see it, as witness between me and thee.

Unlocked Literal Bible

Laban said, "This pile is a witness between me and you today." Therefore its name was called Galeed. It is also called Mizpah, because Laban said, "May Yahweh watch between you and me, when we are out of sight one from another. If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take any wives besides my daughters, although no one else is with us, see, God is witness between you and me."

Urim-Thummim Version

Then Jacob said to his relatives, gather stones and they took stones, and made a mound and they ate a meal there on the mound. And Laban named it Jegarsahadutha (witness mound in Chaldee) : but Jacob named it Galeed (witness mound in Hebrew). Then Laban said, this mound is a witness between us this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed.

### **Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

Christian Community (1988)

Laban said, "This pile of stones is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed; and it was also known as Mizpah because Laban had said, "May Yahweh watch between me and you when we are no longer in sight of each other. If you harm my daughters or take other wives besides my daughters, even though no man is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me."

The Heritage Bible

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and you this day. Therefore he called the name of it Galeed And Mizpah [Mizpah is Hebrew for Watch Tower.]; what he said: Jehovah watch between me and you, when we are concealed each man from his friend. If you look upon my daughters with harshness, or if you take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness between me and you.

New American Bible (2002)

"This mound," said Laban, "shall be a witness from now on between you and me." That is why it was named Galeed - and also Mizpah [Mizpah: a town in Gilead; cf ⇒ Judges 10:17; ⇒ 11:11, ⇒ 34; ⇒ Hosea 5:1. The Hebrew name mispa ("lookout") is allied to yisep yhwh ("may the Lord keep watch"), and also echoes the word masseba ("memorial pillar"). ], for he said: "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. If you mistreat my daughters, or take other wives besides my daughters, remember that even though no one else is about, God will be witness between you and me."

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| New American Bible (2011) | Laban said, “This mound will be a witness from now on between you and me.” That is why it was named Galeed—and also Mizpah [ <b>Mizpah</b> : a town in Gilead; cf. Jgs 10:17; 11:11, 34; Hos 5:1. The Hebrew name mispa (“lookout”) is allied to yisep yhw (“may the Lord keep watch”), and also echoes the word masseba (“sacred pillar”).], for he said: “May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are out of each other’s sight. If you mistreat my daughters, or take other wives besides my daughters, know that even though no one else is there, God will be a witness between you and me.” |
| New Jerusalem Bible       | Laban said, ‘May this cairn be a witness between us today.’ That is why he named it Galeed, and also Mizpah, because he said, ‘Let Yahweh act as watchman between us when we are no longer in sight of each other. If you ill-treat my daughters or marry other women besides my daughters, even though no one be with us, remember: God is witness between us.’   |
| New Revised Standard V.   | Laban said, ‘This heap is a witness between you and me today.’ Therefore he called it Galeed, and the pillar [Compare Sam: MT lacks <i>the pillar</i> ] Mizpah [That is <i>Watchpost</i> ], for he said, ‘The Lord watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other. If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me.’  |
| Revised English Bible     | “This cairn”, said Laban, “is a witness today between you and me.” That was why it was named Gal-ed; it was also named Mizpah, for Laban said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent from one another. If you ill-treat my daughters or take other wives besides them, then though no one is there as a witness, God will be the witness between us.”  |

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Complete Jewish Bible | Lavan said, “This pile witnesses between me and you today.” This is why it is called Gal-‘Ed and also HaMitzpah [the watchtower], because he said, “May ADONAI watch between me and you when we are apart from each other. If you cause pain to my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, then, even if no one is there with us, still God is witness between me and you.” |
| The Complete Tanach   | And Laban said, "This pile is a witness between me and you today." Therefore, he called it Gal ed.   |

**Therefore, he called it Gal-ed:** The pile is a witness.

And Mizpah, because he said, "May the Lord look between me and you when we are hidden from each other.

**And Mizpah, because he said, etc.:** And Mizpah, which is on Mount Gilead, as it is written (Jud. 11:29): “and he passed over Mizpeh of Gilead.” Now, why was it named Mizpah? Because each one said to the other, “May the Lord look (יִצְרֵף) between me and you if you transgress the covenant.”

**when we are hidden:** And we do not see each other.

If you afflict my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters when no one is with us, behold! God is a witness between me and you."

**...my daughters...my daughters:** Twice. Bilhah and Zilpah were also his daughters from a concubine. — [from Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 36]

**If you afflict my daughters:** By depriving them of their conjugal rights (Yoma 77).

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| exeGesés companion Bible | And Laban says,<br>This heap is a witness |
|--------------------------|---|

between me and between you this day.  
 So they call the name thereof  
 Gal Ed/Heap of Witness;  
 and Mispah;

**THE MISPEH BENEDICTION**

for he says,

Yah Veh watch between me and between you,  
 when we hide, man from friend.

If you humble my daughters,  
 or if you take women beside my daughters  
 - no man is with us - see

Elohim is witness between me and between you.

Hebraic Roots Bible

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between you and between me today; so he called its name Galeed (Heap of Testimony); also, Mitzpah (Watchtower); for he said, May YAHWEH watch between you and me, for we are hidden, when we are out of sight, each from his neighbor. If you will not afflict my daughters, and if you will not take wives above my daughters, no man is with us. Behold! Elohim is a witness between you and me.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

And Laban declared, "This mound is a witness between you and me this day." That is why it was named Gal-ed; And [it was called] Mizpah, because he said, "May the Lord watch between you and me, when we are out of sight of each other. If you ill-treat my daughters or take other wives besides my daughters—though no one else be about, remember, God Himself will be witness between you and me."

Kaplan Translation

'This mound shall be a witness between you and me today,' said Laban. 'That's why it is called Gal'ed. [Let the pillar be called] [(Lekach Tov).] Watchpost (Mitzpah). Let it be said that God will keep watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. If you degrade my daughters, or marry other women in addition to them, there may be no one with us, but you must always realize that God is the Witness between you and me.' Some sources see this as a proper noun (Ramban). See Judges 10:17, 11:11, 11:34, Hosea 5:1. Others, however, do not see it as a proper name (Targum; Rashi), and would interpret the verse, 'There was a watchpost, regarding which he said...' Some identify this place with Ramath Gilead in 1 Kings 22:3. This is 24 miles north of the Jabbok, and 25 miles east of the Jordan. See note on Genesis 32:3.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

And Lavan said, This gal (heap, mound) is an ed (witness) between me and thee this day. Therefore was shmo called Gale'ed;  
 And Mitzpah (Watch); for he said, Hashem watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

If thou shalt afflict my banot, or if thou shalt take nashim besides my banot, no man is with us; see, Elohim ed beini uveinecha (Elohim is witness between me and you).

*The Scriptures* 1998

And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why its name was called Gal'ed, also Mitspah, because he said, "Let יהוה watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight. "If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us; see, Elohim is witness between you and me!"

**Expanded/Embellished Bibles:**

*The Amplified Bible*

Laban said, "This mound [of stones] is a witness [a reminder of the oath taken] today between you and me." Therefore he [also] called the name Galeed, and Mizpah (watchtower), for Laban said, "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent from one another. If you should mistreat (humiliate, oppress) my daughters, or if you should take other wives besides my daughters, although no

one is with us [as a witness], see and remember, God is witness between you and me.”

The Expanded Bible

Laban said to Jacob, “This pile of rocks [mound; heap] will remind us of the agreement [be a witness] between us.” That is why the place was called A Pile to Remind Us [Galeed]. It was also called Mizpah [<sup>C</sup>sounds like “watch” in Hebrew], because Laban said, “Let the Lord watch over us while we are separated [absent] from each other. Remember that God is our witness even if no one else is around us. He will know if you harm [abuse] my daughters or marry [take] other women.

Kretzmann’s Commentary

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed; and Mizpah, another name, which was later applied to the location on account of another remark by Laban; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another. Mizpah, or Mizpeh, means watch-tower, for Jehovah was called upon to be the watchman, to watch carefully that all the terms of the agreement should be observed. 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. The Lord, knowing what the stipulation included, would watch that none of its terms be violated.

NET Bible®

Laban said, “This pile of stones is a witness of our agreement [*Heb* “a witness between me and you.”] today.” That is why it was called Galeed. It was also called Mizpah [*Heb* “and Mizpah.”] because he said, “May the Lord watch<sup>105</sup> between us [*Heb* “between me and you.”] when we are out of sight of one another [*Heb* “for we will be hidden, each man from his neighbor.”]. If you mistreat my daughters or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one else is with us, realize [*Heb* “see.”] that God is witness to your actions [*Heb* “between me and you.”].”

The Pulpit Commentary

And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day. The historian adding—Therefore was the name of it called (originally by Jacob, and afterwards by the Israelites from this transaction) Galeed (vide on Genesis 31:21). The stony character of the region may have suggested the designation. And Mizpah;—watchtower from Tsaphah, to watch. Mizpah afterwards became the site of a town in the district of Gilead (Judges 10:17; Judges 11:11, Judges 11:19, Judges 11:34); which received its name, as the historian intimates, from the pile of witness erected by Laban and his kinsmen, and was later celebrated as the residence of Jephthah (Judges 11:34) and the seat of the sanctuary (Judges 11:11). Ewald supposes that the mound (Galeed) and the watch tower (Mispah) were different objects, and that the meaning of the (so-called) legend is that, while the former (the mountain) was piled up by Jacob and his people, the latter (now the city and fortress of Mizpah on one of the heights of Gilead) was constructed by Laban and his followers; but the “grotesqueness” of this interpretation of the Hebrew story is its best refutation—for he (i.e. Laban) said, The Lord—Jehovah; a proof that Genesis 31:49, Genesis 31:50 are a Jehovistic interpolation (Tuch, Bleek, Colenso, Kalisch); an indication of their being a subsequent insertion, though not warranting the inference that the entire history is a complication (Keil); a sign that henceforth Laban regarded Jehovah as the representative of his rights (Lange); but probably only a token that Laban, recognizing Jehovah as the only name that would bind the conscience of Jacob (Hengstenberg, Quarry), had for the moment adopted Jacob’s theology (‘Speaker’s Commentary’), but only in self-defense (Wordsworth)—watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another—literally, a man from his companion. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us;—either then they stood apart from Laban’s clan followers (Inglis); or his meaning was that when widely separated there would be no one to judge betwixt them, or perhaps even to observe them (Rosenmóller), but—see, God (Elohim in contrast to man) is witness betwixt me and thee.

The Voice

**Laban:** This pile of stones stands as a witness to the agreement we have made today.

This is why he called it Galeed. The pillar was called Mizpah, which means “watch post.”

**Laban:** May the Eternal One watch us when we are away from one another. If you in any way mistreat my daughters or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, even though no one else is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Benner’s Mechanical Trans. ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> said, this mound is a witness between me and you today therefore, he called out his title Galeyd <sup>[Mound of witness]</sup>, and Hamitspah <sup>[Watchtower]</sup> because he said, YHWH <sup>[He Exists]</sup> will keep watch between me and you given that we will be hidden, a man from his dysfunction, if you will afflict my daughters and if you will take women in addition to my daughters, not a man with us, see, Elohiym <sup>[Powers]</sup> is a witness between me and you,...

English Standard Version Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore he named it Galeed, and Mizpah, for he said, “The LORD watch between you and me, when we are out of one another’s sight. If you oppress my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.”

Modern English Version Laban said, “This pile is a witness between me and you this day.” Therefore its name was called Galeed, and Mizpah, for he said, “May the LORD watch between you and me, when we are apart from one another. If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take other wives beside my daughters, although no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me.”

New King James Version Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me this day.” Therefore its name was called Galeed, also Mizpah, because he said, “May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another. If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us—see, God is witness between you and me!”

Third Millennium Bible And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between me and thee this day." Therefore was the name of it called Galeed, and Mizpah [that is, A beacon or watchtower]; for he said, "The LORD watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another. If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters, no man is with us--see, God is witness between me and thee!"

Young’s Updated LT And Laban says, “This heap is witness between me and you today.” Therefore has he called its name Galeed. Mizpah also, for he said, “Jehovah watches between me and you, for we are hidden one from another. If you afflict my daughters, or take wives beside my daughters—there is no man with us—see, God is witness between me and you.”

**The gist of this passage:** The upright stone with the surrounding stones stands as a remembrance to the truce that Laban and Jacob have entered into.

48-50

| Genesis 31:48a                     |  |                  |                           |
|------------------------------------|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong’s #        |
| wa (or va) (i)<br>[pronounced wah] | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because | wâw consecutive  | No Strong’s #<br>BDB #253 |

| Genesis 31:48a   |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                        |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]                               | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i>                                      | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect              | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55                  |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN]                | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>  | masculine singular proper noun; location                              | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526                |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced gahʃ]                                     | <i>a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring</i>  | masculine singular noun; with the definite article                    | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164                |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]                                       | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>  | masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article  | Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |
| 'êd (עֵד) [pronounced gayde]                                     | <i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Genesis 31:48 Deut. 31:19)</i> | masculine singular noun   | Strong's #5707<br>BDB #729                |
| bêyn (בֵּינַם) [pronounced bane]                                 | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>   | preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix           | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107                 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וּ) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                 |
| bêyn (בֵּינַם) [pronounced bane]                                 | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>   | preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107                 |
| yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm]                                    | <i>day; time; today (with a definite article)</i>  | masculine singular noun with the definite article                     | Strong's #3117<br>BDB #398                |

**Translation:** Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Probably, this was something of a pronouncement that Laban did. When coming to an agreement, Laban, referring to the rocks which Jacob and his men had arranged, said, “This heap of stones is a witness between us today.”

The first *said* is in the Qal imperfect. However, the naming of these rocks was in the Qal perfect, meaning that the name stayed with it. In the v. 47, when Laban names these rocks, it is in the Qal imperfect, referring to an incomplete action; but, in the same verse when Jacob names it, that is in the Qal perfect, meaning a completed action. Jacob decided to name it as he did because Laban **had** said (Qal perfect tense again). These rocks represent a nonaggression pact and a boundary between Jacob and Laban.

## Genesis 31:48b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| ‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]   | <i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>   | preposition of proximity  | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752  |
| kên (כֵּן) [pronounced <i>kane</i> ]  | <i>so, therefore, thus; then, afterwards; upright, honest; rightly, well; [it is] so, such, so constituted</i>                        | adverb  | Strong's #3651<br>BDB #485  |
| Together, ‘al kên (עַל כֵּן) mean <i>so, upon the ground of such conditions, therefore, on this account, on account, for this reason</i> . Literally, these words would be translated <i>upon so, upon therefore, upon then</i> . |   |   |                             |
| qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced <i>kaw-RAW</i> ]  | <i>to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lâmed]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                            | Strong's #7121<br>BDB #894  |
| shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced <i>shame</i> ]  | <i>name, reputation, character; fame, glory; celebrated; renown; possibly memorial, monument</i>                                      | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #8034<br>BDB #1027 |
| Gal <sup>ê</sup> êd (גַּלְעָד) [pronounced <i>gahl<sup>e</sup>-GAYD</i> ]   | <i>witness-pile, hill of witness; and is transliterated Galeed, Gilead</i>  | proper noun; location   | Strong's #1567<br>BDB #165  |

**Translation:** *Therefore, Jacob* [lit., *he*] *named it Galeed*. Normally, because we have a verb that is not attached to a proper noun, we go back to the nearest proper noun which is masculine. However, we already know that Jacob named this place *Galeed*; therefore, it is proper to put in Jacob's name here.

At first, it appears that Jacob and Laban could not even agree to a simple name. Jacob wanted to name it one thing and Laban another—not that the names are that different. It is almost as if one of them wanted to have the last say. Since the other one would not give in, this pile of rocks had two names, each name in the languages of Jacob and Laban. Laban's language was Aramaic and Jacob's was Hebrew. They were related, separated by a couple centuries when Abraham had left. During that time, they developed separately. This is why the two words seem so entirely different and have roughly the same meaning. Jacob's name probably stuck because this country was later named Gilead (which is quite similar in the Hebrew).

This gathering of stones and piling them on top of one another to represent a treaty or some other event was a common practice during this era. Jacob also set up a pillar after God spoke to him in a dream in Genesis 28:18–22. There are a handful of times that stones are piled up for this or that reason in the Bible (Genesis 28:18–22 Joshua 4:5–9 20–24 7:26 2Samuel 18:17 Eccles. 3:5). Generally speaking, such an arrangement of stones stands out as having been done by men, and there is a story behind it. This would also provide an independent witness to the Scriptures themselves.

Bibles are quite plentiful in our day, it being the best selling book of all time. So many people have Bibles around their homes. However, in the ancient world, making a copy of any book of the Bible was an arduous task; and these would be reserved for the Tabernacle, the Temple, synagogues, kings and some libraries (the Dead Sea Scrolls appears to have been a library at one time). So, some young man might ask his father, "What do those stones mean?" and the father explains them to his son. Months or years later, this young man might be in a synagogue listening to Scripture being read, and they come across a passage where those same stones are alluded to and explained.

In both the Old and New Testaments, there was a lot of confirmation given for incidents, traditions and historical mentions outside of the Bible. There might be a festival or a monument; or something that a young boy would see and he would ask about it. Then his father would tell him why it was there. Today, we have additional texts and archeology which often confirms the Scriptures which we study. It is not the same thing, obviously. The child learned the traditions established by God; and we today have various aspects of the Bible confirmed for us.

Critics of Scripture often call for such confirmations, especially if none can be found. A famous example of this is the lack of mention of Joseph in the histories of Egypt. As we will study in the future, Joseph will save the people of Egypt, but at a great cost to them (it will cost them all of their silver and their lands). The people of that generation were very grateful for what he did. However, subsequent generations may not have like Joseph at all, having no appreciation for what he had done. All they might see is, Joseph gave their lands into the hand of Pharaoh. So Joseph could have gone from being a national hero to a national zero (like Christopher Columbus or Thomas Jefferson today in the United States). Just as idiots attempt to remove statues today, statues and plaques commemorating Joseph may have been removed in ancient times, the popular opinion of him shifting.

I recall another person (no one special; just an individual) who claims that he does not believe the Bible because there are no artifacts found in the desert for the time that Moses and the Israelites wandered the Sinai desert (other confirmations of other things, notwithstanding<sup>797</sup>). Given that person's predisposition, it is certain that, if anything ever is found in the Sinai desert, he will dispute it; or, if it turns out to be indisputable, will not change his mind about the infallibility of Scripture.

**Genesis 31:48** And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day. Therefore the name of it was called *Heap of Testimony*,...

Laban believed that he was right and that Jacob was wrong. However, he did not want to separate from his son-in-law and from his daughters and grandchildren with animosity between them. He did not want to be remembered by his daughters and grandchildren in a negative way, knowing that they may never see one another again.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *Galeed: or, Gilead, Genesis 31:23; Deut. 2:36 3:16; Joshua 13:8–9.*<sup>798</sup>

### Genesis 31:49

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                |
|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction                                       | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251         |
| Mits <sup>e</sup> pâh (מִצְפֵּה) pronounced <i>mitz<sup>e</sup>-PAW</i> | <i>outlook point, watchtower; transliterated Mizpah</i>   | proper noun with the definite article                        | Strong's #4708 (& #4709) BDB #859 |
| 'âsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                            | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun; sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81          |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]                              | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect       | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55          |

<sup>797</sup> Like a recent discovery of a very ancient Jewish settlement in northern Egypt. It is best to allow this to shake out, as it may or may not turn out to correspond to the Jewish settlements prior to the exodus.

<sup>798</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:48.

## Genesis 31:49

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| tsâphâh (צָפָה)<br>[pronounced tsaw-FAW]  | <i>to look out, to view, to look about, to spy, to keep watch</i>   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; apocopated  | Strong's #6822<br>BDB #859 |
| The cohortative expresses volition. In the English, we often render this with <i>let</i> or <i>may</i> ; in the plural, this can be <i>let us</i> . The cohortative is designed for the 1 <sup>st</sup> person, it can express a wish or a desire or purpose or an intent. It is found in conditional statements. Generally there is the hê suffix to indicate this. This might be called <i>apocopated</i> in Owen's <i>Analytical Keys to the Old Testament</i> . |   |   |                            |
| YHWH (יהוה)<br>[pronunciation is possibly yohh-WAH]   | transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>  | proper noun   | Strong's #3068<br>BDB #217 |
| bêyn (בין) [pronounced bane]  | <i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>   | preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix           | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107  |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or וּ)<br>[pronounced weh]   | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| bêyn (בין) [pronounced bane]  | <i>in the midst of, between, among;</i> when found twice, it means <i>between</i>   | preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107  |
| kîy (כי) [pronounced kee]   | <i>when, that, for, because, at that time, which, what time</i>   | explanatory conjunction; preposition                                  | Strong's #3588<br>BDB #471 |
| çâthar (חָתַר)<br>[pronounced saw-THAR]   | <i>to be hidden, to lie hid; to be covered over; to hide oneself</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect           | Strong's #5641<br>BDB #711 |
| This concept is expanded to times when two people cannot see one another; so this is a word for when two people <i>are absent from one another</i> .  |   |   |                            |
| E. W. Bullinger: <i>Figure of speech Metonymy (of Adjunct), App-6= Hebrew hidden, put for absent.</i> <sup>799</sup>  |   |   |                            |
| E. W. Bullinger: <i>The Metonymy is used so as to imply that thought hidden from one another, they were not hidden from God.</i> <sup>800</sup>   |   |   |                            |
| îysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]  | <i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>  | masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural) | Strong's #376<br>BDB #35   |
| min (מִן) [pronounced mihn]   | <i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, beyond, more than, greater than</i> | preposition of separation   | Strong's #4480<br>BDB #577 |

<sup>799</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible Notes*; 1909 in the Public Domain; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>800</sup> *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p. 605.

## Genesis 31:49

| Hebrew/Pronunciation              | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| rêa' (עָרָ) [pronounced RAY-ahg'] | associate, neighbor, colleague; companion, friend; beloved; fellow, acquaintance; fellow citizen; another person; one, another [in a reciprocal phrase] | masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #7453<br>BDB #945 |

We might understand this to mean, *each man from the other*.

**Translation:** Also [Laban called it] the Mizpah, where he said, “Y<sup>e</sup>howah will watch between you and me, when we are absent each one from the other. Many times, this is used as a way of saying goodbye to an old friend when you anticipate being separated from one another. However, this saying is originally used here between two men who do not like one another very much and who do not trust one another.

**Genesis 31:49** (a calligraphy graphic); from [The View from Here](#); accessed October 21, 2017.

The Cambridge Bible: *Jehovah is the third party in the solemn contract: He is witness; He will uphold the right, and punish the violator of the bond; cf. enesis G16:5.*<sup>801</sup>



Dr. John Gill: *for he said, the Lord watch between me and you, when we are absent one from another; or "hid one from another"; when being at a distance, they could not see each other, or what one another did in agreement or disagreement with their present covenant: but he intimates, that the Lord sees and knows all things, and therefore imprecates that God would watch over them both, them and their actions, and bring upon them the evil or the good, according as their actions were, or as they broke or kept this covenant.*<sup>802</sup>

Genesis 31:49 Also [Laban called it] the Mizpah, where he said, “Y<sup>e</sup>howah will watch between you and me, when we are absent each one from the other. Most understand v. 49 to logically follow v. 48, where Laban is speaking and calling this heap *Galeed*. He also calls it *Mizpah*, which means *beacon, watchtower*; the idea being that Jacob’s God, Y<sup>e</sup>howah, would watch him. Laban uses the personal name of God (Whom he sees as Jacob’s God at this point), because he wants Jacob to know that his own God would be watching over him and what he does.

<sup>801</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>802</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:49 (slightly edited).

Genesis 31:46–49 And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he named it Galeed, and Mizpah, for he said, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are out of one another's sight. (ESV)

### Naming the place of the covenant (various commentators)

Are they naming the covenant, the place where the covenant takes place or the pile of stones?

Clarke: Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha - אתודהש רגי yegar sahadutha, the heap or round heap of witness; but Jacob called it געלג galed, which signifies the same thing. The first is pure Chaldee, the second pure Hebrew. אגא agar signifies to collect, hence רגי yegar and אגא ogar, a collection or heap made up of gathered stones; and hence also ארוגא egora, an altar, used frequently by the Chaldee paraphrast.<sup>803</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: This stone–heap was called Jegar–Sahadutha by Laban, and Galeed by Jacob (the former is the Chaldee, the latter the Hebrew; they have both the same meaning, viz., “heaps of witness”)...because, as Laban, who spoke first, as being the elder, explained, the heap was to be a “witness between him and Jacob.” The historian then adds this explanation: “therefore they called his name Gal’ed,” and immediately afterwards introduces a second name, which the heap received from words that were spoken by Laban at the conclusion of the covenant (Genesis 31:49): “And Mizpah,” i.e., watch, watch–place (sc., he called it), “for he (Laban) said, Jehovah watch between me and thee; for we are hidden from one another (from the face of one another), if thou shalt oppress my daughters, and if thou shalt take wives to my daughters! No man is with us, behold God is witness between me and thee!” (Genesis 31:49, Genesis 31:50).<sup>804</sup>

Wesley: They gave a new name to the place, Genesis 31:47–48. Laban called it in Syriac, and Jacob in Hebrew, The heap of witness. And Genesis 31:49, it was called Mizpah, a watch – tower. Posterity being included in the league, care was taken that thus the memory of it should be preserved. The name Jacob gave this heap stuck by it, Galeed, not the name Laban gave it.<sup>805</sup>

Matthew Henry: They gave a new name to the place, Genesis 31:47, Genesis 31:48. Laban called it in Syriac, and Jacob in Hebrew, the heap of witness; and (Genesis 31:49) it was called Mizpah, a watch–tower. Posterity being included in the league, care was taken that thus the memory of it should be preserved. These names are applicable to the seals of the gospel covenant, which are witnesses to us if we be faithful, but witnesses against us if we be false. The name Jacob gave this heap (Galeed) stuck by it, not the name Laban gave it. In all this rencounter, Laban was noisy and full of words, affecting to say much; Jacob was silent, and said little. When Laban appealed to God under many titles, Jacob only swore by the fear of his father Isaac, that is, the God whom his father Isaac feared, who had never served other gods, as Abraham and Nahor had done. Two words of Jacob's were more memorable than all Laban's speeches and vain repetitions: for the words of wise men are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools, Eccles. 9:17.<sup>806</sup>

Alford: It is remarkable that in giving these names Laban chooses the Chaldee, Jacob the Hebrew, for the same meaning, the heap of witness.<sup>807</sup>

Dr. John Gill points out an interesting thing: And Mizpah,.... Which being an Hebrew word, it looks as if the heap had also this name given it by Jacob, which signifies a "watch" or "watchtower"; though, by what follows, it seems to be given by Laban, who could speak Hebrew as well, as Syriac, or Chaldee.<sup>808</sup>

<sup>803</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>804</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

<sup>805</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

<sup>806</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>807</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:47.

<sup>808</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:49.

## Naming the place of the covenant (various commentators)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *In his native language, which is Aramaic, Laban gave the heap of stones the name “Jegar-sahadutha,” which means, “witness heap.” In his native language, which is Hebrew, Jacob gave the heap of stones the name “Galeed,” which also means, “witness heap.”*

Wenstrom continues: *The fact that Jacob gave the heap of stones a Hebrew name indicates that he is identifying himself with the Promised Land, the land of Canaan. The fact that Laban gave the heap of stones an Aramaic name and Jacob a Hebrew one reveals that Laban and Jacob are now two distinct people, each speaking their own language.*<sup>809</sup>

Dr. Robert Dean: *Both of those terms mean the same thing, that is, just a heap of stone. It is also called Mizpah, which means a tower, v. 49, and it is a watchtower because it is a sign that they have entered into this contract before God and God is going to watch over and hold them each accountable for the provisions of this contract.*<sup>810</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *In his craft Laban invents another idea that may be attached to the cairn: it may serve as a mizpah, “a watch” or “watch-station” or “sentry,” standing aloft between these two when they cannot keep watch upon one another. Here again, of course, the idea implied is that Jacob is the one who bears watching. For that reason Laban employs the name of the true God “Yahweh.” Whoever may be Laban’s god, Laban does not require watching; but may Jacob’s God watch over Jacob and keep him from harming Laban.*<sup>811</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *[T]he pillar and the cairn of stones...are here indiscriminately referred to first as one, and then as the other, indicating that they were probably combined just as were the names, one given by Laban, the other by Jacob. It is evident that the covenant meant two different things to the participants. To Jacob, it was a victory; to Laban it was a face-saving device.*<sup>812</sup>

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *Mizpah: i.e. a beacon, or watch-tower, Judges 10:17 11:11, 29, Mizpeh, 1Samuel 7:5 1Kings 15:22 Hosea 5:1.*<sup>813</sup>

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Genesis 31:48–49 Laban said, “This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed. Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, “Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another.”

## Mizpah in Galeed (various commentators)

Barnes: *And Mizpah. This refers to some prominent cliff from which, as a watch-tower, an extensive view might be obtained. It was in the northern half of Gilead Deut. 3:12-13, and is noticed in Judges 11:29. It is not to be confounded with other places called by the same name. The reference of this name to the present occurrence is explained in these two verses. The names Gilead and Mizpah may have arisen from this transaction, or received a new turn in consequence of its occurrence.*<sup>814</sup>

Jacobus: *Mizpah [means] a watch-tower or beacon. “The pile of stones was to be not only a memorial but a sort of look out—when they should be absent from each other—keeping watch upon each of them for their fidelity.”*<sup>815</sup>

<sup>809</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 507); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>810</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>811</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>812</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>813</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>814</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:48–54.

<sup>815</sup> *The Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

### Mizpah in Galeed (various commentators)

Keil and Delitzsch: *The geographical names Gilead and Ramath–mizpeh (Joshua 13:26), also Mizpeh–Gilead (Judges 11:29), sound so obviously like Gal'ed and Mizpah, that they are no doubt connected, and owe their origin to the monument erected by Jacob and Laban; so that it was by prolepsis that the scene of this occurrence was called “the mountains of Gilead” in Genesis 31:21, Genesis 31:23, Genesis 31:25. By the mount or mountains of Gilead we are not to understand the mountain range to the south of the Jabbok (Zerka), the present Jebel Jelaad, or Jebel es Salt.*

Keil and Delitzsch continue: *The name Gilead has a much more comprehensive signification in the Old Testament; and the mountains to the south of the Jabbok are called in Deut. 3:12 the half of Mount Gilead; the mountains to the north of the Jabbok, the Jebel–Ajlun, forming the other half. In this chapter the name is used in the broader sense, and refers primarily to the northern half of the mountains (above the Jabbok); for Jacob did not cross the Jabbok till afterwards (Genesis 32:23–24). There is nothing in the names Ramath–mizpeh, which Ramoth in Gilead bears in Joshua 13:26, and Mizpeh–Gilead, which it bears in Judges 11:29, to compel us to place Laban's meeting with Jacob in the southern portion of the mountains of Gilead. For even if this city is to be found in the modern Salt, and was called Ramath–mizpeh from the even recorded here, all that can be inferred from that is, that the tradition of Laban's covenant with Jacob was associated in later ages with Ramoth in Gilead, without the correctness of the association being thereby established.*<sup>816</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Mizpah] That is, The watch–tower. Cf. Judges 11:29, “Mizpeh of Gilead,” and Genesis 31:34, “Mizpah.” Probably a common name for a height... The Sam. reads maṣṣēbah, LXX καὶ ἡ ὄρασις = “the vision.”*<sup>817</sup>

Clarke: *Mizpah - מִצְפָּה mitspah signifies a watch-tower; and Laban supposes that in consequence of the consecration of the place, and the covenant now solemnly made and ratified, that God would take possession of this heap, and stand on it as on a watch-tower, to prevent either of them from trenching on the conditions of their covenant.*<sup>818</sup>

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Genesis 31:48–49 Laban said, “This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed. Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, “Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another.”

### Other information about Mizpah (various commentators)

Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *There were several places bearing this name in Palestine. (1Samuel 7:5–16; Joshua 15:28; Joshua 11:3–8.)*<sup>819</sup>

The NET Bible: *The name Mizpah (מִצְפָּה, mitspah), which means “watchpost,” sounds like the verb translated “may he watch” (יִצֵּף, yitsef). Neither Laban nor Jacob felt safe with each other, and so they agreed to go their separate ways, trusting the Lord to keep watch at the border. Jacob did not need this treaty, but Laban, perhaps because he had lost his household gods, felt he did.*<sup>820</sup>

<sup>816</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

<sup>817</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882–1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>818</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:48–49.

<sup>819</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>820</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 20, 2016.

### Other information about Mizpah (various commentators)

Dr. Bob Utley: *The term "Mizpah" (BDB 859) in Genesis 31:49 is also a Hebrew term which speaks of a "watchtower" and is personified there to refer to God witnessing (BDB 859, KB 1044, Qal JUSSIVE, root related to Mizpah) between these two men.*<sup>821</sup>

Benson: *It appears that the name which Jacob gave it remained to it, and not the name which Laban gave it. And Mizpah — (Genesis 31:49,) This name in Hebrew signifies a watchtower. And they agreed to give it this second name to remind them and their posterity of the solemn appeal they had now mutually made to the all-seeing eye of God, whose providence watches over the actions of mankind, rewarding sincerity and punishing deceitfulness. They appeal to him, 1st, As a witness, The Lord judge between thee and me — That is, the Lord take cognizance of every thing that shall be done on either side in violation of this league. 2d, As a judge.*<sup>822</sup>

Whedon: *The name Mizpah (Genesis 31:49) subsequently became very common, and is applied to three other places on the east (Joshua 11:3; Judges 10:17; 1Samuel 22:3) and two on the west of the Jordan. Joshua 15:38; Joshua 18:26.*<sup>823</sup>

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### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Genesis 31:48–50 Laban said, “This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed. Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, “Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us.”

### Some claim this text was added in, misplaced, or whatever (commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *The mention of this name comes in very abruptly at this point, and may be a gloss...It has been suggested that the high point here indicated might be the Rammath-mizpeh of Joshua 13:25, or the Mizpah in Gilead of Judges 11:11. A third name for “the heap of stones” is very awkward, and the grammar barely tolerable. The text has undergone some dislocation.*<sup>824</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch make this assertion: *There can be no doubt that Genesis 31:49 and Genesis 31:50 bear the marks of a subsequent insertion. But there is nothing in the nature of this interpolation to indicate a compilation of the history from different sources. That Laban, when making this covenant, should have spoken of the future treatment of his daughters, is a thing so natural, that there would have been something strange in the omission. And it is not less suitable to the circumstances, that he calls upon the God of Jacob, i.e., Jehovah, to watch in this affair. And apart from the use of the name Jehovah, which is perfectly suitable here, there is nothing whatever to point to a different source; to say nothing of the fact that the critics themselves cannot agree as to the nature of the source supposed.*<sup>825</sup>

I include this as something to think about. I do not see this text as an insertion.

<sup>821</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:49.

<sup>822</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47–53.

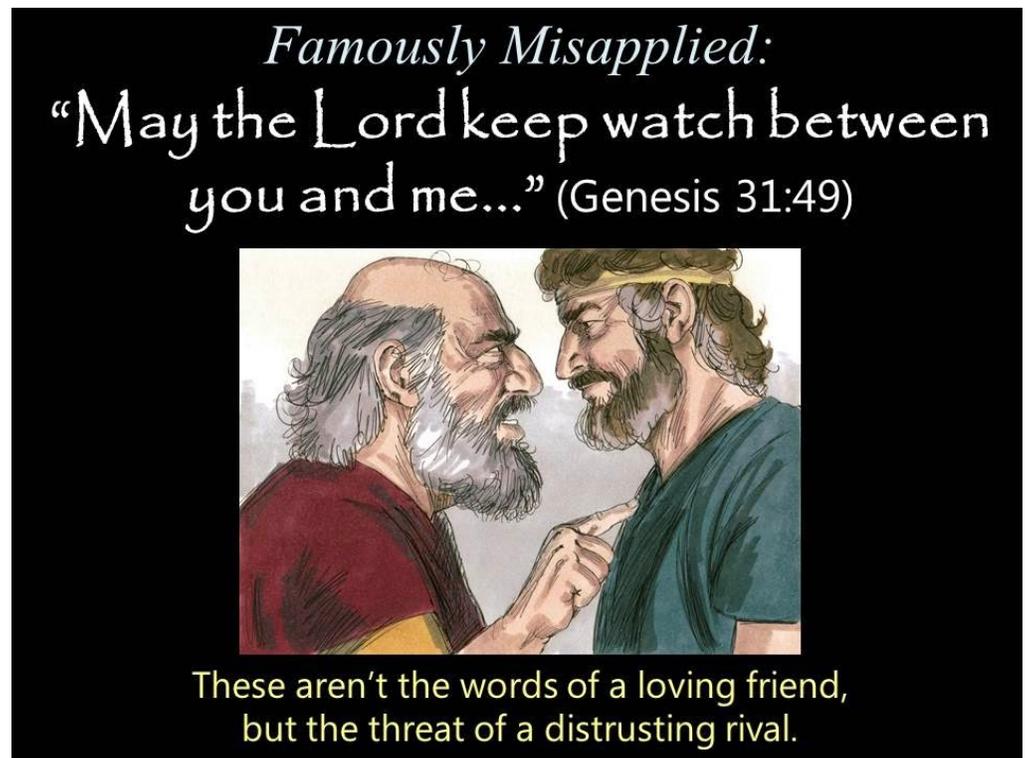
<sup>823</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:47.

<sup>824</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>825</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

This benediction is used in Christendom today often for two friends which are parting; but its origins are this agreement made between two men who do not trust each other (and for good reason). These rocks separate them from each other. To Jacob, these stones represent the covenant that was made between them before all the witnesses of his people and Laban's. To Laban, they were a witness that Jacob would treat his daughters with integrity in the future. For both of them, it was separation and a nonaggression pact. It is not two sincere Christians oozing with love for one another, praying for divine guidance and involvement in each other's lives. They have a pile of rocks where one will stay on one side and one on the other side for the rest of their natural lives. If either man decided to try to find and harm the other, there is this pile of rocks which is to remind him of their treaty.

**Genesis 31:49, Famously Misapplied** (a graphic); from [Allacin on What Is Truly Worth Knowing](#); accessed October 21, 2017.



The Cambridge Bible: *The cairn on the hill is to be the witness of the covenant between two sets of people separated at a distance from one another, and tempted to take advantage of one another. The popular use of the word Mizpah, based on this verse, ignores the context, and, in particular, Genesis 31:50. God is here invoked, because of the mutual distrust of the two parties, to watch lest one or the other should violate the compact.*<sup>826</sup>

Meredith Kline: *May God watch you, when I can't! ... This covenant arose out of mutual suspicion and sought protection not for the other but for themselves from the other's malice.*<sup>827</sup>

Although these men are surely rivals, it appears that they will come to a reasonable agreement and understanding at the very end.

[Genesis 31:49 ...and Watchtower, for he said, Jehovah watch between you and me when we are absent from one another.](#)

Laban also gave this heap of rocks the name Mits<sup>e</sup>pâh (מצפֿה) pronounced *mitz<sup>e</sup>-PAW*, which means *outlook point, watchtower*; transliterated *Mizpah*. Strong's #4708 (& #4709) BDB #859. Some translations transliterate this (ESV, WEB) and some translate it (Green's literal translation, MKJV).

<sup>826</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:49.

<sup>827</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional reference at this link.

Properly, these verses should be taken together:

**Genesis 31:48–49** Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." Therefore he named it Galeed, and Mizpah [= *Watchtower*], for he said, "The LORD watch between you and me, when we are out of one another's sight. (ESV)

These are two men who have developed a dislike for one another over these past 20 years—or, at the very least, they did not trust one another. There is enough information in this narrative which should indicate that they both had good reason to be that way. Jacob, all of this time, believed that he was being cheated by Laban on wages (which he was). Laban believed that Jacob just took off without saying goodbye, without indicating any appreciation whatsoever—and Laban was right about this. Jacob did not really appreciate his relationship to Laban, which resulted in 2 wives, 2 mistresses and at least 12 children, at this point. In fact, all of Jacob's blessing and wealth, came from, originally, from Laban (and ultimately from God, obviously).

So Laban is saying, "I can't be there to watch over my daughters, so I ask the LORD to do this." Even though there is some local religion in Laban's life, he uses the proper name for God in this passage.

**"The Reconciliation of Jacob and Laban"** by Italian Baroque painter **Ciro Ferri**. From [Dwelling the Word](#), accessed August 12, 2015. [Wikimedia](#) claims that this is a painting by Pietro Berretini (and I am guessing that they are more accurate at this point).

According to Wikimedia, this was painted between 1630 and 1635; oil on canvas; and is currently at the Louvre Museum.

I recognize Leah and Rachel, as well as some of their children, in this picture; and Jacob and Laban. However, I would assume that the man off to the right corner is perhaps a slave or someone who came with Laban? It is odd that he is given such a prominent place in this painting.



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## Genesis 31:50a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|--|----------------------------|
| ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]  | <i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when</i> (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)              | primarily an hypothetical particle                                   | Strong's #518<br>BDB #49   |
| The particle ʾîm (אִם) can be used as a demonstrative ( <i>lo, behold</i> ), an interrogative (usually expecting a negative response and often used with other particles and rhetorically), and as a conditional particle ( <i>if, though</i> ); an indication of a wish or desire ( <i>oh that, if only</i> ; this is a rare usage). |  |  |                            |
| Gesenius writes: <i>Its primary power I regard as demonstrative, lo! Behold!</i> <sup>828</sup>   |  |  |                            |
| ʿânâh (אָנָה) [pronounced ʿaw-NAWH]   | <i>to oppress, to depress, to afflict; to persecute; to intimidate; to humble; to deal harshly [with someone]; to harangue [harass, provoke, hassle]</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect            | Strong's #6031<br>BDB #776 |
| ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object          | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced bahth]  | <i>daughter; village</i>   | feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |

**Translation:** *If you afflict my daughters...* The intent of this verse is easy enough to understand, even if the verse itself is difficult to understand in parts.

First, Laban is concerned about Jacob oppressing, afflicting, intimidating or dealing harshly with his daughters. That is the meaning of the verb used here. People can see this as Laban just saying something to make up for his accusations; but I think that it is a sincere request. He will never see his daughters again; and suddenly, he thinks like a father again.

Dr. John Gill: *If you shall afflict my daughters,.... In body or mind, by giving them hard blows, or ill words, and by withholding from them the necessaries of life, food and raiment.*<sup>829</sup>

One might say, *where was your concern before?* A case could be made for Laban being hypocritical; but that does not mean his requirement here is insincere. Laban is anything but a perfect man; and his treatment of his daughters after Jacob put in 14 years of work for them is appalling. This does not mean that Laban is unable to feel true affection for his daughters—particularly at this point, where he realizes that he will never see them again.

Some make a big deal out of Laban warning Jacob not to harm his daughters, given that there is no indication of Jacob has ever thought to harm them in the past. But marriages to change; relationships do change; and Laban is simply making this a part of their pact.

<sup>828</sup> Gesenius *Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Baker Books; ©1979; p. 55.

<sup>829</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:50 (slightly edited).

| Genesis 31:50b  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced <i>eem</i> ]                                    | <i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when</i> (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)   | primarily an hypothetical particle                                   | Strong's #518<br>BDB #49   |
| lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced <i>law-KAHKH</i> ]                         | <i>to take, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize</i>   | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect             | Strong's #3947<br>BDB #542 |
| nâshîym (נָשִׁים) [pronounced <i>naw-SHEEM</i> ]                      | <i>women, wives</i>   | feminine plural noun; irregular plural of Strong's #802              | Strong's #802<br>BDB #61   |
| ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]                                   | <i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i> | preposition of relative proximity                                    | Strong's #5921<br>BDB #752 |
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced <i>bath</i> ]                                 | <i>daughter; village</i>  | feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |

**Translation:** ...or if you take wives instead of my daughters,... Secondly, Laban is concerned that Jacob might take other wives in addition to his daughters. The younger wives might receive more time and affection, as was generally the case in a marriage of multiple wives. Remember, Jacob is a very successful man; and it is likely that he will continue this success in the future. This makes him attractive to other women.

So Laban has two major concerns, which are simple enough for any man to understand: he does not want his daughters harmed and he does not want them to be cast aside in marriage, even if only emotionally.

Laban, as we have observed many times, is a manipulator and a cheat; and he is out for himself and his sons. Here, he seems to take into account his daughters and their well-being. Laying aside Jacob's character for the moment, what Laban says here are reasonable expectations of Jacob; and Jacob gives no objection to the concerns of his father-in-law.

Genesis 31:49–50 Laban said... at Mizpah,...“Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us.”

## Laban's concern for his daughters (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *[Laban asks] that Leah and Rachel may not be exposed to the risk of any indignity.*<sup>830</sup>

Clarke: *Jacob had already four wives; but Laban feared that he might take others, whose children would naturally come in for a share of the inheritance to the prejudice of his daughters and grandchildren.*<sup>831</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *or if you will take other wives besides my daughters; which also would be an affliction and vexation to them, see Leviticus 18:18. Laban, though he had led Jacob into polygamy, and even obliged him to it, did not choose he should go further into it, for the sake of his daughters, to whom he professes now much kindness and affection, though he had shown but little to them before; as well as talks in a more religious strain than he had been used to do.*<sup>832</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Laban deals with his first concern, the security and protection of his daughters. He hands them over to God's protection for their tribe can no longer protect them. God will see whether Jacob treats them rightly. Note especially the provision against Jacob taking other primary wives (concubines would not matter, they are of lower status and would not affect the status of the primary wives).*<sup>833</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *To cast a further shadow upon Jacob's character Laban conjures up what was in reality a highly improbable situation. Suppose Jacob should treat Laban's daughters harshly ('anah "afflict, oppress"), or should take other wives in addition to the ones he had. But Jacob had never given the least indication of being inclined to treat his wives harshly. Gentleness and goodness are characteristics of Jacob. Besides, as the account reads, Jacob had more wives already than he had ever desired. He apparently recognized the evils of bigamy sufficiently in his own home. Both these cases mentioned by Laban as possible are in themselves harsh and unjust slanders.*<sup>834</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Laban's statement "If you mistreat my daughters" is hypocrisy on his part again in the sense that he made a pretense of having concern for his daughters' safety, which he did not possess as demonstrated by his treatment of his daughters as expressed by his daughters in Genesis 31:14-16.*<sup>835</sup>

Maybe there is some hypocrisy here; but I believe that this is an honest set of requirements that Laban puts forth. Perhaps it is just hitting him that he will never see his daughters or grandchildren ever again.

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I believe at this point, both men have calmed down, and are taking stock of the *new reality*, so to speak. Personally, I do not fault Laban for his words here, even though his concern for his daughters seems to have materialized out of the blue.

<sup>830</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:50.

<sup>831</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:50.

<sup>832</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:50 (slightly edited).

<sup>833</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:50.

<sup>834</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>835</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

## Genesis 31:50c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation          | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|-------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| ʾēyn (אין) [pronounced ān]    | <i>nothing, not, [is] not; not present, not ready; expresses non-existence, absence or non-possession; [there is] no [none, not one, no one, not]</i> | particle of negation; substantive of negation; construct state                     | Strong's #369<br>BDB #34   |
| ʾīysh (איש) [pronounced eesh] | <i>a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone</i>  | masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural)              | Strong's #376<br>BDB #35   |
| ʿim (עם) [pronounced ġeem]    | <i>with, at, by, near; like; from</i>   | preposition of nearness and vicinity with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix | Strong's #5973<br>BDB #767 |

**Translation:** ...[even though there is] no one [of us] near us,... This section seems to suggest that there is no one among them to enforce this covenant. There is no one with Jacob to see that he fulfills his promises. Jacob will not be able to watch Laban or vice versa; and there will be no man or group of men who observe and report back.

Matthew Poole: *No man is with us, i.e. here is now no man with us, who when we are parted can witness and judge between us, and punish the transgressor. Or thus, Though now we have many with us, as witnesses of this agreement, yet shortly, when we shall be parted, no man will be with us, to observe and report our actions to the other, or to do the injured person right.*<sup>836</sup>

I think the idea with this and the following statement is, Laban knows that there will be no one with Jacob to enforce their agreement—however, God will be with him.

## Genesis 31:50d

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                       | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| râʾâh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]         | <i>look, see, behold, view, see here, listen up</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperative     | Strong's #7200<br>BDB #906 |
| ʾĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM] | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>  | masculine plural noun                                       | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43   |
| ʿēd (עֵד) [pronounced ġayde]               | <i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Genesis 31:48 Deut. 31:19)</i> | masculine singular noun                                     | Strong's #5707<br>BDB #729 |
| bēyn (בין) [pronounced bane]               | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>   | preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107  |

<sup>836</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:50.

| Genesis 31:50d  |  |   |                           |
|---|--|---|---------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #        |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>      | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251 |
| bêyn (בֵּינַי) [pronounced bane]                                | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i> | preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107 |

**Translation:** ...behold [that] Elohim [is] a witness between you and me.” The verb used here means *look, see, behold*; but the idea is, Jacob is to remember—in fact, he is to recall this as if this is today—that God is the witness between them. This is an agreement that Jacob is entering into with Laban before God. Such an agreement needs to be followed.

Genesis 31:48–50 Laban said, “This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed. Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, “Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us.”

**God stands as a witness between the two parties (various commentators)**

Dr. Peter Pett: *God will observe for the fulfilment of the covenant. He will, as it were, stand on that border and guarantee the fulfilment of the covenant on both sides.*<sup>837</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *God is witness between me and you; Who is omniscient and omnipresent, sees, observes all the actions of men, and deals with them accordingly; and so will be a witness for or against each of us, as we will behave in observing, or not observing, the terms of our covenant.*<sup>838</sup>

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Genesis 31:48–50 Laban said, “This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed. Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, “Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us.”

**Laban’s Covenant with Jacob (Preacher’s Complete Homiletical Commentary)**

Laban himself proposes this covenant, and imparts to it the sanctions of religion (Genesis 31:49–53). But—

- I. It was forced upon him by circumstances. This was no expression of a friendship which needed not an outward sign, but was rather an expedient to save further trouble. It was wrung from Laban by the hard necessity of his position. He had been in a great rage against Jacob, but now his temper is cooled. The circumstances which tamed his spirit, and brought him to a better mind were these:—
  1. His long journey in pursuit of Jacob. He pursued after him seven days’ journey (Genesis 31:23). Physical toil, the continued strain of anxiety, the proved impossibility of inflicting vengeance,—all these tend to cool passion.
  2. The Divine warning. God had appeared to Laban charging him that he should do no violence to Jacob (Genesis 31:29). This warning was really of the nature of a rebuke (Genesis 31:42).
  3. His failure to criminate Jacob. He had charged Jacob with theft, and after a fruitless search, was

<sup>837</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:48–49.

<sup>838</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:50.

## Laban's Covenant with Jacob (Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary)

mortified at finding no evidence of crime.

4. The overwhelming force of Jacob's self-defence (Genesis 31:36–42). Jacob recites the evidence of his faithful and laborious service for twenty years, and the facts to which he appealed could not be gainsaid. The truth of his reproaches against Laban was but too evident.
- II. It showed an imperfect sense of religious duty and obligation. When it comes to the point, Laban cannot find it in his heart to do anything against his own flesh and blood. (Genesis 31:43.) The natural feelings of a father prevail. Laban and Jacob enter into a covenant. They set up a heap and call it Mizpah; "for he said, the Lord watch between me and thee when we are absent one from another" (Genesis 31:49.)
- But
1. The natural love of kindred may exist apart from piety. The social affections are beautiful in themselves, but they may be exercised by those who have very imperfect notions of religion, or who even set it aside altogether.
  2. The forms of religion may be used with but an imperfect recognition of their real significance. The setting up of this pillar, and the pious motto attached to it, seemed to indicate a most sacred friendship and a solemn regard to the realities of religion. The all-pervading presence and the power of God were recognised. God is regarded as One to whom men are ultimately accountable. But this transaction, though employing the sanctions of religion, shows but a very low apprehension of its nature. This heap was set up by enemies who called upon God to protect them, each from the encroachments of the other. They seemed to think that the chief work of the Almighty in this world was to make them happy, to guard their interests, to avenge their private wrongs. They think little of God's glory, or of their own perfection in godliness. This is a mean and selfish view of religion.

*The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

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Genesis 31:49–50 Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, "Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us." Given the context, when Laban says *no man with us*, he means that there will be no 3<sup>rd</sup> party with Jacob to enforce this agreement. If Jacob does not treat his daughters well or if he takes another wife, even though Laban has no man from his family to witness this, God is a witness to Jacob's potentially evil behavior. An English translation from the Septuagint reads: *If you will humble my daughters, if you should take wives in addition to my daughters, see, there is no one with us looking on. God [is] a witness between me and you.* The implication is, God will do more than just witness this infraction; He will deal with it.

**Genesis 31:50** *If you will not afflict my daughters, or if you will take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us. See! God is witness between you and me."*

Laban asks for his daughters to be treated well; and for Jacob not to take any more wives. He calls for God to be a witness between them. These are all reasonable requests. Jacob, as a rich man, could easily have more wives and more children. Laban is asking him to agree not to.

Unlike agreements that many people enter into in this era, these agreements were taken very seriously. When God was a witness, both men would endeavor to keep their part of the agreement.

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Because vv. 51–53a is a quotation from Laban, I placed these verses all together.

I am unhappy with my translation of v. 52 and have reworked it, viewing the other translations, and I am still not completely happy with the results.

And so says Laban to Jacob, “Behold the heap [of stones] the this and behold the pillar which I have set between me and between you—a witness the heap the this and a witness the pillar. If I [even I] do not pass over unto you the heap the this and if you [even you] do not cross over unto me the heap the this and the pillar the this for evil. An Elohim of Abraham and an Elohim of Nahor [they] will judge between us, an Elohim of their father.”

Genesis  
31:51–53a

Laban [also] said to Jacob, “Observe this heap [of stones] and the pillar which I have set between us—this heap [of stones is] a witness [that]; and the pillar [is] a witness [that], I will not pass over this heap [of stones] to you and you will not cross over this heap [of stones] and this pillar to me [to do] evil [to me]. The Elohim of Abraham and the Elohim of Nahor—[they] will judge between us—the Elohim of their father.”

Laban also said to Jacob, “Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so says Laban to Jacob, “Behold the heap [of stones] the this and behold the pillar which I have set between me and between you—a witness the heap the this and a witness the pillar. If I [even I] do not pass over unto you the heap the this and if you [even you] do not cross over unto me the heap the this and the pillar the this for evil. An Elohim of Abraham and an Elohim of Nahor [they] will judge between us, an Elohim of their father.” |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Laban said to Jakob, Behold this mound and this pillar, which <u>thou</u> bast erected between me and thee. This mound and pillar are a witness, that I will not pass over this mound to thee; and that thou shalt not pass over this mound and this pillar, to do me evil. The God of Abraham [Sam. Vers. "the God of Abraham."] and the God of Nachor shall judge between us, the God of their fathers.   |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | And Laban said to Jakob, Behold this mound, and behold the pillar which <u>thou</u> hast reared between me and thee. This mound is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I may not pass beyond this mound to thee, and that thou mayest not pass beyond this mound and this pillar to do harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nachor shall judge between us, the God of their fathers.   |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And he said again to Jacob: Behold, this heap, and the stone which I have set up between me and you, Shall be a witness: this heap, I say, and the stone, be they for a testimony, if either I shall pass beyond it going towards you, or you shall pass beyond it, thinking harm to me. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nachor, the God of their father, judge between us.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Laban said to Ya'aqub, "See this heap, and see the pillar, which I have set between me and you. May this heap be a witness, and the pillar be a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and that you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and God of Nahor, God of their father, judge between us."   |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have set between me and you; This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this pillar against you, and that you also shall not pass over this pillar against me or this heap for harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor and the God of our forefathers judge between us.   |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Laban said to Jacob, Behold, this heap, and this pillar are a witness. For if I should not cross over unto you, neither should you cross over to me, for mischief   |

beyond this heap and this pillar. The God of Abraam and the God of Nachor judge between us.”

Significant differences: The Hebrew has *I have set up*; the targums have *you have set up*. The Greek leaves *set up* out of its translation. In fact, the Greek leaves out the first two phrases which Laban speaks.

It is not really clear to me whether Laban is saying, *if one of us crosses over this witness to see the other*; or if he is saying that will not take place. Both approaches may be found in the other ancient translations.

The Greek lacks the final phrase *the God of their father*.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English      | And Laban said, See these stones and this pillar which I have put between you and me; They will be witness that I will not go over these stones to you, and you will not go over these stones or this pillar to me, for any evil purpose. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, be our judge.   |
| Easy English                | Laban also said ‘I have set this stone up. And I have set the heap of stones by it. They are between you and me. I will not go past the stones to your side to hurt you. And you must not go past them to my side to hurt me. The stones will show where we can go. Let the God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, the God of their father say who is right between us.’   |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006   | Here are the rocks that I have put between us, and here is the special rock to show that we made an agreement. This pile of rocks and this one special rock both help us to remember our agreement. I will never go past these rocks to fight against you, and you must never go on my side of these rocks to fight against me. May the God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their ancestors judge us guilty if we break this agreement.” |
| International Children’s B. | Here is the pile of rocks that I have put between us. And here is the rock I set up on end. This pile of rocks and this rock set on end will remind us of our agreement. I will never go past this pile to hurt you. And you must never come to my side of them to hurt me. The God of Abraham is the God of Nahor and the God of their ancestors. Let God punish either of us if we break this agreement.”   |
| <i>The Message</i>          | Laban continued to Jacob, “This monument of stones and this stone pillar that I have set up is a witness, a witness that I won’t cross this line to hurt you and you won’t cross this line to hurt me. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor (the God of their ancestor) will keep things straight between us.”   |
| Names of God Bible          | Laban said to Jacob, “Here is the pile of stones, and here is the marker that I have set up between you and me. This pile of stones and this marker stand as witnesses that I will not go past the pile of stones to harm you, and that you will not go past the pile of stones or marker to harm me. May the <b>Elohim</b> of Abraham and Nahor—the <b>Elohim</b> of their father—judge between us.”   |
| NIRV                        | Laban also said to Jacob, “Here is this pile of stones. And here is this stone I’ve set up. I’ve set them up between you and me. This pile is a witness. And this stone is a witness. They are witnesses that I won’t go past this pile to harm you. And they are witnesses that you won’t go past this pile and this stone to harm me. The God of Abraham and Nahor is also the God of their father. May their God decide which of us is right.”     |
| New Simplified Bible        | Laban also said to Jacob: »Here is the pile of stones. Here is the marker that I have set up between you and me. »This pile of stones and this marker stand as witnesses that I will not go past the pile of stones to harm you, and that you will not  |

go past the pile of stones or marker to harm me. »May the God of Abraham and Nahor the God of their father judge between us.«

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible    | Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this mound and here is the sacred pillar that I’ve set up for us. This mound and the sacred pillar are witnesses that I won’t travel beyond this mound and that you won’t travel beyond this mound and this pillar to do harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor will keep order between us.”   |
| Contemporary English V. | Both this pile of rocks and this large rock have been set up between us as a reminder. I must never go beyond them to attack you, and you must never go beyond them to attack me. My father Nahor, your grandfather Abraham, and their ancestors all worshiped the same God, and he will make sure that we each keep the agreement.   |
| The Living Bible        | This heap,” Laban continued, “stands between us as a witness of our vows that I will not cross this line to attack you and you will not cross it to attack me. I call upon the God of Abraham and Nahor, and of their father, to destroy either one of us who does.”  |
| New Berkeley Version    | Laban further told Jacob, “Look at this pillar and at this cairn, which I have set up between me and you. Let this cairn be a witness and this pillar, too, that I will not pass it to harm you and that you will not pass it to harm me. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, the God of their father judge between us.” This is where the NBV ends v. 53.  |
| New Century Version     | Here is the pile of rocks that I have put between us and here is the rock I set up on end. This pile of rocks and this rock set on end will remind us of our agreement. I will never go past this pile to hurt you, and you must never come to my side of them to hurt me. Let the God of Abraham, who is the God of Nahor and the God of their ancestors, punish either of us if we break this agreement.” |
| New Life Version        | Laban said to Jacob, “See these stones that have been set up between you and me. These stones that have been set up will stand for our agreement. I will not pass by these stones to hurt you. And you will not pass by these stones to hurt me. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.”  |
| New Living Translation  | “See this pile of stones,” Laban continued, “and see this monument I have set between us. They stand between us as witnesses of our vows. I will never pass this pile of stones to harm you, and you must never pass these stones or this monument to harm me. I call on the God of our ancestors—the God of your grandfather Abraham and the God of my grandfather Nahor—to serve as a judge between us.”  |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| American English Bible   | Then Laban continued: 'Look! This pile of stones and this pillar are witnesses that I won't come beyond this pillar to do anything bad to you, and you won't come [beyond this pillar] to me. May the God of AbraHam and the God of NaHor judge between us!'  |
| International Standard V | “Look!” Laban added, “Here is the stack of stones and here is the pillar that I’ve set up between you and me. This stack is a witness, and so is this pillar, reminding me not to cross beyond this stack of stones, and reminding you not to pass by this stack in my direction, intending to cause harm. May Abraham’s God and Nahor’s god judge between us.” |
| Revised Knox Bible       | He said further to Jacob, Look at this heap, this stone which I have set up between us; these shall be witnesses, heap and stone shall be there to accuse us, if I pass by them on my way to you, or you on your way to me, with harmful intent. May the God who is Abraham's God and Nachor's, the God of their common father see                              |

justice done between us. This is the sense of the Latin; the Hebrew text is confused, and leaves it doubtful whether one God or a plurality of Gods is meant.<sup>839</sup>

Translation for Translators

Laban also said to Jacob, "You see this large stone and this pile of rocks that we have set up to be between us. Both this pile of rocks and this large stone will remind us, that I will not go past these rocks to harm you, and you will not go past these rocks to harm me. We will ask the God whom *your grandfather* Abraham and *his father* Nahor worshiped to punish [MTY] either one of us, *if we harm the other one.*"

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Awful Scroll Bible

Laban was to say to Jacob: This heap and pillar, I have pointed out, this heap is evidence, and this pillar is a testimony - were we to pass over this heap, even were we to pass over this heap and this pillar for evil? - He of mighty ones of Ab-raham, he of mighty ones of Nahor, even he of mighty ones of our fathers were to judge between us!

Conservapedia

Laban said to Jacob, "See this mound, and see this monument, that I have cast between me and you. This mound is a testimony, and this monument is a testimony, that I will not pass over over this mound to you, and you will not pass over this mound and this pillar to me, for evil. May the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."

God's Truth (Tyndale)

Then said Laban: this heap be witness between you and me this day (therefore is it called Gilead) and this toot hill which the Lord sees (said he) be witness between me and you when we are departed one from another: that you shall not vex my daughters neither shall take other wives unto them. Here is no man with us: behold, God is witness between you and me. And Laban said moreover to Jacob: behold, this heap and this mark which I have set here, between me and you: this heap be witness and also this mark, that I will not come over this heap to you, and you shall not come over this heap and this mark, to do any harm. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their fathers, be judge between us.

HCSB

Laban also said to Jacob, "Look at this mound and the marker I have set up between you and me. This mound is a witness and the marker is a witness that I will not pass beyond this mound to you, and you will not pass beyond this mound and this marker to do me harm. The God of Abraham, and the gods of Nahor—the gods of their father—will judge between us."

H. C. Leupold

Laban also said to Jacob: See, this heap and this watch-station (Mizpah) which I have planted between me and thee: a witness is this heap and a witness is this pillar, that I will not go past this heap against thee, and that thou wilt not go past this heap against me, neither past this pillar to do any harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor they shall judge between us: the gods of their fathers.

Lexham English Bible

And Laban said to Jacob, "See, this pile of stones, and see the pillar that I have set up between me and you. This pile of stones [is] a witness, and the pillar [is] a witness, that I will not pass beyond this pile of stones to you, and that you will not pass beyond this pile of stones and this pillar to me intending harm. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father judge between us."

Tree of Life Version

Laban said further to Jacob, "Behold, this pile, and this pillar which I've set up between you and me: this pile serves as a witness, that I won't pass by this pillar to go to you, and that you won't pass by this pile and this pillar to go to me—with evil intent. May the God of Abraham and the gods of Nahor, the gods of their father, judge between us."

Unlocked Literal Bible

Laban said to Jacob, "Look at this pile, and look at the pillar, which I have set between you and me. This pile is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not

<sup>839</sup> This footnote comes from the [Knox Bible](#).

pass beyond this pile to you, and that you will not pass beyond this pile and this pillar to me, to do harm. May the God of Abraham, and the god of Nahor, the gods of their father, judge between us."

Urim-Thummim Version

And Laban said to Jacob, take note of this mound and mark this pillar that I have laid between us. Let this mound be witness, and this pillar be witness that I will not cross over this mound to you, and that you will not cross over this mound and pillar to me, for harm. Let the Elohim of Abraham and Nahor, the Elohim of their father judge between us.

### **Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):**

The Heritage Bible

And Laban said to Jacob, Behold, this heap, and behold, this memorial column, which I have caused to flow here between me and you; This heap is a witness, and this memorial column is a witness, that I will not cross over this heap to you, and that you shall not cross over this heap and this memorial column to me for evil. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us; and Jacob swore by the Fear of his father, Isaac. All of v. 53 is included for context.

New American Bible (2002)

Laban said further to Jacob: "Here is this mound, and here is the memorial stone that I have set up between you and me. This mound shall be witness, and this memorial stone shall be witness, that, with hostile intent, neither may I pass beyond this mound into your territory, nor may you pass beyond it into mine. May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor (their ancestral deities) maintain justice between us!"

New American Bible (2011)

Laban said further to Jacob: "Here is this mound, and here is the sacred pillar that I have set up between you and me. This mound will be a witness, and this sacred pillar will be a witness, that, with hostile intent, I may not pass beyond this mound into your territory, nor may you pass beyond it into mine. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us!"

New English Bible

Laban said further to Jacob, 'Here is this cairn, and here the pillar which I have set up between us. This cairn is witness and the pillar is witness: I for my part will not pass beyond this cairn to your side, and you for your part shall not pass beyond this cairn and this pillar to my side to do an injury, otherwise the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor will judge between us.'

New Jerusalem Bible

Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Here is this cairn I have thrown up between us, and here the pillar. This cairn is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I am not to cross to your side of this cairn and you are not to cross to my side of this cairn and pillar, with hostile intent. May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us.'

New Revised Standard V.

Then Laban said to Jacob, 'See this heap and see the pillar, which I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor—the God of their father—'judge between us.'

Revised English Bible

Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this cairn, and here the pillar which I have set up between us. Both cairn and pillar are witnesses that I am not to pass beyond this cairn to your side with evil intent, and you must not pass beyond this cairn and this pillar to my side with evil intent. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us."

### **Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

Complete Jewish Bible

Lavan also said to Ya'akov, "Here is this pile, and here is this standing-stone, which I have set up between me and you. May this pile be a witness, and may the standing-stone be a witness, that I will not pass beyond this pile to you, and you will

not pass beyond this pile and this standing-stone to me, to cause harm. May the God of Avraham and also the god of Nachor, the god of their father, judge between us."

The Complete Tanach

And Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this pile and behold this monument, which I have cast between me and you.

**which I have cast:** Heb. יִתִּיךְ, similar to (Exod. 15:4): "He cast (הֵרִי) into the sea," like one who shoots an arrow. — [from Gen. Rabbah 74:15]

This pile is a witness, and this monument is a witness, that I will not pass this pile [to go] to you and that you shall not pass this pile and this monument to [come to] me to [do] harm

**that I:** Heb. אֲדָ. Here אֲדָ is used as an expression of אֲשֶׁר, that, like (above 24:33): "until (אֲדָ) I have spoken my words."

**to [do] harm:** To do harm you may not pass, but you may pass to do business. — [from Gen. Rabbah 74:15]

May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor judge between us, the god of their father."

**the God of Abraham:** This is holy. [I.e., it refers to the Deity.]- [from Gen. Rabbah 74:16]

**and the god of Nahor:** Profane. [I.e., it refers to pagan deities.]- [from Gen. Rabbah 74:16]

**the god of their father:** Profane. [I.e., it refers to pagan deities.]

exeGesés companion Bible

And Laban says to Yaaqov,  
Behold this heap and behold this monolith  
which I pour between me and between you:  
this heap witnesses and this monolith witnesses,  
that I not pass over this heap to you  
and that you not pass over this heap  
and this monolith to me, for evil.  
Elohim of Abraham and Elohim of Nachor,  
Elohim of their father, judges between us.

Hebraic Roots Bible

And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a testimony. As for me, I will not pass over this heap to you; and as for you, you will not pass over this heap and this pillar for evil to me. The Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Nahor, the Elohim of their father, let judge between us.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

And Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this mound and here the pillar which I have set up between you and me: this mound shall be witness and this pillar shall be witness that I am not to cross to you past this mound, and that you are not to cross to me past this mound and this pillar, with hostile intent. 53 May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor"—their ancestral deities—"judge between us."

Kaplan Translation

Laban then said, 'Here is the mound and here is the pillar that I have set up between us. The mound shall be a witness, and the pillar shall be a witness. I am not to go beyond the mound with bad intentions, and you are not to go beyond the mound and pillar. May the God of Abraham, the god of Nachor, and the god of their fathers be our judge.'

Orthodox Jewish Bible

And Lavan said to Ya'akov, Hinei this gal (heap, mound), and hinei the matzevah (pillar), which I have cast between me and thee;  
This gal (heap, mound) be ed (witness), and this matzevah (pillar) be edah (witness), that for ra'ah I will not pass over this gal to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this gal and this matzevah unto me.

The Elohei Avraham, and Elohei Nachor, Elohei Avihem judge between us.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

#### *The Amplified Bible*

Laban said to Jacob, “Look at this mound [of stones] and look at this pillar which I have set up between you and me. This mound is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this mound to harm you, and that you will not pass by this mound and this pillar to harm me. The God of Abraham [your father] and the God of Nahor [my father], and the god [the image of worship] of their father [Terah, an idolater], judge between us.”

#### The Expanded Bible

Here is the pile of rocks [mound; heap] that I have put [thrown up] between us and here is the rock I set up on end [pillar]. This pile of rocks [mound; heap] and this rock set on end [pillar] will remind us of our agreement [“be a witness]. I will never go past this pile [mound; heap] to hurt you, and you must never come to my side of them to hurt me. Let the God of Abraham, who is the God of Nahor and the God of their ancestors [fathers], punish either of us if we break this agreement [“judge between us].”

#### Kretzmann’s Commentary

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. If either one should ever have thoughts of vengeance, his way into the country of the other would lead past this place, and the monument of stones would serve to remind him of the covenant. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, that is, the God of Terah, judge betwixt us. Laban, the idolater, is rather indefinite in naming his god, though he tries to find common ground.

#### NET Bible®

“Here is this pile of stones and this pillar I have set up between me and you,” Laban said to Jacob [*Heb* “and Laban said to Jacob, ‘Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between men and you.’” The order of the introductory clause and the direct discourse has been rearranged in the translation for stylistic reasons.]. “This pile of stones and the pillar are reminders that I will not pass beyond this pile to come to harm you and that you will not pass beyond this pile and this pillar to come to harm me [*Heb* “This pile is a witness and the pillar is a witness, if I go past this pile to you and if you go past this pile and this pillar to me for harm.”]. May the God of Abraham and the god of Nahor, the gods of their father, judge between us.”

#### The Pulpit Commentary

And Laban said to Jacob,—according to Ewald the last narrator has transposed the names of Laban and Jacob—Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast (same word as in Genesis 31:45. The Arabic version and Samaritan text read yaritha, thou hast erected, instead of yarithi, I have erected or cast up) betwixt me and thee; this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that (literally, if, here = that) I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar (Laban bound himself never to pass over the heap which he had erected as his witness; whereas Jacob was required to swear that he would never cross the pillar and the pile, both of which were witnesses for him) unto me, for harm. The emphatic word closes the sentence. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge—the verb is plural, either because Laban regarded the Elohim of Nahor as different from the Elohim of Abraham (Rosenmóller, Keil, Kalisch, Wordsworth, ‘Speaker’s Commentary’), or because, though acknowledging only one Elohim, he viewed him as maintaining several and distinct relations to the persons named—betwixt us. Laban here invokes his own hereditary Elohim, the Elohim of Abraham’s father, to guard his rights and interests under the newly–formed covenant; while Jacob in his adjuration appeals to the Elohim of Abraham’s son.

## The Voice

**[Laban:]** See this pile of stones and this pillar which I have set between us. This pile is a witness and this pillar is a witness that I will not pass beyond this pile of stones to harm you, and you will not pass beyond this pile and this pillar to harm me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor (the God of their father Terah) serve as judge between us.

This is no sweet farewell. It is a parting of the ways between two men who don't trust one another. Both are tricksters, but they are family. It is probably best from now on if they avoid each other completely.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans. | ...and Lavan [White] said to Ya'aqov [He restrains], look, this mound, and look, the monument which I threw between me and you, a witness is this mound and a witness is the monument, if I do not cross over this mound to you and if you do not cross over this mound and this monument, to me, it is for dysfunction, the powers of Avraham [Father lifted] and the powers of Nahhor [Snorting] will judge between us, the powers of their fathers... |
| Concordant Literal Version | And saying is Laban to Jacob, "Behold this mound! And behold the monument which I aim to be between me and you. Witness is this mound, and witness is the monument, that I should not be passing this mound to you, and you should not be passing this mound and this monument to me, for evil!" The Elohim of Abraham and the Elohim of Nahor, the Elohim of the forefathers, shall judge between us.   |
| Darby Translation          | And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold the pillar which I have set up between me and thee: [let] this heap be witness, and the pillar a witness, that neither I pass this heap [to go] to thee, nor thou pass this heap and this pillar [to come] to me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us!   |
| <i>Emphasized Bible</i>    | And Laban said to Jacob—Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have set betwixt me, and thee: A witness, be this heap, and, a witness, the pillar,—That, I, am not to pass, unto thee, over this heap, And, thou, art not to pass, unto me, over this heap and this pillar for harm. The Gods of Abraham and the Gods of Nahor judge betwixt us—the Gods of their fathers.  |
| NASB                       | Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."   |
| New King James Version     | Then Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this heap and here is this pillar, which I have placed between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us."   |
| Third Millennium Bible     | And Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold this pillar, which I have cast between me and thee. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass beyond this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm. The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."  |
| Young's Updated LT         | And Laban says to Jacob, "Lo, this heap, and lo, the standing pillar which I have cast between me and you; this heap is witness, and the standing pillar is witness, that I do not pass over this heap unto you, and that you will not pass over this heap and this standing pillar unto me—for evil; the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, judges between us--the God of their father."  |

**The gist of this passage:** The stones which would stand between them, would be a witness against either man, not to cross over to do harm to the other.

| Genesis 31:51a  |   |  |                            |
|---|---|--|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                      | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                           | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]                        | <i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think; to command; to promise; to explain; to intend; to decide; to answer</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect | Strong's #559<br>BDB #55   |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN]         | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>   | masculine singular proper noun; location                 | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                    | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>  | directional/relational preposition                       | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| Ya'âqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-âuh-KOH <sup>b</sup> V] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun                                    | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |

**Translation:** Laban [also] said to Jacob,... Laban is the only one who is recorded as having said something about these stones and their agreement with one another. There will not be a parallel speech by Jacob.

If Jacob made a similar speech, it is not recorded. Bear in mind that Laban rode hard for 10 days trying to catch up to Jacob—and I am sure that he rehearsed things that he would say to Jacob in his mind. Jacob, on the other hand, was hoping to avoid Laban altogether, but he no doubt had things to say to Laban, and I believe he said them.

| Genesis 31:51b  |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                          |
| hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced hin-NAY]                          | <i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note; pay attention, get this, check this out</i> | interjection, demonstrative particle                                 | Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006)<br>BDB #243 |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced gah <sup>l</sup> ]                     | <i>a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring</i>                                     | masculine singular noun; with the definite article                   | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164                  |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]                                    | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>   | masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article | Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260   |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, וַ) [pronounced weh] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                   |

| Genesis 31:51b  |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                          |
| hinnêh (הִנֵּה)<br>[pronounced <i>hin-NAY</i> ]                             | <i>lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, note, take note; pay attention, get this, check this out</i> | interjection,<br>demonstrative particle                               | Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006)<br>BDB #243 |
| matstsêbâh (מַטְּצֵבָה)<br>[pronounced <i>mahtz-tzay<sup>b</sup>-VAWH</i> ] | <i>pillar, sculpted images</i>  | feminine singular noun<br>with the definite article                   | Strong's #4676 & #4678<br>BDB #663          |
| ʾăsher (אֲשֶׁר)<br>[pronounced <i>uh-SHER</i> ]                             | <i>that, which, when, who, whom; where</i>  | relative pronoun;<br>sometimes the verb <i>to be</i> is implied       | Strong's #834<br>BDB #81                    |
| yârâʿ (אָרַף)<br>[pronounced <i>yaw-RAW</i> ]                               | <i>to throw, to cast; to lay, to set; to shoot arrows</i>   | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal perfect                          | Strong's #3384<br>BDB #432                  |
| bêyn (בֵּינֵי)<br>[pronounced <i>bane</i> ]                                 | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>  | preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix           | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107                   |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו)<br>[pronounced <i>weh</i> ]  | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>   | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                   |
| bêyn (בֵּינֵי)<br>[pronounced <i>bane</i> ]                                 | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>  | preposition with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107                   |

**Translation:** ...“Observe this heap [of stones] and the pillar which I have set between us—... The beginning is not too difficult to translate. There is an oblong stone turned on its end, and it is surrounded by smaller rocks which support it in this upright state.

This is interesting—back in v. 45, Jacob is said to have set up this pillar. However, here, Laban says that he set up the pillar. This suggests that both men, and those working for them, all had a hand in doing this.

Gen. 31:45–46 So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.

Gen. 31:51 Then Laban said to Jacob, "See this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me.

### Who put the pillar in place (commentators/discussion)

It is an odd thing for Laban to speak of these stones as something which he has placed between them (literally, *between me and between you*). We already know that both sets of men were responsible for setting up these stones in this way (in v. 45, Jacob takes a stone and sets it up as a pillar; in v. 46, Jacob tells his kinsmen to gather stones; we may reasonably suppose that Laban's men participated in the gathering of these stones). Is he taking credit for this (as he has taken credit for everything); is he saying that, *this was my idea*? It is just somewhat odd for him to say this.

## Who put the pillar in place (commentators/discussion)

James Burton Coffman: *Laban's claim in Genesis 31:51 that he had set up the stone cairn-pillar does not mean that he alone had done it, but that he had called for the making of the covenant to which Jacob had assented. The text specifically says that Jacob set the pillar and ordered the gathering of the stones.*<sup>840</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *Although Laban offers to make a covenant, it is Jacob who sets up a pillar (Genesis 31:45 [see Genesis 28:18], although Laban claims to have done it in Genesis 31:51) and gets the kinsmen to gather stones around it (Genesis 31:46).*<sup>841</sup>

The Cambridge Bible: *Jacob had caused the heap to be collected; Laban had erected the pillar.*<sup>842</sup> I am not sure exactly how they came to that conclusion.

Clarke: *But this pillar, not cast but set up, was certainly set up by Jacob; for in Genesis 31:45 we read, And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar: it is therefore for the honor of one Hebrew and one Samaritan MS. that they have preserved the true reading in Genesis 31:51, תירי yaritha, You have set up – Kennicott. Instead of either of the above readings the Samaritan text has yarata, The pillar which you see between me and you.*<sup>843</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *the heap of stones seems to be gathered and laid together by the brethren, and the pillar to be erected by Jacob; and yet Laban says of them both, that he cast them, or erected them, they being done by his order, or with his consent, as well as Jacob's; unless the pillar can be thought to design another beside that which Jacob set up, and was like that, a single stone at some little distance from the heap: but the Samaritan and Arabic versions read, "which thou hast seen or set", &c. agreeably to Genesis 31:45.*<sup>844</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *This does not mean that Laban placed the pillar, only that he sees himself as having caused it to be set as part of the covenant signs. As leader of the confederation, releasing Jacob from it, it is he who sets the terms of the covenant and he sees himself as responsible for all connected with it.*<sup>845</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Notice in Genesis 31:51 how Laban states that he claims to have built this pillar and heap of stones when in reality it was Jacob and his family according to Genesis 31:46 and so we see that once again Laban always claims what he has not done or does not belong to him and is therefore delusional.*<sup>846</sup>

Perhaps we can understand Laban's words as emblematic of his life in general. He claiming to do things which he has not done and claiming the right to things to which he no longer has any rights.

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *For yarithi, "I have set up," we may read yaritha, "Thou hast set up," with one Heb. and one Samaritan manuscript (see note on Genesis 31:45). Genesis 31:51.*<sup>847</sup>

When it comes to an actual quotation, the Bible does not necessarily guarantee the veracity of *the content of what* is said, but it guarantees that Laban said this.

Let me suggest that this is what Laban meant: "It was my idea to have the covenant with one another; so that is equivalent to setting up the pillar." Very likely, some of Laban's men helped Jacob here.

<sup>840</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>841</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:44.

<sup>842</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:51.

<sup>843</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:51 (slightly edited).

<sup>844</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:51.

<sup>845</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:51–52.

<sup>846</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>847</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:51.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

**Genesis 31:51** And Laban said to Jacob, “Behold this heap, and behold the pillar which I have set up between you and me.

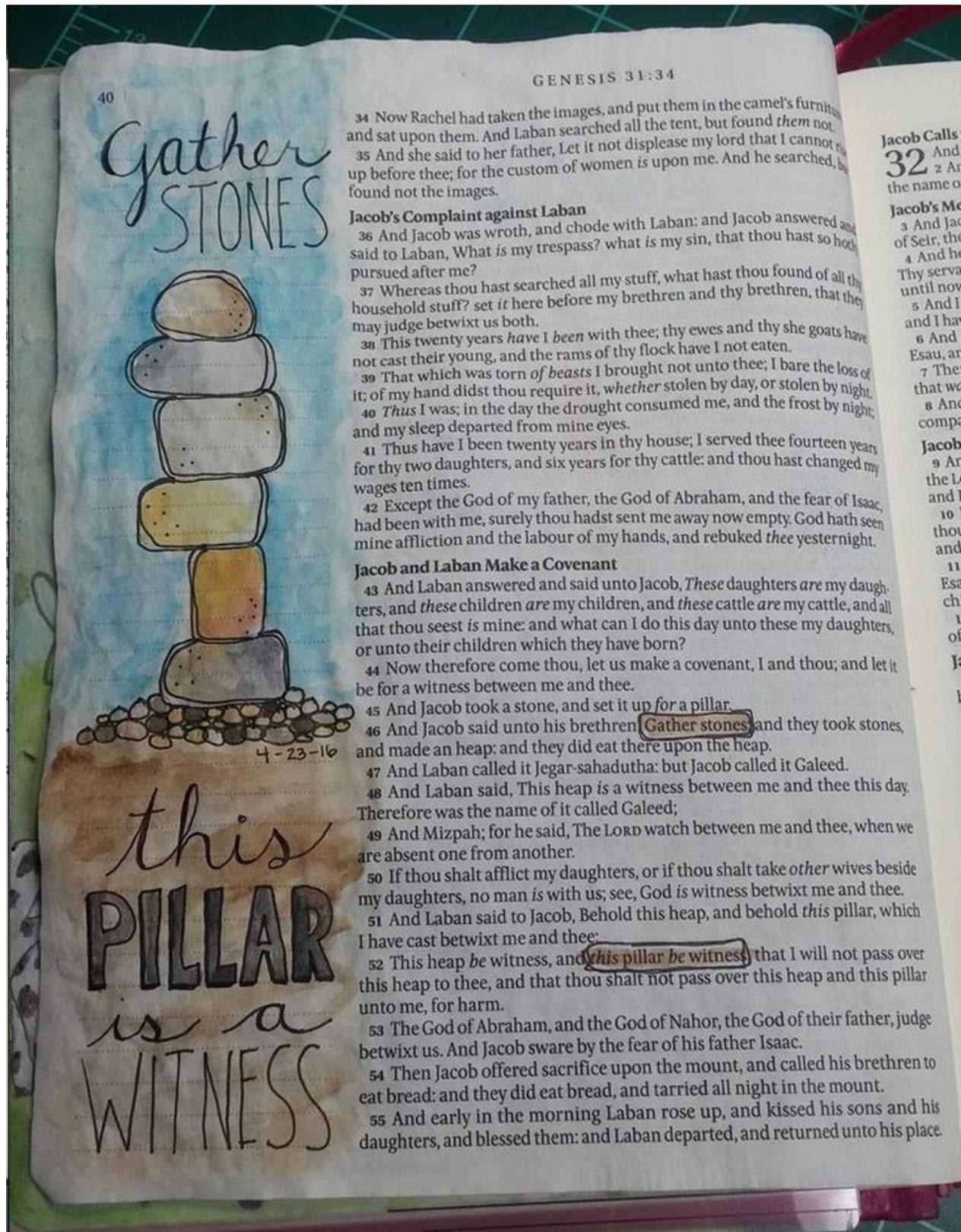
Despite his many flaws, Laban is saying all of the right things here, and it does not appear that he is doing this to put something over on Jacob. He seems to recognize that this will be the last time that he sees Jacob and his daughters. Let me suggest that he pursued Jacob as a man conflicted. For instance, he may have realized, for the first time, that he would miss his daughters and grandchildren (having taken them for granted previously); but he must also recognize that he can't take them back. Jacob paid the price for his wives; Laban cannot take two women back with him. Furthermore, Laban did not want to continue to raise his daughters. Since they have been married, they would not marry again.

| Genesis 31:52a  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                           |
| ‘êd (עֵד) [pronounced <i>gayde</i> ]                                    | <i>witness, testimony, solemn testimony, evidence; a statement of truth, something which stands as a testimony or memorial to a fact (e.g., Genesis 31:48 Deut. 31:19)</i> | masculine singular noun  | Strong's #5707<br>BDB #729                   |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]                                    | <i>a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring</i>  | masculine singular noun; with the definite article                   | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164                   |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]                                      | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>  | masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article | Strong's #2088,<br>2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                    |
| ‘êdâh (עֵדָה) [pronounced <i>gay-DAW</i> ]                              | <i>witness, testimony</i>  | feminine singular noun   | Strong's #5713<br>BDB #729                   |
| matstsêbâh (מַצְטֵבָה) [pronounced <i>mahtz-tzay<sup>b</sup>-VAWH</i> ] | <i>pillar, sculpted images</i>   | feminine singular noun with the definite article                     | Strong's #4676 &<br>#4678 BDB #663           |

**Translation:** ...this heap [of stones is] a witness [that]; and the pillar [is] a witness [that],... We have the masculine and feminine words for *witness*; which suggests that they are predicate nominatives in this verse to subjects *heap* and *pillar*.

There is the pillar which is standing straight up, in an oblong fashion, and it is surrounded by stones which were gathered. All of this is to have a distinctly human touch placed upon it. Therefore, it all stands for something. Whether Laban passes by them to go to Jacob or vice versa, they would see these things and it would remind them of the agreement which was struck here.

Gather Stones—this Pillar is a Witness (Bible Journaling); from Pinterest; accessed October 21, 2017. For



whatever reason, I love this arty-fartsy stuff.

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *This heap be witness — Objects of nature were frequently thus spoken of. But over and above, there was a solemn appeal to God; and it is observable that there was a marked difference in the religious sentiments of the two.*<sup>848</sup>

| <b>Genesis 31:52b</b>   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Hebrew/Pronunciation</b>   | <b>Common English Meanings</b>   | <b>Notes/Morphology</b>   | <b>BDB and Strong's #</b>                    |
| 'îm (אִם) [pronounced eem]  | <i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when</i> (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)        | primarily an hypothetical particle  | Strong's #518<br>BDB #49                     |
| The particle 'îm (אִם) can be used as a demonstrative ( <i>lo, behold</i> ), an interrogative (usually expecting a negative response and often used with other particles and rhetorically), and as a conditional particle ( <i>if, though</i> ); an indication of a wish or desire ( <i>oh that, if only</i> ; this is a rare usage). |  |   |  |
| Gesenius writes: <i>Its primary power I regard as demonstrative, lo! Behold!</i> <sup>849</sup>   |  |   |  |
| 'ânîy (אֲנִי) [pronounced aw-NEE]   | <i>I, me</i> ; in answer to a question, it means <i>I am, it is I</i>  | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, personal pronoun   | Strong's #589<br>BDB #58                     |
| lô' (לֹא or לוֹא) [pronounced low]  | <i>not, no</i>   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation  | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518                   |
| 'âbar (עָבַר) [pronounced gaw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]   | <i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over [beyond], to cross, to cross over; to go away, to depart; to violate [a law]</i> | 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #5674<br>BDB #716                   |
| 'el (אֶל) [pronounced eh]   | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>  | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39                     |
| 'êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]  | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object   | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84                     |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced gah]   | <i>a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring</i>  | masculine singular noun; with the definite article  | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164                   |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]  | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>  | masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article  | Strong's #2088,<br>2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |

<sup>848</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:52.

<sup>849</sup> Gesenius *Hebrew Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Baker Books; ©1979; p. 55.

**Translation:** ...I will not pass over this heap [of stones] to you... I was unsure as to how to translate the *if*; and perhaps it has a different understanding when used in an oath. It is unclear to me whether Laban is saying that neither man will cross over this witness; or, *if they do, they need to think about this agreement being made.*

Bear in mind that, when Laban first headed out after Jacob, he may have had it in his heart to harm Jacob. If he found the gods with Jacob, what would he have done?

| Genesis 31:52c  |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                        |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                 |
| ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced <i>eem</i> ]                                      | <i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)</i>        | primarily an hypothetical particle  | Strong's #518<br>BDB #49                  |
| ʾattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ahT-TAW</i> ]                            | <i>you (often, the verb to be is implied)</i>  | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun   | Strong's #859<br>BDB #61                  |
| lôʾ (לֹא or לוֹל) [pronounced <i>low</i> ]                              | <i>not, no</i>   | negates the word or action that follows; the absolute negation  | Strong's #3808<br>BDB #518                |
| ʾâbar (עָבַר) [pronounced <i>gaw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR</i> ]                 | <i>to pass over, to pass through, to pass on, to pass, to go over [beyond], to cross, to cross over; to go away, to depart; to violate [a law]</i> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect  | Strong's #5674<br>BDB #716                |
| ʾel (אֶל) [pronounced <i>ehl</i> ]                                      | <i>unto; into, among, in; toward, to; against; concerning, regarding; besides, together with; as to</i>  | directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied) with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular suffix | Strong's #413<br>BDB #39                  |
| ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                                    | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object   | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84                  |
| gal (גַּל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]                                    | <i>a heap [of stones], a wave [used figuratively for chastisement of Jehovah], spring</i>  | masculine singular noun; with the definite article  | Strong's #1530<br>BDB #164                |
| zeh (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zeh</i> ]                                      | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>  | masculine singular demonstrative adjective with the definite article  | Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063)<br>BDB #260 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>  | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251                 |
| ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                                    | untranslated generally; occasionally <i>to, toward</i>   | indicates that the following substantive is a direct object   | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84                  |

## Genesis 31:52c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology   | BDB and Strong's #                     |
|--|--|--|--|
| matstsêbâh (מַצְבֵּי) [pronounced mahtz-tzay <sup>b</sup> -VAWH] | <i>pillar, sculpted images</i>   | feminine singular noun with the definite article                                   | Strong's #4676 & #4678 BDB #663        |
| zô`th (זֹה) [pronounced zoth]                                    | <i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>  | feminine of singular zeh; demonstrative pronoun, adverb; with the definite article | Strong's #2063 (& 2088, 2090) BDB #260 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                           | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition   | No Strong's # BDB #510                 |
| râ`âh (רָעָה) [pronounced raw-GAW]                               | <i>evil, misery, distress, disaster, injury, iniquity, aberration, that which is morally reprehensible</i> | feminine singular adjective/noun   | Strong's #7451 BDB #949                |

**Translation:** ...and you will not cross over this heap [of stones] and this pillar to me [to do] evil [to me]. The idea that neither man will cross over this witness to their agreement to harm the other is found later on at the end of v. 52. I placed it here because it seemed to make better English sense.

The idea is, one day, Laban wakes up in a bad mood, wants to harm Jacob, and he takes off with some men to do that. But he comes to this heap of stones and this pillar and he remembers the oath that he took before God, not to pass over these stones to harm Jacob.

It is this passage which clear presents these rocks as a boundary between Laban and Jacob and as a nonaggression pact. I have added a couple of English words which I hope helps with the meaning of this verse. This is an eternal parting of the ways.

Let's just suppose that one of the men decided he was angry again and went looking for the other—the idea is, they would walk past this heap of stones and remember their agreement, and remember that God is watching over them, to uphold this agreement. And, more likely coming to this agreement and setting up this pillar remains etched in their minds forevermore.

Some understood this to be a mutual warning.

Genesis 31:51–53a Laban also said to Jacob, “Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.”

### Crossing over the pillar of stones (various commentators)

Guzik: *In this covenant, Laban expresses how suspicious he is of Jacob. The idea of Mizpah (“watch”) is “If you do wrong, God will see it and may He punish!”*<sup>850</sup>

Barnhouse: *In effect, the pillar of Mizpah meant, ‘If you come over on my side of this line, the pact is void and I will kill you.’ The covenant breaker would need God to take care of him, because the other would shoot to kill.*<sup>851</sup>

<sup>850</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:43–50.

<sup>851</sup> David Guzik's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:43–50.

### Crossing over the pillar of stones (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *[It is] not that these were to be the boundaries of their respective countries; for neither of them at present were possessed of lands that reached hither, if of any at all; nor that it would be a breach of covenant to pass over or by those, from one country into another, but so as to do, or with an intent to do, hurt to each other.*<sup>852</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Previously the guarding has been against the threat from Laban if his daughters are not rightly dealt with, thus the heap was mentioned. Now the guarding is two way and so both heap and pillar are mentioned. It is significant that Laban fears Jacob. The intervention of God on Jacob's behalf on a dream is not something he can pass over lightly, and he knows how Yahweh has prospered Jacob in the past. Thus he himself wants some warranty that peace will be maintained both ways. The pillar is, as it were, Jacob's signature to the covenant of peace.*<sup>853</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *By invoking the name of Jacob's God, Laban was implying that Jacob was the one who needed to be watched and this was the responsibility of the God of Jacob. Laban's gods would not need to do anything since he was a man of his word, which of course was a joke.*

Wenstrom continues: *The witness heap was also given the name "Mizpah," meaning "watchtower" since Laban did not trust Jacob, which is a case of Laban projecting onto Jacob his own failure and the fact he himself can't be trusted. Therefore, Laban is saying, "I do not trust you Jacob and since I won't be hear to watch you, then may the Lord keep watch."*<sup>854</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Very solemnly Laban begins again, saying nothing new, but desirous of creating the impression that this dangerous character Jacob must be tied as firmly as possible. Only now he lays emphasis on the possibility of Jacob's coming back on a punitive expedition. It is true that Laban's bad conscience may actually have induced him to reckon with such a possibility. But in any case he merely suspects Jacob of being capable of such a deed because he himself would no doubt have avenged himself thus. In this case (v. 51, 52) Laban refers to the cairn only as "heap" and as "pillar" (matstsepha), the latter expression involving the idea of a sacred pillar. Laban safeguards himself by all possible sanctions and calls upon Jacob's religious scruples. Incidentally, so as not to make the aspersions too direct and so defeat his own purpose, Laban also pledges himself not to "go past this heap" against Jacob "to do any harm" (Hebrew: "for evil").*<sup>855</sup>

Personally, I do not fault Laban for this particular nonaggression pact. Now, is Jacob the kind of man who would cross back over to harm Laban? I do not think that there is any evidence of that. Laban, like many others, judges Jacob and thinks of Jacob in terms of his own shortcomings. This is common in man. So I see this as simply a reasonable agreement between two imperfect men who are not always reasonable.

#### Chapter Outline

#### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Genesis 31:51–53a Laban also said to Jacob, "Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father."

### The covenant between Jacob and Laban (commentators/discussion)

Barnes: *The terms of the covenant are now formally stated. I have cast. The erection of the pillar was a joint act of the two parties; in which Laban proposes, Jacob performs, and all take part.*<sup>856</sup>

<sup>852</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:52.

<sup>853</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:51–52.

<sup>854</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>855</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>856</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:48–54.

## The covenant between Jacob and Laban (commentators/discussion)

Matthew Henry: *They solemnly appealed to God concerning their sincerity herein, [1.] As a witness (Genesis 31:49): The Lord watch between me and thee, that is, "The Lord take cognizance of every thing that shall be done on either side in violation of this league. When we are out of one another's sight, let his be a restraint upon us, that wherever we are we are under God's eye." This appeal is convertible into a prayer. Friends at a distance from each other may take the comfort of this, that when they cannot know or succour one another God watches between them, and has his eye on them both. [2.] As a Judge, Genesis 31:53. The God of Abraham (from whom Jacob descended), and the God of Nahor (from whom Laban descended), the God of their father (the common ancestor, from whom they both descended), judge betwixt us. God's relation to them is thus expressed to intimate that they worshipped one and the same God, upon which consideration there ought to be no enmity between them. Note, Those that have one God should have one heart: those that agree in religion should strive to agree in every thing else. God is Judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously; whoever does wrong, it is at his peril.*<sup>857</sup>

F. B. Meyer: *In our time covenants are engrossed on parchment, so that there may be written documentary evidence accessible, to prove that certain transactions have taken place. The same object was conserved, where the art of writing was confined to the few, by the erection of monuments, whose existence was associated with the agreements into which men had entered with one another...it is evident that they lived in an habitual recognition of God and the eternal sanction of His presence. The Lord was to watch between them. God was to be witness and judge.*<sup>858</sup>

Trapp: *"A fool is full of words," said Solomon. Laban likewise talks a great deal here. A covenant he will have, a pillar he will have, a heap he will have; and that heap shall be a witness, and that pillar a witness, and God a witness, and a Judge too. There is no end of his discourse. The basest things are ever the most plentiful, so the least worth yields the most words.*<sup>859</sup>

Let me push back on Trapp somewhat; what is recorded that Laban says is not unreasonable. He may have come roaring after Jacob, possibly with murder in his heart, but he seems to have calmed down (he found nothing stolen with Jacob and company); and he seems to be focusing on reasonable things at this point (the treatment of his daughters).

Bush: *Jacob makes no reply to Laban's boasting, but lets it pass; and though he had felt so keenly and spoken so warmly, yet he consents to a covenant of peace. His resentment is under the control of his moral principle. He said nothing, but expressed his mind by actions.*<sup>860</sup>

We actually do not know if Jacob added any words to this covenant or not; if he did, they are not recorded. Given the temperament and the weaknesses of these two men, I believe that this covenant is the best that either man could have hoped for.

This covenant eased Jacob's mind considerably. As he moved closer and closer to Canaan, he became more and more apprehensive about Esau. At no point does he concern himself with Laban, thinking, "What if Laban changes his mind and comes back after me?" I believe the both men intended at this point to abide by the terms of their agreement.

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *This treaty was not a promise between friends but a warning between antagonists who did not trust each other. They called on God to keep each other true to the terms of the covenant they had just made and so therefore, this covenant is a "non-aggression" pact.*<sup>861</sup>

<sup>857</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>858</sup> F. B. Meyer, *Through the Bible by Day (A Devotional Commentary)*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>859</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:44 (suggestive comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>860</sup> The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:44 (suggestive comments) (slightly edited).

<sup>861</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

## The covenant between Jacob and Laban (commentators/discussion)

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:53 manifests two more elements of a treaty in ancient Near Eastern practice, namely the invoking divine witnesses, a curse for breaking the agreement, which was insured in the case of Jacob and Laban by the presence of God. Laban added an oath to the covenant by calling on the God of Abraham and the gods of Nahor, the gods of their father to judge between Jacob and Laban, which indicates how great a split this is between the two families of Laban and Jacob.*<sup>862</sup>

H. Vos: *This covenant also might be called a nonaggression pact.*<sup>863</sup>

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Genesis 31:51–53a Laban also said to Jacob, “Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.”

## Laban’s requirements of Jacob in the covenant (various commentators)

Henry M. Morris: *Laban...took the initiative in proposing the terms of the covenant after the pillar was erected. Implying that Jacob was the one not to be trusted, he demanded certain restrictions on his activities. Jacob must not afflict his daughters (Jacob had always treated them with kindness and consideration, and Laban had no cause to think that he ever would do otherwise); neither must he ever take any wives other than Laban’s daughters (Jacob had only wanted Rachel in the first place, but had been forced into a bigamous relationship by Laban’s own deception); finally, after Jacob had become strong in the land of Canaan (as Laban realized he inevitably would, under God’s blessing), he must not come back to Haran bent on revenge against Laban (Laban knew Jacob was not a vindictive man and would never think of such a thing, but he got a measure of vicarious satisfaction by imputing his own base motives to Jacob in this way).*<sup>864</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *[Laban] enjoined upon Jacob fidelity to his daughters, the formation of the covenant of reconciliation and peace between them is first described, according to which, neither of them (sive ego sive tu, as in Exodus 19:13) was to pass the stone-heap and memorial-stone with a hostile intention towards the other.*<sup>865</sup>

Verse-by-verse Ministries: *In response to Jacob’s protest, Laban demands a covenant Remember, covenants were powerful agreements that bound each party to mutual obedience under penalty of death. In this case, the agreement Laban seeks is actually an agreement of protection. He demands that Jacob never cross this line again, and likewise Laban will never cross into Jacob’s territory. Furthermore, Jacob can never take additional wives.*

Verse-by-verse Ministries continues: *Why does Laban insist on these rules in the covenant? Superficially, Laban claims that since these two men are at odds with one another now, they must remain separated for protection. In reality, Laban has other reasons for this agreement. Remember the household idols? Though Laban couldn’t find them, he knows that Jacob has them. So he fears that Jacob will return sometime with the idols and lay claim to Laban’s property. So the line in the sand protects Laban from Jacob’s claims.*

<sup>862</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>863</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>864</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 490.

<sup>865</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

## Laban's requirements of Jacob in the covenant (various commentators)

Verse-by-verse Ministries concludes: *Secondly, Jacob is prohibited from taking other wives so that his family won't extend into other families or clans which then might inherit Laban's idols and cross the line looking for his inheritance. These are Laban's intentions, to protect himself and prevent Jacob from every harming him in the future.*<sup>866</sup>

I need to combine this with the doctrine listed in v. 50.

[Chapter Outline](#)

[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

**Genesis 31:52** This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and that you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.

This will be a pact of non-aggression. Jacob would not pass by this heap of stones to do harm to Laban or vice versa. It would stand between them both as a witness to this agreement; an agreement entered into with God's approval.

The idea is that, perhaps one of them one day would start to stew and start to get angry and decide, "I'm going to bring my servants with me, and pay that so-and-so back for all the crap that he has given me." But then, in order to go from one place to the other, they would have to pass by this monument, and this monument represents a pledge taken by both men before God.

**Application:** To many of us today, whatever pledges we make, whatever contracts that we sign, are meaningless, if we choose to do something else. I have signed a great many contracts in my business; and very often with people who have no intention of fulfilling their part of the contract. They look at the contract as something they have to sign in order to get what they want; but they do not see it as an obligation of personal honor or even as a legal document.

They say, *there is no honor among thieves*; sometimes, there is no honor at all.

This is different between Laban and Jacob. These are men who have some very strong feelings about one another—not feelings of mutual respect and love. However, Jacob is married to Laban's daughters; Jacob is caring for Laban's grandchildren. Therefore, it is to the benefit of both men to have a pact where they have set aside their personal differences.

Such agreements are a part of married life all of the time. You may dislike your in-laws, for whatever reason, justified or not. However, for the times that you see them, you make nice, for the benefit of your spouse and the benefit of your children (their grandchildren). This is known as being civilized, not hypocritical. As an aside, we spend time, sometimes every day, with people that we do not really like. It is normal to still say, *hello, good morning, how are you?* It is inappropriate (at work or wherever) to tell them what you think about their wardrobe, their taste in friends, cars or whatever, even if close proximity to such things makes you want to vomit.

**Application:** Let me give you a real-life situation: now teachers are dealing with all kinds of confused children, boys who may wear effeminate clothing, girls who might try to act like boys, and even children whose foolish parents have allowed them to transmorph into some other gender. We all know this is wrong; the Bible is clear on such things. However, this does not mean that, every time we see little Johnny that we give him an earful. Little Johnny might be wearing a bra and lipstick, and we just roll with it. If this is allowed in your school, then you let it go. You do not praise him as if he has done something great and brave—he hasn't—but you do not beat him over the head with his own perversion either. Much of the problem here is related to his parents who would allow and sometimes even encourage such stupid behavior. Much of the problem is cultural where children are made to believe that, there is a reasonable chance that you might be a girl but born as a boy (or vice versa) and that if

<sup>866</sup> From [verse-by-verse ministries](#); accessed October 15, 2017.

you recognize it and act on it, that shows courage. 30 years ago, our society understood that this shows anything but courage, but we are in the culture that we are in.

In all cases, this is a person for whom Christ died, and often their acting out simply reveals just how mixed up and empty they are without faith in Christ and without Bible doctrine. There are many people who have recovered from this lifestyle and from this confusion (just google *recovering homosexuals*). It is not up to us to change their exterior; when the time presents itself, we present the Lord Jesus Christ. We let Christ work from the inside out.

Whereas, only 2% or so of Americans self-identify as homosexual, a much larger percentage have had same-sex attractions—some occasional and some often—and our society seems to now be selling the idea that, if you feel a same-sex attraction at anytime, well that simply means you are born a homosexual and you should act on it. The generational change in society will simply mean that more of those who would have learned to resist such attractions will give in to them, and that perversion will run rampant in a larger and larger segment of our society.

In any case, I apparently have gone out on far too many tangents at this time, going from striking a mutual agreement, to tolerating in-laws, to tolerating those at work that you might not normally want to tolerate, to tolerating people who suffer from a confused sexuality due to the views of society today. We will now return to the narrative.

Jacob and his father-in-law Laban have come to a mutual understanding, and are making a covenant with one another. They have amassed a pile of rocks to commemorate this agreement, and they will part—perhaps not as friends, but not as enemies either.

**Genesis 31:51–52** And Laban said to Jacob, “Behold this heap, and behold the pillar which I have set up between you and me. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and that you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.

*This heap* refers to the pile of stones that they had gathered, with probably a long oblong stone set upright in the midst of the pile. The idea is, this will stand out from the other stones laying about, and it commemorates and records their agreement with one another.

Laban continues:

| Genesis 31:53a   |   |                                |                           |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology               | BDB and Strong's #        |
| ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים)<br>[pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]                      | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i> | masculine plural construct     | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43  |
| ʿAb̄râhâm (אַבְרָהָם)<br>[pronounced <i>ahb<sup>ve</sup>-raw-HAWM</i> ]    | <i>father of a multitude, chief of a multitude; transliterated Abraham</i>                          | masculine singular proper noun | Strong's #85<br>BDB #4    |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו)<br>[pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i>                               | simple wâw conjunction         | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251 |
| ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים)<br>[pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i> ]                      | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i> | masculine plural construct     | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43  |

## Genesis 31:53a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|
| Nâchôwr (נַחֹר)<br>[pronounced naw-KHOHR]  | <i>snorting [of a horse]; hoarse, dry hot; transliterated Nahor</i>   | masculine singular proper noun  | Strong's #5152<br>BDB #637  |
| shâphaṭ (שָׁפַט)<br>[pronounced shaw-FAHT]   | <i>to judge, to condemn, to punish; to defend [especially the poor and oppressed], to defend [one's cause] and deliver him from his enemies; to rule, to govern</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect                          | Strong's #8199<br>BDB #1047 |
| This plural verb really stands out. It implies that there is more than one God judging.  |   |   |                             |
| The NET Bible: <i>The Hebrew verb translated "judge" is plural, suggesting that Laban has more than one "god" in mind. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX, apparently in an effort to make the statement monotheistic, have a singular verb. In this case one could translate, "May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." However, Laban had a polytheistic world view, as evidenced by his possession of household idols (cf. 31:19). The translation uses "God" when referring to Abraham's God, for Genesis makes it clear that Abraham worshiped the one true God. It employs "god" when referring to Nahor's god, for in the Hebrew text Laban refers to a different god here, probably one of the local deities.</i> <sup>867</sup> |   |   |                             |
| bêyn (בֵּין) [pronounced bane]   | <i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>  | preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix                       | Strong's #996<br>BDB #107   |
| ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים)<br>[pronounced el-o-HEEM]  | <i>God; gods, foreign gods, god; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>   | masculine plural construct  | Strong's #430<br>BDB #43    |
| ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]   | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i>   | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3          |

Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge: *For avihem, "Their father," several manuscripts read avichem, "Your father," for Terah was an idolater (see note on Joshua 24:2).*<sup>868</sup>

**Translation:** The Elohim of Abraham and the Elohim of Nahor [they] will judge between us—the Elohim of their father.” This brings us to the end of the words spoken by Laban. If Jacob said something, those words were not recorded.

There are two possible concerns in this portion of v. 53: (1) *to judge* is in the plural and (2) *the Elohim of their father* may be a gloss.

Genesis 31:51a, 53a Laban said to Jacob, “May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.”

<sup>867</sup> From <https://bible.org/netbible/index.htm?gen39.htm> (footnote); accessed November 23, 2016.

<sup>868</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880; from E-sword, Genesis 31:53.

## The plural of *to judge* (a discussion)

*Elohim* is a plural noun and it is used twice here, but it nearly always takes a singular verb. The plural verb makes sense if Laban is speaking of two Entities here or he is saying, “The God of Abraham and the gods of Nahor—they will judge between us.”

Interestingly enough, there is the masculine plural verb used here. The noun *Elohim* is plural, but it nearly always takes a singular verb. This is Laban speaking, so it may simply be that he is rusty in his Hebrew—as if he has spoken Aramaic for many decades (which is certainly possible). However, people do not tend to lose their language.

What is more likely the case is, Laban has forsaken the God of his family, the God of Abraham, and that he serves another god, the god of his father Nahor (which should be the same God as Abraham’s God).

The Cambridge Bible: *The verb “judge” is in the plural. See note on Genesis 20:13 for the rare use of the plural verb with “Elohim.” Laban speaks of the God of Abraham, i.e. of the Hebrews in Canaan, and of the God of Nahor, i.e. of the Hebrews in Haran, and as a Syrian may possibly have regarded them as distinct deities. The plural with Elohim is found in Genesis 20:13, Genesis 35:7.*<sup>869</sup>

The Geneva Bible: *Behold, how the idolaters mingle the true God with their false gods.*<sup>870</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *The phrase “the God of Nahor” should be translated “the gods of Nahor” for two reasons: (1) Laban was still a polytheist as evidenced by his household gods that Rachel stole. (2) The plural form of the verb shaphat (שָׁפַט) (shaw-fat), means “they will judge.”*<sup>871</sup>

The plural verb can suggest one of two things: (1) Laban is having some difficulty speaking in the Hebrew (*God* is a plural noun, but does not take a plural verb) or (2) Laban sees these as different gods. I believe that it is the latter, because of what Jacob will say next.

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[Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines](#)

Genesis 31:51a, 53a Laban said to Jacob, “May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.”

## A possible gloss in the Hebrew Bible

Genesis 31:53 The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac. (KJV)

Clarke: *The God of their father* – As Laban certainly speaks of the true God here, with what propriety can he say that this God was the God of Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor? It is certain that Terah was an idolater; of this we have the most positive proof, Joshua 24:2. Because the clause is not in the Septuagint, and is besides wanting in some MSS., Dr. Kennicott considers it an interpolation. But there is no need of having recourse to this expedient if we adopt the reading מְכִיבָא *abichem*, Your father, for מְאִיבָא *abihem*, Their father, which is supported by several of Kennicott’s and Divine establishment Rossi’s MSS., and is precisely the same form made use of by Laban, Genesis 31:29, when addressing Jacob, and appears to me to be used here in the same way; for he there most manifestly uses the plural pronoun, when speaking only to Jacob himself.

Clarke concludes: *It is therefore to be considered as a form of speech peculiar to Laban; at least we have two instances of his use of it in this chapter.*<sup>872</sup>

<sup>869</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>870</sup> Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Genesis 31:53.

<sup>871</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>872</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:53.

## A possible gloss in the Hebrew Bible

The Cambridge Bible: *the God of their father*] R. V. marg. gods. These words are not found in the LXX and some Hebrew MSS., and are probably a gloss. If they are omitted, the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor were treated in the original form of the narrative as separate, not identical, deities.<sup>873</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

No doubt, there have been modifications made to the way that Abraham speaks from living in Canaan; and the same for Laban living in Padan-Aram. Laban appears to have been raised in Padan-aram, so his native language is Aramaic. Jacob learned Hebrew (and other languages) from his mother, father and grandfather Abraham. So, the use of the plural verb here might not mean anything more than Laban struggling with the Hebrew language.

divine witness? I may need to split this into two doctrines?

Genesis 31:51–53a Laban also said to Jacob, “Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.”

In case you are confused as to *who is who*; there will be a genealogical chart to follow with a quick explanation about who is related to who and how.

## The Elohim of Abraham and Nahor and Terah (various commentators)

Barnes: “*The God of Abraham, Nahor, and Terah.*” This is an interesting acknowledgment that their common ancestor Terah and his descendants down to Laban still acknowledged the true God even in their idolatry.<sup>874</sup>

Dr. Thomas Constable: Laban had two deities in mind when he said “The God of Abraham and the god of Nahor” (Genesis 31:53), as the Hebrew plural verb translated “judge” indicates. Jacob swore by the “Awesome One of Isaac,” which indicates that he was worshipping the God of his fathers. Laban also swore by the pagan god his fathers worshipped.<sup>875</sup>

Benson: *The God of Abraham, (Genesis 31:53,) from whom Jacob was descended; and the God of Nahor — Laban’s progenitor; the God of their father — From whom they were both descended; judge betwixt us. God’s relation to them is thus expressed, to intimate that they worshipped one and the same God, upon which consideration there ought to be no enmity betwixt them. Those that have one God, should have one heart: God is judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously. Whoever does wrong, it is at his peril.*<sup>876</sup>

Keil and Delitzsch: *Of this the memorial was to serve as a witness, and the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father (Terah), would be umpire between them. To this covenant, in which Laban, according to his polytheistic views, placed the God of Abraham upon the same level with the God of Nahor and Terah, Jacob swore by “the Fear of Isaac” (Genesis 31:42), the God who was worshipped by his father with sacred awe.*<sup>877</sup>

<sup>873</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>874</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:48–54.

<sup>875</sup> From <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>876</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47–53.

<sup>877</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:43–54.

## The Elohim of Abraham and Nahor and Terah (various commentators)

Matthew Henry: *God is judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously; whoever do wrong, it is at their peril.*<sup>878</sup>

Alford: *aban calls to witness the Gods (the verb is in the plural in the original) of Abraham and Nahor and their father Terah; but Jacob swears only by the true God, Him whom Isaac, his father, feared.*<sup>879</sup>

Bush: *This sentiment shows that some knowledge of the true God was extensively prevalent at that early period, though in Laban's case it did not avail to extinguish the relics of his idolatrous propensities.*<sup>880</sup>

Dr. Bob Utley: *"The God of Abraham and God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us" The VERB here is PLURAL (BDB 1047, KB 1622, Qal IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense, PLURAL), which seems to imply that Laban is making a polytheistic statement. The Septuagint does not follow the MT here (it has the SINGULAR VERB). The book of Genesis seems to imply that Abraham became a YHWHist, but not Nahor. This seems to be an allusion to an agreement made in the names of several family gods. But, notice that Jacob only swears by the name of the God of his father, YHWH ("the fear of Isaac").*<sup>881</sup>

I believe that there is a good chance that many of Abraham's relatives believed in the Y<sup>e</sup>howah, Creator God. However, their understanding of Him became distorted over the years and the true worship of Y<sup>e</sup>howah was not pass down to their descendants.

Wesley: *As a judge, The God of Abraham, from whom Jacob was descended, and The God of Nahor, from whom Laban was descended, the God of their father, the common ancestor from whom they were both descended, judge betwixt us. God's relation to them is thus expressed, to intimate that they worshipped one and the same God, upon which consideration there ought to be no enmity betwixt them. Those that have one God should have one heart: God is judge between contending parties, and he will judge righteously, whoever doth wrong it is at their peril.*<sup>882</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *And the father of these was Terah, so that the god of them was not the true God, and is not meant, at least not as truly worshipped; but the god or gods of Terah, Nahor and Abraham worshipped while idolaters, and Laban still continued to do, though perhaps not in so gross a manner as some did.*<sup>883</sup>

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Laban spake of the God of Abraham and Nahor, their common ancestors; but Jacob, knowing that idolatry had crept in among that branch of the family, swore by the "fear of his father Isaac." They who have one God should have one heart: they who are agreed in religion should endeavor to agree in everything else.*<sup>884</sup>

Matthew Poole: *[Laban] joins idols with the true God, and secretly chargeth the religion of Jacob and Abraham with novelty, and prefers his own as the most ancient religion. See Jos\_24:2. Whence we may learn that antiquity of itself is no certain argument of the true church or religion.*

<sup>878</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>879</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>880</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:50 (suggestive comments).

<sup>881</sup> Dr. Bob Utley, Copyright © 2014 Bible Lessons International; [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org); from e-sword; Genesis 31:53.

<sup>882</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

<sup>883</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>884</sup> Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; 1871; from e-sword, Genesis 31:52.

## The Elohim of Abraham and Nahor and Terah (various commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *Each now swears by the God he worships. Jacob swear by Yahweh, the God of Abraham, in the title 'the Fear' ('the Awesome One') given by his father Isaac, and Laban swears by the god of Nahor. Each swears by the God of his father.*<sup>885</sup>

Trapp: *Laban, the idolater, pretends antiquity, appeals to the gods of Abraham, of Nahor, and of their father Terah, who served strange gods. {Joshua 24:2} Papists boast much of antiquity, as once the Gibeonites did of old shoes and mouldy bread. A gentleman being importuned by a Popish questionist, to tell where our religion was before Luther; answered, That our religion was always in the Bible, where your religion never was. Mine antiquity is Jesus Christ, saith Ignatius, and we with him.*<sup>886</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *Without directly correcting Laban or his statement of the case, Jacob swears by the true God under the same name as that used v. 42, the Fear (i. e., object of fear, or reverence) of his father Isaac. Had the renegade Laban perhaps meant to identify his own god with the true God of Abraham? And is Jacob's statement of His name an attempt to ward off such an identification? This is not impossible.*<sup>887</sup>

The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary: *The Lord takes cognisance of the conduct of men when they are absent one from another. The Most High is above all, and sees all.*<sup>888</sup>

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Maps and Short Doctrines

Bush: *The power of religion is extremely weak in our minds if the consideration of the all-seeing eye of Jehovah does not operate more strongly to restrain us from evil than the presence of the world of mortal men.*<sup>889</sup>

I think that we have a more difficult time understand this covenant because (1) so many of us sign contracts which we seem to have no intention of fulfilling unless they are in our best interests; (2) the idea that God is watching our behavior is not real to many of us.

Genesis 31:51–53a Laban also said to Jacob, "Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father."

Thomas: *It is impossible to avoid noticing the curious misconception of the term "mizpah" which characterizes its use today. As used for a motto on rings, Christmas cards, and even as the title of an organization, it is interpreted to mean union, trust, fellowship; while its original meaning was that of separation, distrust, and warning. Two men, neither of whom trusted the other, said in effect: "I cannot trust you out of my sight. The Lord must be the watchman between us if we and our goods are to be kept safe from each other."*<sup>890</sup>

<sup>885</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>886</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>887</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>888</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:48–49 (suggestive comments).

<sup>889</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:48–49 (suggestive comments).

<sup>890</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

## A truer meaning of the Mizpah farewell (many commentators)

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

Smith continues: *So next time one of your Christian friends says Mizpah, you might not be so willing to just smile. It isn't a pleasant departure but it has one intention, the Lord watch you, I can't.*<sup>891</sup>

Wesley: *They solemnity appealed to God concerning their sincerity herein; As a witness, Genesis 31:49. The Lord watch between me and thee – That is, the Lord take cognizance of every thing that shall be done on either side in violation of this league.*<sup>892</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:51-52 manifests another element of a treaty common in ancient Near Eastern legal practice, namely, that of establishing boundary stones to demarcate territory. The boundary marked by the stones was the limit of Jacob's property as Gilead would later become part of the nation of Israel.*<sup>893</sup>

Dr. Thomas Constable: *The Song of Solomon -called "Mizpah [lit. watchtower] blessing" was not really a promise between friends but a warning between antagonists who did not trust each other ( Genesis 31:49). They called on God to keep each other true to the terms of the covenant they had just made. They could not check on each other themselves.*<sup>894</sup>

J. Vernon McGee: *The words of this contract have been used by young people's groups and other groups as a benediction. I don't think it ought to be used that way because it was a contract made between two rascals who are going to quit stealing from each other and work on somebody else! "The Lord watch between me and thee" is really saying, "May the Lord keep His eye on you so you won't steal from me anymore." That is exactly what these men are saying. And after this, they separate. The pile of stones remained at Mizpah as a boundary line between Laban and Jacob. Each promised not to cross over on the other's side.*<sup>895</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Laban then also called the heap of stones "Mizpah" (meaning "watchtower"), denoting it as a sort of sentry guarding the boundary between Laban's sphere of activities and Jacob's sphere of activities.*<sup>896</sup>

Morris continues: *It is sad and strange that Laban's hypocritical and suspicious statement (verse 49) has been so often appropriated in the present day by Christians as the so-called "Mizpah Benediction." It was not intended by Laban as a blessing in any sense at all.*<sup>897</sup>

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[Genesis 31:53a](#) The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us."

Abraham and Nahor were brothers. Abraham's grandson is Jacob and Nahor's grandson is Laban (now Jacob's father-in-law). Laban speaks of the God of Jacob's grandfather and the God of his own grandfather—Who is the

<sup>891</sup> Chuck Smith, *Through the Bible Commentary C2000 Series*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:53–55.

<sup>892</sup> John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:44.

<sup>893</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>894</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>895</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>896</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 490.

<sup>897</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 491.

same God—as if there is some kind of equality in their lines. *Their father* refers to Terah ben Nahor (Nahor I<sup>898</sup>), who is both Jacob and Laban's great grandfather.

This reference to the *God of Nahor* suggests that he was a believer, just as his brother Abraham was. However, Laban's use may indicate that he is making reference to a plurality of gods.

H. C. Leupold: *In conclusion Laban offers his most solemn adjuration, stronger than v. 50 b; for God is called upon not only to "witness" but to "judge." Besides, he is called by the solemn title "God of Abraham." In fact, another god is invoked, "the god of Nahor." If v. 29 and v. 42 are compared, it seems most likely that two different deities, are under consideration: the true God; and Nahor's, that is also Laban's idol. The plural of the verb "judge" (yishpetu) therefore points to two different gods. So the polytheist Laban speaks. The more gods to help bind the pact, the better it is sealed, thinks Laban.*<sup>899</sup>

**Terah's Genealogy** is from [Wikipedia](#), accessed August 18, 2015. Terah's father is Nahor I, the son of Serug.

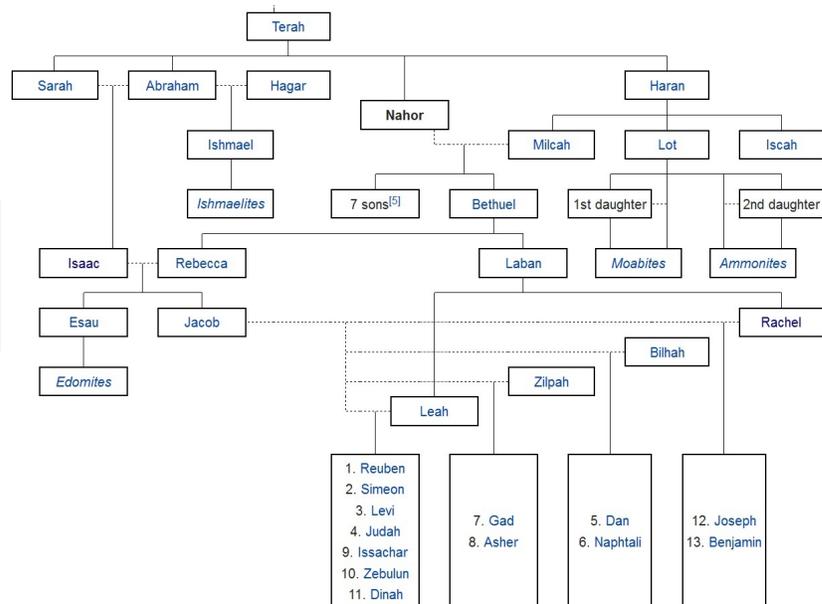
To help with this chart; there are two men named Nahor. One is Terah's father and the other is Terah's son. Terah has 3 sons of note: Abraham, Nahor and Haran. Sarah appears to be Abraham's full or half-sister.

Laban (the brother of Rebekah) is the son of Bethuel, grandson of Nahor, great grandson of Terah. Isaac marries his cousin Rebekah and Jacob marries his cousins, Rachel and Leah.

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### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Whedon makes the interesting observations: *Laban opens the controversy, and his speech, both here (Genesis 31:26–30) and afterwards, (Genesis 31:43–44; Genesis 31:48–53,) and Jacob's also, (in Genesis 31:36–42,) read like the fragments of an ancient poem. They have the rhythm and passion of poetry, and should be put in the poetic form.*<sup>900</sup>



I normally do not like to split up a verse, but that seemed to be the most logical thing to do. V. 53a completes the quotation of Laban and Jacob's response (in actions) is recorded in vv. 53b–54.

<sup>898</sup> Nahor, the brother of Abraham, would be Nahor II.

<sup>899</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

<sup>900</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:26.

And so swears Jacob in a fear of his father Isaac. And so sacrifices Jacob a sacrifice in the mountain. And so he calls to his brothers to eat bread and so they ate bread. And so they spend the night in the mountain.

Genesis  
31:53b–54

Accordingly, Jacob swears by the fear/respect of his father Isaac. Jacob then sacrificed an animal in the mountain [where they were]. He then called upon his brothers to eat bread and they ate bread [together]. Then they spent the night on the mountain.

Accordingly, Jacob swore by the religion of his father Isaac. Jacob sacrificed an animal to God in the mountain where they all were. He then called upon his brothers to break bread; and so they all ate together. Then they spent the night on the mountain.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Masoretic Text (Hebrew)  | And so swears Jacob in a fear of his father Isaac. And so sacrifices Jacob a sacrifice in the mountain. And so he calls to his brothers to eat bread and so they ate bread. And so they spend the night in the mountain.  |
| Targum (Onkelos)         | And Jakob sware by Him whom Izhak his father feared [Sam. Vers. "by the Redeemer of his father Izhak."]. And Jakob sacrificed victims in the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread; and they ate bread, and tabernacled in the mountain.                                       |
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | But Jakob sware by the God whom his father Izhak feared. And Jakob slew sacrifices in the mount, and invited his kinsmen who came with Laban to help themselves to bread, ( <u>or strengthen themselves with bread,</u> ) and they helped themselves to bread, and lodged in the mount. |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. And after he had offered sacrifices in the mountain, he called his brethren to eat bread. And when they had eaten, they lodged there.  |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Then Ya'aqub swore by the fear of his father, Isaac. Ya'aqub offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his relatives to eat bread. They ate bread, and stayed all night in the mountain.  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And Jacob swore by the reverence of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and invited his brethren to eat bread; and they did eat food, and spent the night on the mountain.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. And he offered a sacrifice in the mountain, and called his brethren, and they ate and drank, and slept in the mountain.  |

Significant differences: Additional text in one targum.

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| Bible in Basic English    | Then Jacob took an oath by the Fear of his father Isaac. 54 And Jacob made an offering on the mountain, and gave orders to his people to take food: so they had a meal and took their rest that night on the mountain.   |
| Easy English              | So Jacob made a promise in the name of God. He offered a sacrifice to God in the hill country. He asked his relatives to eat a meal with him. After they had eaten, they stayed the night there.   |
| Easy-to-Read Version–2006 | Jacob's father, Isaac, called God "Fear." So Jacob used that name to make the promise. Then Jacob killed an animal and offered it as a sacrifice on the mountain. And he invited his men to come and share a meal. After they finished eating, they spent the night on the mountain. |

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Good News Bible (TEV)       | Then, in the name of the God whom his father Isaac worshiped, Jacob solemnly vowed to keep this promise. He killed an animal, which he offered as a sacrifice on the mountain, and he invited his men to the meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain.    |
| International Children's B. | So Jacob made a promise in the name of God. This was the God of his father Isaac. Then Jacob killed an animal and offered it as a sacrifice on the mountain. And he invited his relatives to share in the meal. After they finished eating, they spent the night on the mountain. |
| <i>The Message</i>          | Jacob promised, swearing by the Fear, the God of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and worshiped, calling in all his family members to the meal. They ate and slept that night on the mountain.  |
| NIRV                        | So Jacob made a promise using the name of the God his father Isaac worshiped. He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country. And he invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.   |
| New Simplified Bible        | So Jacob swore this oath out of respect for his father Isaac. He offered a sacrifice on the mountain. He invited his relatives to eat the meal with him. They ate with him and spent the night on the mountain.   |

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Common English Bible    | So Jacob gave his word in the name of the awesome one of his father Isaac. Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and invited his relatives to a meal. They ate together and spent the night on the mountain.   |
| Contemporary English V. | Then Jacob made a promise in the name of the fearsome God his father Isaac had worshiped. Jacob killed an animal and offered it as a sacrifice there on the mountain, and he invited his men to eat with him. After the meal they spent the night on the mountain.              |
| The Living Bible        | So Jacob took oath before the mighty God of his father, Isaac, to respect the boundary line. Then Jacob presented a sacrifice to God there at the top of the mountain, and invited his companions to a feast, and afterwards spent the night with them on the mountain.         |
| New Berkeley Version    | Jacob swore by the reverence of his father Isaac and offered sacrifice on the mountain-side. He invited his kinsmen to break bread; then spent the night on the mountain.   |
| New Century Version     | So Jacob made a promise in the name of the God whom his father Isaac worshiped. Then Jacob killed an animal and offered it as a sacrifice on the mountain, and he invited his relatives to share in the meal. After they finished eating, they spent the night on the mountain. |
| New Life Version        | So Jacob promised by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob gave a gift in worship to God on the mountain. Then he called his brothers to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed the night on the mountai.  |
| New Living Translation  | So Jacob took an oath before the fearsome God of his father, Isaac, to respect the boundary line. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice to God there on the mountain and invited everyone to a covenant feast. After they had eaten, they spent the night on the mountain.             |

#### **Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:**

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| American English Bible   | Then Jacob swore by the fear of his father IsaAc, 54 and he offered a sacrifice on the mountain. He called his family together and they ate and drank, then they all went to sleep on the mountain.           |
| International Standard V | So Jacob made an oath by his father's Fear [i.e. the LORD], offered sacrifices there on the mountain, and called on his relatives to eat some food. So they ate the food and spent the night on the mountain. |

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | Then Jacob swore by the God his father Isaac held in reverence, and summoned his kinsmen, when sacrifice had been done on the hill, to take food there. So they took their meal, and remained there.  |
| Translation for Translators | So Jacob solemnly promised to do what they said in their peace agreement. And he asked God, the one before whom his father Isaac trembled, to listen to what they promised. He offered a sacrifice to God there in the hilly area, and he invited his relatives to eat with him. After they had eaten, they slept there that night. |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible     | Jacob was to swear by the dread of his father Isaac. Jacob was to sacrifice, a sacrifice on the mountain, and was to call his brothers to eat bread. They were to eat bread, and were to lodge on the mountain. |
| Conservapedia          | And Jacob swore by the awe of his father Isaac. Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinfolk to eat bread. They did eat bread, and lodged overnight in the mountain.                       |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible    | Jacob then swore by the Worshipped of his father Isaac. And Jacob sacrificed a sacrifice on the Heap, and invited his relatives to eat bread. So they ate bread, and they rested on the Heap.                   |
| God's Truth (Tyndale)  | And Jacob sware by him that his father Isaac feared. Then Jacob did sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and tarried all night in the hill.                       |
| Jubilee Bible 2000     | And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount and called his brethren to eat bread; and they ate bread and slept in the mount.                                   |
| NIV, ©2011             | So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac. He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.      |
| Unlocked Literal Bible | Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and called his relatives to eat a meal. They ate and spent the entire night on the mountain.                             |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Christian Community (1988)               | So Jacob swore by the Fearful God of his father Isaac. Jacob also offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his brothers to the meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.   |
| New American Bible (2002)                | Jacob took the oath by the Awesome One of Isaac. He then offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to share in the meal. When they had eaten, they passed the night on the mountain.  |
| New American Bible (2011)                | Jacob took the oath by the Fear of his father Isaac [Fear of...Isaac: an archaic title for Jacob's God of the Father.]. He then offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to share in the meal. When they had eaten, they passed the night on the mountain. |
| New English Bible<br>New Jerusalem Bible | Then Jacob swore by the Kinsman of his father Isaac. He offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to the meal. They ate the meal, and passed the night on the mountain.   |
| New Revised Standard V.                  | So Jacob swore by the Fear [Meaning of Heb uncertain] of his father Isaac, and Jacob offered a sacrifice on the height and called his kinfolk to eat bread; and they ate bread and tarried all night in the hill country.   |
| Revised English Bible                    | Jacob swore this oath in the name of the Fear of Isaac, the God of his father. He slaughtered an animal for sacrifice there in the hill-country, and summoned his kinsmen to the feast. They ate together and spent the night there.  |

**Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Complete Jewish Bible      | But Ya'akov swore by the One his father Yitz'chak feared. Ya'akov offered a sacrifice on the mountain and invited his kinsmen to the meal. They ate the food and spent the whole night on the mountain.  |
| The Complete Tanach        | And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. And Jacob slaughtered a slaughtering on the mountain, and he invited his friends to eat a meal, and they ate bread and lodged on the mountain.  |
|                            | <p><b>And Jacob slaughtered a slaughtering:</b> He slaughtered animals for a feast.</p> <p><b>his friends:</b> [Heb. לַאֲחָיו, lit., to his brothers.] To his friends who were with Laban.</p> <p><b>to eat a meal:</b> Heb. לֶחֶם. Any kind of foodstuff is called לֶחֶם [not only bread], like (Dan. 5:1): "made a great feast (לֶחֶם)" ; (Jer. 11:19): "Let us destroy his food (וּמַחֲלֵב) with wood."</p> |
| exeGesés companion Bible   | ...- and Yaaqov oaths by the fear of his father Yischaq. Then Yaaqov sacrifices a sacrifice on the mount and calls his brothers to eat bread: and they eat bread and stay overnight in the mount:...   |
| JPS (Tanakh—1985)          | And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. 54Jacob then offered up a sacrifice on the Height, and invited his kinsmen to partake of the meal. After the meal, they spent the night on the Height.  |
| Kaplan Translation         | Jacob swore by the Dread of his father Isaac. He then butchered an animal on the hill, and invited his relatives to break bread. They had a meal and spent the night on the hill..   |
| Orthodox Jewish Bible      | And Ya'akov swore by the Pachad Aviv Yitzhak. Then Ya'akov offered zavach upon the har, and called his achim to eat lechem; and they did eat lechem, and tarried all night on the har.   |
| <i>The Scriptures</i> 1998 | And Ya'aqob swore by the Fear of his father Yitshaq. And Ya'aqob brought an offering on the mountain, and called his brothers to eat bread. And they ate bread and spent the night on the mountain.  |

**Expanded/Embellished Bibles:**

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>The Amplified Bible</i> | But Jacob swore [only] by [the one true God] the Fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice [to the Lord] on the mountain, and called his relatives to the meal; and they ate food and spent the night on the mountain.  |
| The Expanded Bible         | So Jacob made a promise ·in the name of the God whom his father Isaac worshiped [·by the fear of his father Isaac]. Then Jacob ·killed an animal and offered it as [·offered] a sacrifice on the mountain, and he invited his ·relatives [·brothers] to share in the meal [31:46]. After they finished eating, they spent the night on the mountain.   |
| Kretzmann's Commentary     | And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac, by the God whom his father worshiped and whom he knew to be the only true God. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, he killed animals for an offering to the true God, and called his brethren to eat bread and thus to seal the covenant with a common meal. And they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.   |
| NET Bible®                 | Jacob took an oath by the God whom his father Isaac feared [ <i>Heb</i> "by the fear of his father Isaac." See the note on the word "fears" in v. 42.]. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice [The construction is a cognate accusative with the verb, expressing a specific sacrifice.] on the mountain and invited his relatives to eat the meal [ <i>Heb</i> "bread, food." Presumably this was a type of peace offering, where the person |

bringing the offering ate the animal being sacrificed.]. They ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

The Pulpit Commentary

And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac (vide supra, Genesis 31:42). Then Jacob offered sacrifice—literally, slew a slaying, in ratification of the covenant—upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread. The sacrificial meal afterwards became an integral part of the Hebrew ritual (Exodus 14:3–8; Exodus 29:27, Exodus 29:28; Le Exodus 10:14, Exodus 10:15). And they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

The Voice

So Jacob swore an oath on the Fear of Isaac, his father; and Jacob offered a sacrifice on the hill there and called all of his relatives together to eat bread. And they all ate bread and spent the *rest of the* night in the hill country.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

*The Amplified Bible*

...and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> was sworn in the awe of his father Yits'hhaq <sup>[He laughs]</sup>, and Ya'aqov <sup>[He restrains]</sup> sacrificed a thing of sacrifice in the hill and he called out to his brothers to eat bread and they ate bread and they stayed the night in the hill,...

Concordant Literal Version

And swearing is Jacob by the Awe of his father Isaac. And sacrificing is Jacob a sacrifice in the mountain. And calling is he his brethren to eat bread. And eating are they bread and lodging in the mountain.

*Emphasized Bible*

And Jacob swore by the Dread of his father Isaac: and Jacob offered sacrifice in the mountain, and called on his brethren to eat bread. So they did eat bread, and tarried the night in the mountain.

English Standard Version

So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, and Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread. They ate bread and spent the night in the hill country.

New King James Version

And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.

Young's Updated LT

And Jacob swears by the Fear of his father Isaac. And Jacob sacrifices a sacrifice in the mount, and calls to his brothers to eat bread, and they eat bread, and lodge in the mount.

**The gist of this passage:**

Jacob swore only by the God of his father Isaac. Then a sacrifice was offered by Jacob and they all ate a meal together.

53b-54

| Genesis 31:53b   |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                                | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| shâba <sup>c</sup> (שָׁבַע) [pronounced <i>shaw<sup>b</sup>-VAHG</i> ] | <i>to swear, to imprecate, to curse, to swear an oath, to take a solemn oath, to swear allegiance</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Niphal imperfect | Strong's #7650<br>BDB #989 |
| Ya'âqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced <i>yah-âuh-KOH<sup>bV</sup></i> ]        | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>                    | masculine proper noun                                       | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784 |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]                 | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>   | a preposition of proximity                                  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88   |

## Genesis 31:53b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #              |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------|
| pachad (פַּחַד)<br>[pronounced PAH-khahd]                                 | <i>fear, terror, dread, a thing which is feared, that which is feared</i>                             | masculine singular construct  | Strong's #6343<br>BDB #808      |
| 'âb (אָב) [pronounced aw <sup>b</sup> v]                                  | <i>father, both as the head of a household, clan or tribe; founder, civil leader, military leader</i> | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1 BDB #3              |
| Yis <sup>e</sup> châq (יִשְׁחַק)<br>[pronounced yihs <sup>e</sup> -KHAWK] | <i>he laughs; laughing; transliterated Isaac</i>  | masculine singular proper noun  | Strong's #3327 & #3446 BDB #850 |

**Translation:** Accordingly, Jacob swears by the fear/respect of his father Isaac. The word *fear* here refers to the faith or the religion of his father Isaac. How much of it that Jacob is aware of, we do not know. We really don't know much about Isaac's personal faith as well. They have both come from a man of faith, Abraham; and they certainly believe in Abraham's God—but their lives clearly do not have the spiritual impact that Abraham's life did.

Laban has seemingly suggested that there are a variety of gods. "The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." (Genesis 31:53a; ESV) So that there is no misunderstanding, Jacob will swear by one God, and one God alone.

*The Amplified Bible*, I believe, gives the best sense of this: **But Jacob swore [only] by [the one true God] the Fear of his father Isaac.**

### The Fear of Isaac (various commentators)

Benson: *Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac — The God whom his father Isaac feared, who had never served other gods, as Abraham and Nahor had done: to this only living and true God he offered a sacrifice, (Genesis 31:54,) in gratitude for the peace he had obtained with Laban.*<sup>901</sup>

Barnes: *Jacob swears by the fear of Isaac, perhaps to rid himself of any error that had crept into Laban's notions of God and his worship. The common sacrifice and the common meal ratify the covenant of reconciliation.*<sup>902</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *Each now swears by the God he worships. Jacob swear by Yahweh, the God of Abraham, in the title 'the Fear' ('the Awesome One') given by his father Isaac, and Laban swears by the god of Nahor. Each swears by the God of his father.*<sup>903</sup>

Trapp: *The Chaldee Paraphrast sometimes useth the word fear, or terror, for God, for the reason above given. {Genesis 31:42} Hence Jacob, coming from Syria, and being to swear to a Syrian, swears here by "the Fear of his father Isaac."*<sup>904</sup>

The Geneva Bible: *Meaning, by the true God whom Isaac worshipped.*<sup>905</sup>

<sup>901</sup> Rev. Joseph Benson, *Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*; 1857; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:47–53.

<sup>902</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:48–54.

<sup>903</sup> Dr. Peter Pett, *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>904</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>905</sup> Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Genesis 31:53.

## The Fear of Isaac (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *and Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac; that is, by the true God his father Isaac feared, served, and worshipped: or "but Jacob" (r), &c. which seems plainly to suggest, that the God whom Laban called upon to be a judge between them, should they break covenant, and swore by, and he whom Jacob swore by, were different; each swore by their own deities.*<sup>906</sup>

John Wesley: *And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac - The God whom his father Isaac feared, who had never served other gods, as Abraham and Nahor had done.*<sup>907</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr. makes the very important point: *Jacob ignored the gods of Nahor and took his oath only in the name of the true and living God who was worshipped by Isaac, his father and grandfather Abraham as indicated by the statement that "Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac." This statement expresses Jacob's faith in the God of his father Isaac indicating that he is identifying with the God his father Isaac who reverentially worshipped God and possessed an eternal relationship and close intimate fellowship with Him.*<sup>908</sup>

Clyde T. Francisco: *When Abraham was called, it was not necessary for him to leave the God of his fathers but rather to follow him, and to purify his worship.*<sup>909</sup>

James Burton Coffman: *We have repeatedly emphasized that monotheism was widely known in the pre-Abrahamic period, as witnessed by the priesthood of Melchizedek, and other evidences, including this here. In fact, the choice of Abraham and the introduction into human history of the device known as the Chosen People, was due to God's purpose of preventing the universal knowledge of the true God disappearing from the earth, which it was rapidly doing as a result of the proliferating paganism in the days reaching down to Abraham and afterward.*<sup>910</sup>

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It is unlikely that Jacob swore anything different apart from not acknowledging any God but Y<sup>e</sup>howah.

**Genesis 31:53** The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

Interestingly enough, Jacob does not swear by their common God (or, their uncommon gods), but he swears by *the Fear of his father Isaac*. Today we may understand *the fear of Isaac* to refer to his faith; to the allegiance that he has for his God. God, as the giver of life, was understood to be feared, indicating both fear and respect. God was understood to be thought about. Jacob, despite his many failures, has a better understanding of their common God—Whom he learned about primarily from Rebekah, his mother (Rebekah is Laban's sister). So, Laban is both Jacob's father-in-law and his uncle (and, I think that they would be second cousins, having the same great grandfather?).

Recall that, earlier that day, Laban was searching for his little god figurines. Therefore, his grasp of matters theological was both confused and syncretic. Furthermore, when God called Abraham, he was told to specifically separate from his father's house (Genesis 12:1) and to go to Canaan, an order which Abraham only followed in part (**Terah took Abram his son and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son**

<sup>906</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:53.

<sup>907</sup> John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>908</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>909</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017. Additional reference at that link.

<sup>910</sup> From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

Abram's wife, and they went forth together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan, but when they came to Haran, they settled there. The days of Terah were 205 years, and Terah died in Haran.—Genesis 11:31–32; ESV). Presumably, one of the primary reasons for Abraham to separate from his father was that there was idolatry in his family (And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods.'"—Joshua 24:2; ESV). So, Jacob does not appear to want to swear by their *common gods*. That is, the way that Laban speaks of their God, sounds as if they are swearing before quite a number of gods.

**Genesis 31:53** The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

Note that there is a spiritual heritage here. We began with Abraham in our study of the patriarchs, but the God of Abraham is a Revealed God; a God Who revealed himself to Nahor. This does not mean that God came to Nahor many times. It could simply be that Nahor knew God through what existed of the book of Genesis and the book of Job. However, as noted above, there was theological vagueness in that part of Abraham's family. Therefore, so that Jacob does not intermix with whatever false notions of God that Laban has, he swears **by the Fear of his father Isaac**. As we have studied previously, this *fear* refers to a respect for and a concentration on the Revealed God.

We never go into detail about that branch of Terah's family in Syria and their relationship to God. It is clear that a belief in the Revealed God existed and we find testimony to that given when Rebekah is sent with Abraham's servant to marry Isaac. When the servant speaks about his entire trip that resulted in his finding them as the will of God, they agreed and could not argue with him about that.

On the other hand, there was confusion in their household as well, as revealed by their possession of household deities. We will know a little about this portion of their genealogy, but very little. There may be hundreds of family members living in this area and there may be 10 or 20. We simply do not even know their numbers. Furthermore, when Laban speaks about *the God of Terah* and *the God of Abraham*, it seems as if he is referring to different Gods/gods. So Jacob specifies this to refer to Isaac's faith.

In fact, at this point in time, for all intents and purposes, we are done with Laban. He will be mentioned 3 times after this chapter, but only in passing. His genealogy will never be explored. In fact, you may remember that we never even learn the names of his sons. His sons were interested in material things only.

The faith of Y<sup>e</sup>howah is passed on to Abraham's descendants; and that faith continues down through many generations. We do not know if that same faith is passed down on a limited basis to a few generations of Laban—that his sons are not even named in Scripture suggests that they did not exercise faith in the Revealed God. Laban apparently did believe in the God of Abraham, but his faith apparently took in other gods as well.

Because the faith of Abraham has been passed down to Isaac and then to Jacob, we are interested in their genealogy. The genealogy that is important is that which takes us from Adam to Abraham to David and finally to Jesus. This is the **genealogy of promise**, and the only genealogy followed out fully in the Word of God. There are a few other lines in Scripture, but, apart from the first few chapters of Chronicles, other lines are mentioned usually once and then forgotten—and never as a **linear genealogy** (Genesis 11 is an example of a linear genealogy).

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:48–53 And Laban said, "this heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed. and Mizpah, for he said, "may the lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other. If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, no man is with us, see, god is a witness between me and you." and Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between me and you. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. (I will not cross over to you--and you will not cross over to me--pref I + f.s.n hir for evil or harm) the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor and the god of their father, they will judge between us." But Jacob swore only by the Fear of his father Isaac.

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:48–53

1. During this section we will observe that Laban uses quite a number of terms and is quite verbose.
2. This is designed to snow Jacob and put pressure on him, and to justify Laban before the eyes of those who are present.
3. Laban is a deceitful type who uses many words to cover his tracks.
4. He acts like the pillar and heap were his idea to bind Jacob whom he makes out to be untrustworthy.
5. We have seen that Laban had no defense for Jacob's assertions in vs 36-42 that he was ever less than honorable with Laban.
6. Nevertheless, Laban makes Jacob out to be some sort of crafty person who must be carefully observed at all times.
7. He not only uses the heap which Jacob had made, he appropriates the name Galeed and adds another nuance by the addition of Mizpah.
8. The heap is not only to be a witness of the covenant, it is to serve as a sentry or watchtower between Laban and Jacob.
9. All throughout this section, Laban constantly reiterates the phrase "between me and you" emphasizing that he was in the right and that he needed protecting from Jacob.
10. Although Laban is a religious reversionist, he consistently covers his tracks with the correct vocabulary, as seen in the use of YHWH.
11. He invokes this term to add further pressure to the notion that Jacob must be watched, and Jacob's God is responsible to do so.
12. He further casts aspersions on Jacob's character by implying that Jacob would become abusive to his wives in the future.
13. He has been married to these women for 20 years and there has been no evidence of spousal abuse in the past.
14. This is done to feign interest in their well-being, which Laban does not truly possess.
15. The idea that Jacob would take more wives than he had is ludicrous, since he already had one more wife than he wanted.
16. And this was so due to Laban, who apparently had no problems with bigamy 20 years before when he wanted to marry off both daughters to the same man!!!
17. Now he acts the concerned, indignant father who is anxious about the welfare of his daughters.
18. Laban is a self-righteous jerk, who is slandering Jacob's character without reason.
19. And doing so in such a way as to come across as a sincerely religious type.
20. He states that the future eventuality is that there will be no one present with both of them, so he invokes God as a witness in that case.
21. Laban continues his very solemn statements which are designed to convey the impression that this very dangerous character Jacob is to be bound as firmly as possible.
22. He is concerned with the possibility that at some future time Jacob may want to extract revenge for all the indignities he has suffered at Laban's hand.
23. Both past deceptions and the current round of maligning.
24. All throughout this section he consistently attributes to Jacob the very things he has done or considered doing.
25. The reversionistic believer thinks that everyone thinks the same way that he thinks.
26. He is certain that given the opportunity, they would do what he would do.

## Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:48–53

27. However, the adjusted believer functions according to a different standard, the Royal Honor Code.
28. Laban invokes the God of Abraham, Nahor and Terah, as if these three men were equal spiritually.
29. Laban is polytheistic, and demonstrates this fact by his use of the plural verb, indicating that he had more than one god in view.
30. We know that Laban followed in the spiritual footsteps of the reversionistic believers, Nahor and
31. Jacob does not condescend to this and swears only by the Fear of Isaac.
32. This term is used to indicate that Isaac was not merely a believer, but was occupied with the One in whom he believed.

From [Makarios Bible Church](#) (Word document will open on your computer); accessed October 19, 2017.

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### Genesis 31:54a

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                                      | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|---|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                           | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| zâbach (זָבַח) [pronounced zaw <sup>b</sup> -VAHKH]       | <i>to slaughter [usually an animal for sacrifice]; to sacrifice [an animal]; to slay, to immolate [an animal sacrifice]</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect | Strong's #2076<br>BDB #256          |
| This is the first occurrence of this word in the Bible.   |   |  |                                     |
| Ya'ăqôb (יַעֲקֹב) [pronounced yah-ăuh-KOH <sup>B</sup> V] | <i>supplanter; insidious, deceitful; to circumvent and is transliterated Jacob</i>  | masculine proper noun                                  | Strong's #3290<br>BDB #784          |
| zebach (זָבַח) [pronounced ZEH <sup>B</sup> -vakh]        | <i>slaughtered animal [used in a sacrificial offering], slaughter, sacrifice, slaughterings, sacrificial animal</i>         | masculine singular noun                                | Strong's #2077<br>BDB #257          |
| This is the first occurrence of this word in Scripture.   |   |  |                                     |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]          | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>                         | a preposition of proximity                             | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88            |
| har (הַר) [pronounced har]                                | <i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country, a mountainous area, mountain region</i>   | masculine singular noun with the definite article      | Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249 |

**Translation:** *Jacob then sacrificed an animal in the mountain [where they were].* At this point, they are in the hill country of Gilead (*mountain* and *hill country* is the same word in the Hebrew). So, this covenant is solemnized by offering a sacrifice to God.

In this, the covenant goes beyond being an agreement between the two men; God is brought into the picture. This is only logical, as it has been God who has overseen the business relationship between Jacob and Laban.

Genesis 31:53b–54 Accordingly, Jacob swore by the religion of his father Isaac. Jacob sacrificed an animal to God in the mountain where they all were. He then called upon his brothers to break bread; and so they all ate together. Then they spent the night on the mountain.

### The Offering of a Sacrifice (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *Lit.* “killed a sacrifice.” The killing of an animal for sacrifice was the occasion of a feast. The sacrifice consisted not only in an offering to the Deity, but also in the eating of portions of the sacrificial victim by both the contracting parties of the covenant; cf. Genesis 26:30.<sup>911</sup>

Clarke: *Offered sacrifice upon the mount* - It is very likely that Laban joined in this solemn religious rite, and that, having offered the blood and fat to God, they feasted upon the sacrifice.<sup>912</sup>

Dr. John Gill had an odd comment here: *Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount,....* 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" (s), 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, see Genesis 26:30.<sup>913</sup>

Matthew Poole: *Then Jacob offered sacrifice; either to give God thanks for the great mercies and deliverances vouchsafed to him, or to beg God's blessing upon the present treaty, and upon their whole family. But it is not so probable that Jacob would choose that time for the offering of sacrifices when Laban was present, whom he could neither honestly admit to them, nor conveniently exclude from them. And therefore, seeing the same Hebrew word signifies killing as well as sacrificing, as appears from Num. 22:40 1Samuel 28:24 1Kings 1:9 2Chronicles 18:2, &c., I rather understand it of his killing of beasts, in order to a feast which he made for his brethren.*<sup>914</sup>

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#### Genesis 31:54b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                    | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]         | and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| qârâ' (קָרָא) [pronounced kaw-RAW]      | to call, to proclaim, to read, to call to, to call out to, to assemble, to summon; to call, to name [when followed by a lamed] | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect                          | Strong's #7121<br>BDB #894 |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]  | to, for, towards, in regards to  | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'achîym (אֶחָיִם) [pronounced awhk-EEM] | brothers, kinsmen, close relatives; tribesmen; fellow-countrymen   | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #251<br>BDB #26   |

<sup>911</sup> The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>912</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>913</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>914</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:54.

## Genesis 31:54b

| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology                   | BDB and Strong's #         |
|--|--|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ] | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>                             | directional/relational preposition | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| 'âkal (אכל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]       | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>                   | Qal infinitive construct           | Strong's #398<br>BDB #37   |
| lechem (לחם) [pronounced LEH-khem]     | literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i> | masculine singular noun            | Strong's #3899<br>BDB #536 |

**Translation:** He then called upon his brothers to eat bread... Although there has been a clear delineation throughout this chapter between Laban's *brothers* and Jacob's *brothers*; I think that we may assume that Jacob is speaking to all the men there (Laban will leave the next day—v. 55).

## Genesis 31:54c

| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #         |
|------------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]    | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| 'âkal (אכל) [pronounced aw-KAHL]   | <i>to eat; to devour, to consume, to destroy</i>                                    | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect | Strong's #398<br>BDB #37   |
| lechem (לחם) [pronounced LEH-khem] | literally means <i>bread</i> ; used more generally for <i>food</i>                  | masculine singular noun                                | Strong's #3899<br>BDB #536 |

**Translation:** ...and they ate bread [together]. All of them gather together for a meal on that day.

They had worked through their disagreements and they put those conflicts in the past. What better time to enjoy a meal together, when their anger has been put aside (I am assuming that they had come to that point).

There are times that we study something, but we may not realize why. Dr. Robert Dean explains one reason why this narrative is important: *Another thing we ought to think about in terms of our mindset while we read this. Think of yourself as a Jew and you are in the conquest generation sitting on the plains of Moab getting ready to go into the land under the leadership of Joshua. And as you are reading this you will be reminded of the fact that for several generations the Jews had been out of the land, just as Jacob was out of the land, and just as God was faithful to Jacob and protected him and prospered him when he was out of the land, God has been faithful to the Jews while they were in Egypt. He has protected them and prospered them even though they were in slavery. Now God has brought them back to the land. So the return of Jacob to the land is a reminder of the fact that God has also protected them. It is a continuous reminder that God is the one who protects us and watches over us.*<sup>915</sup>

Genesis 31:53b–54 Accordingly, Jacob swore by the religion of his father Isaac. Jacob sacrificed an animal to God in the mountain where they all were. He then called upon his brothers to break bread; and so they all ate together. Then they spent the night on the mountain.

<sup>915</sup> From [Dean Bible Ministries](#); accessed October 20, 2017.

## Disparate parties eating a meal together (various commentators)

The Cambridge Bible: *To partake of food together was the sign of restored friendship and trust between disputing parties.*<sup>916</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *and called his brethren, to eat bread; the, men that came with Laban, and him also, these he invited to his feast, for all sorts of food is called bread.*<sup>917</sup>

Matthew Poole: *to eat bread, & c., under which phrase all meats are usually comprehended in Scripture, as hath been already noted, and will appear hereafter. And this practice was usual in those times, to confirm covenants by a feast. See Genesis 26:30.*<sup>918</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *This is Jacob's response to Laban's offer. By offering sacrifice and eating with the confederate leaders he fully accepts his part in the covenant, while their eating with him is a sign of their peaceful acceptance of the terms. All are now agreed and the deed is done. The feast goes on through the night (compare Genesis 24:54).*<sup>919</sup>

Trapp: *Called his brethren to eat bread.] And so overcame evil with good; which is the noblest of all victories. God cannot but love in us this imitation of his mercy; and that love is never fruitless.*

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Genesis 31:54 manifests the final element of a treaty in ancient Near Eastern practice, namely that partaking of a meal between the parties before the witnessing heap, confirming the acceptance of the terms by both parties.*<sup>920</sup>

H. C. Leupold: *We view Jacob's sacrifice as one of thanksgiving that this last serious danger that threatened from Laban is removed. We cannot conceive of Jacob as joining with the idolater Laban in worship and sacrifice. Consequently, we hesitate to identify the "eating of bread" with the partaking of the sacrificial feast, unless the "kinsmen" here are to be regarded only as the men on Jacob's side, as 'a(ch)chim is used throughout the chapter. In that event the kinsmen are to be thought of as having the same mind as Jacob on questions of religious practices. But the summons to eat bread might also signalize that the transactions between Jacob and Laban are concluded. The events of the meeting between Jacob and Laban may well have consumed an entire day, and so the night has to be spent in the same place.*<sup>921</sup>

The idea that only Jacob and his men partake of this meal would make little or no sense. The significance of this meal is the agreement that both parties have come to; and the eating together signifies fellowship. If Jacob is just sitting down at a meal with his own crew, that would make little sense to record that event.

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### Genesis 31:54d

| Hebrew/Pronunciation               | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology | BDB and Strong's #        |
|------------------------------------|---|------------------|---------------------------|
| wa (or va) (i)<br>[pronounced wah] | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i> | wâw consecutive  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253 |

<sup>916</sup> *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*; 1882-1921; by Cambridge University Press; General Editor J. J. S. Perowne, from e-sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>917</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>918</sup> Matthew Poole, *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*; ©1685; from e-Sword, Gen.31:54.

<sup>919</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>920</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 508); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>921</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

| Genesis 31:54d                                   |   |  |                                     |
|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                             | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology                                       | BDB and Strong's #                  |
| lûwn (לוּן) [pronounced loon]                    | <i>to lodge, to pass the night, to spend the night, to lodge for the night, to abide</i>            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect | Strong's #3885<br>BDB #533          |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ] | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i> | a preposition of proximity                             | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88            |
| har (הַר) [pronounced har]                       | <i>hill; mountain, mount; hill-country, a mountainous area, mountain region</i>                     | masculine singular noun with the definite article      | Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249 |

**Translation:** Then they spent the night on the mountain. This would have been both groups of men—Laban and his men and Jacob and his men. They are all in the mountain region of Gilead. They had separate camps originally; whether they returned to these camps or camped side-by-side, we cannot say.

Genesis 31:53b–54 Accordingly, Jacob swore by the religion of his father Isaac. Jacob sacrificed an animal to God in the mountain where they all were. He then called upon his brothers to break bread; and so they all ate together. Then they spent the night on the mountain.

### The parties tarried all night (various commentators)

Dr. John Gill: *and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount; this affair between Laban and Jacob had took up the whole day, at evening they feasted together upon the covenant being made, and then tarried all night to take their rest.*<sup>922</sup>

Whedon: *It was the solemn evening of the last separation and farewell between the chosen seed and their "fathers on the other side of the flood." Joshua 24:14. Henceforth they diverge more and more widely, and none of Jacob's sons go back to take wives in that eastern land.*<sup>923</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *So we see the covenant ceremony has been concluded resulting in peace between Laban and Jacob. Laban's chase of Jacob has ended in a covenant guaranteeing respect for each other's family and territory in the future and so therefore, Laban heads home to Paddan Aram and Jacob to Canaan.*<sup>924</sup>

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**Genesis 31:54** And Jacob offered sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brothers to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night in the mountain.

You will note that Jacob takes the lead in the worship of Y<sup>ehowah</sup>, offering up an animal sacrifice. As we know today, animal sacrifices looked forward to Jesus dying on the cross for our sins. They no doubt had some understanding that their sins and wrongdoing were passed along to the animal which was then sacrificed. However, I have not found any evidence that these men of old understood that the animal sacrifices that they offered up were a picture of the Messiah to come.

<sup>922</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:54.

<sup>923</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from E-sword; Genesis 31:54.

<sup>924</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 509); accessed October 18, 2017.

We no longer sacrifice animals because that was a **type** of Christ, and all **typology** referring to Jesus Christ came to an end when the **antitype**, the True Lamb without spot and blemish, Jesus Christ, appears.

*His brothers* refer not to his literal brothers, but to those men who are with him—either as employees or as slaves. This apparently includes Laban and his people as well. As suggested earlier, there may or may not be many unnamed family members. We only know of a handful of people related to and living with Laban.

Ballinger's translation of Genesis 31:43–54 Laban answered Jacob, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne?"

"So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me." Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.

Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed and Mizpah, for he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other. "If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me." Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. "This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. "The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us ."

So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:43–54

#### A Treaty Between Clans (vv. 43-54)

1. Laban's response to Jacob's factually and spiritually based assertions by contrast is pompous and erroneous (v. 43).
2. The fox Laban is caught in a trap of divine making.
3. He has no room to maneuver or dictate terms.
4. All he can do is make a grandiose false claim to the ownership of that which is Jacob's by divine right.
5. Following his hollow statement he bends of resignation noted in the words, "But what can I do...?"
6. He contradicts the words of Jacob in v. 9: "God has rescued your father's livestock and gave it to me" as well as his daughters words in v. 16: "Surely all the wealth that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children" (see also 38ff.).
7. Laban is a beaten man who can only appeal to a judicial fiction!
8. He was defeated soundly in game of his own choosing as he went up against God and his chosen one.
9. Not only was Laban an man enslaved to avarice, he was a control-freak.
10. In v. 44 we see that it was Laban's idea to enter into a pact and not Jacob's.
11. He tries somehow to maintain control over the family he lost in every way.
12. His daughters had no respect for him seeing what he tried to do to them and their children.
13. Why should Jacob "cut" (karat) a covenant with Laban considering his history of keeping his word?
14. Laban wants a covenant which specifies the terms binding the two men.
15. He wants the covenant itself with its binding oath to follow to be "a witness."
16. The terms agreed to were presented before witnesses (the kinsmen) who could confirm or deny the words spoken if a violation were to occur.
17. Jacob ever the man of action selected a large stone and set it up as a pillar.
18. Landmark moments in Jacob's life were centered around the erection of a pillar (cf. 28:18; 35:13 and 35:20).
19. His father's were connected to wells.
20. This pillar served to act as a silent witness to the pact made in the hill country of Gilead.

### Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:43–54

21. Jacob responds not to Laban but to "his [Laban's] kinsmen" and orders them to erect a mound of stones (v. 46).
22. "Gather stones" is the only two words recorded of Jacob speaking in this entire episode!
23. Laban's stupid opening remarks are not worth responding to (v. 43).
24. Jacob gives Laban the silent treatment as he had spoken his piece.
25. Once the mound of stones was in place the two men stopped and had a meal at the base of the heap.
26. The technical name for this pile of stones is a cairn.
27. A cairn is a landmark or memorial to something considered important.
28. The pillar and the cairn served as a silent and dual witness to the making of a pact between the two men.
29. Laban declares their importance in v. 48.
30. After the meal Laban names the place speaking in his native tongue.
31. The name Jagar-sahdutha means "cairn of witness."
32. Jacob named it in his newly adopted tongue which was in Hebrew Galeed meaning the same thing.
33. Jacob was bilingual.
34. In Paddan-Aram he spoke Aramaic a sister language to the newly adopted vernacular of the patriarchs which we have in the Hebrew OT.
35. So Jacob is able to translate from the Aramaic to the Hebrew having lived in an Aramaic-speaking land for twenty years.
36. As an aside the Jews who lived in Babylonian captivity for seventy years lost the ability to converse in Hebrew and instead adopted Aramaic.
37. The Jews of Jesus day spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew.
38. Hebrew became a dead language among the mass of Jewry and was revived in the 20th century among the Jews in connection with their return to the land in these last days.
39. So the pattern went full circle from Aramaic to Hebrew back to Aramaic back to Hebrew.
40. Laban understood that the cairn along with the pillar was a witness.
41. This follows the Biblical pattern of requiring at least two witnesses to every accusation.
42. Galeed is a translation of the Aramaic name given by Laban.
43. Laban not content with just one name for the place offers a second name in v. 49.
44. Mizpah is a pun on the term "watch" (tsapah).
45. Mispah means "watchtower."
46. Laban concern that the two men abide by the oath (words) of the pact is overdone but Jacob humors him.
47. Laban realizes that he has no oversight with respect to Jacob and his keeping his word out of Laban's sight.
48. This is ironic coming from a man who was constantly violating his agreements with others.
49. Appealing to God as the One to oversee the agreement should there be a violation provides further irony all of which was lost on Laban a person who only kept his word if it profited him.
50. In verse 50 and 52 we have the substance of the pact interrupted by Laban's unnecessary reminder that the cairn and the pillar are silent reminders of the terms agreed to in v. 51.
51. The terms of the Laban-sponsored pact fall into two parts.
52. The first was designed to bind Jacob to the proper treatment of his daughters.
53. Notice that Laban cannot bring himself to call the women Jacob's wives!
54. In v. 50 we once again are confronted with irony.
55. Laban binds Jacob to never ever marrying another woman.
56. It was Laban who forced Jacob into bigamy.
57. He seeks to pressure Jacob by saying, "see, God is witness between you and me."
58. After all Jacob has been through the last thing he wants is another wife!
59. The second part of the proposed pact is as ridiculous a concern as is the first part (v. 52).
60. It is impossible to imagine a scenario in which either man would cross this border to inflict harm on the other.
61. Laban has been duly warned by God not to even speak threatening words to Jacob or else.
62. And the last place Jacob wants to visit is Paddan-Aram!
63. Jacob all along has placed Laban's fate in the hands of God.

## Jack M. Ballinger's Analysis of Genesis 31:43–54

64. So all this is quite unnecessary but Jacob goes along if this will get Laban out of his hair forever.
65. Vv. 53 & 54 deals with the actual oath-taking ceremony.
66. The oath-taking ceremony records Laban's actual words while it is simply narrated that Jacob swore to keep his part.
67. Laban interestingly swears by "the God of Abraham, his brother Nahor (Laban's grandfather) and by Terah, his great grandfather as per "the God of their (Abraham and Nahor) father."
68. Laban again invokes deity as the safeguard to the terms of this pact.
69. He had said that God will "watch" and in v. 53 he says God "will judge."
70. Is Laban's concern real or put-on?
71. It appears that the concern is with Jacob who will act the belligerent and show up someday and do Laban harm.
72. Is Laban becoming paranoid?
73. Jacob on the other hand swears by a living ancestor his father Isaac.
74. He swears by the "dread of Isaac."
75. The dread of Isaac is another way of swearing by God in whom Isaac feared as a positive member of the covenant made with Abraham and reiterated with Isaac and Jacob.
76. The episode ends with Jacob offering the appropriate sacrifice and the two of them eating a covenant meal consisting of meat taken from the sacrifice (e.g. the peace offering; see also Gen. 26:26-30 between Isaac and Abimelech).

From <http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/Gen31.htm> accessed October 15, 2017.

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[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

### Laban Returns to Paddan-aram

This verse is Genesis 32:1 in the Hebrew. However, this verse is properly placed right here.

**And so rises early Laban in the morning and so he kisses to his sons and to his daughters; and so he blesses them. And so he departs and so returns Laban to his place.**

Genesis  
31:55

**Laban rose up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and he also blessed them. Then Laban departed and went to his place.**

**Laban woke up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and blessed them all. Then he departed and returned to his home in Paddan-aram.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text (Hebrew)

And so rises early Laban in the morning and so he kisses to his sons and to his daughters; and so he blesses them. And so he departs and so returns Laban to his place.

Targum (Onkelos)

And Laban arose in the morning, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them, and went; and Laban returned to his place. And Jakob went on his way, and the angels of the Lord met him. And when Jakob saw them, he said, This

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Targum (Pseudo-Jonathan) | <u>is a host</u> [Or, "camp."] <u>from before the Lord; and he called the name of the place Mahanaim</u> . Onkelos apparently includes the next 2 verses of Genesis 32 with v. 55. And Laban arose in the morning, and kissed the sons of Jakob and his daughters, and blessed them; and Laban went and returned to his place. |
| Revised Douay-Rheims     | But laban arose in the night, and kissed his sons, and daughters, and blessed them: and returned to his place.   |
| Aramaic ESV of Peshitta  | Early in the morning, Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them. Laban departed and returned to his place.  |
| Peshitta (Syriac)        | And early in the morning Laban rose up and kissed his grandsons and his daughters, and blessed them; then Laban returned and went to his country.  |
| Septuagint (Greek)       | And Jacob departed for his journey; and having looked up, he saw the host of God encamped; and the angels of God met him. This is v. 55 in the New Brenton LXX. What we read as v. 54 is not found here. Perhaps this is a typo?   |
| Brenton's Septuagint     | And Laban rose up in the morning, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them; and Laban having turned back, departed to his place. Brenton, however, apparently did translate this verse.   |
| Significant differences: | No idea about the disparity between the Brenton and the <i>New Brenton LXX</i> . One targum includes verses from the next chapter. The Latin appears to leave off the verb <i>to depart</i> .  |

### Limited Vocabulary Translations:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Bible in Basic English | And early in the morning Laban, after kissing and blessing his daughters, went on his way back to his country.  |
| Easy English           | Early the next morning, Laban woke. He kissed his grandchildren. And he kissed his daughters. He blessed them. Then he left and went back to his home. Jacob ran away from Laban because he was afraid. But God had already told Jacob that he would be with him (verse 3). Jacob should have put his trust in God. He should have told Laban that he was leaving. And he should have trusted God to keep him safe. |
| <i>The Message</i>     | Laban got up early the next morning, kissed his grandchildren and his daughters, blessed them, and then set off for home.   |
| NIRV                   | Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters. He gave them his blessing. Then he left and returned home.   |
| New Simplified Bible   | Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban left and went back home.   |

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Contemporary English V. | Early the next morning, Laban kissed his daughters and his grandchildren good-by, then he left to go back home.  |
| The Living Bible        | Laban was up early the next morning and kissed his daughters and grandchildren, and blessed them, and returned home.   |
| New Berkeley Version    | Early in the morning Laban got up, kissed his sons [The Hebrew <i>te4rms</i> —sons—often includes all children; in this case Laban's grandchildren.] and his daughters goodby, gave them his blessing; then left and went back home. |
| New Life Version        | Laban got up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and daughters. He prayed that good would come to them. Then Laban left and returned home.   |

### Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| American English Bible | And when Laban got up in the morning, he kissed his daughters and [their] sons and blest them, and then Laban turned around and went back to his home. |
|------------------------|--|

|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| International Standard V    | Early the next morning, Laban woke up, kissed his grandchildren and daughters, blessed them, and then left for home [Lit. <i>for his place</i> ]. This v. is 32:1 in MT  |
| New Advent (Knox) Bible     | So they took their meal, and remained there, while Laban rose up at daybreak, kissed his grandsons and his two daughters, and blessed them, and went back to his home. A portion of v. 54 is included for context. |
| Translation for Translators | The next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters <i>goodbye</i> and asked God to bless them. Then he <i>and his men</i> left them and returned home.  |

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Awful Scroll Bible    | Rising early in the morning, Laban was to kiss his sons and his daughters, and was to compliment them. Laban was to depart, and was to turn back to his place.  |
| Conservapedia         | Early the next morning Laban rose up, kissed his sons and daughters, and blessed them. Laban went away and returned to his own place.   |
| Ferrar-Fenton Bible   | Laban then rose up in the morning, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them, and went and returned to his own place. But Jacob continued his journey; and a Messenger of GOD met him. V. 32:1 is included for context.  |
| God's Truth (Tyndale) | And early in the morning Laban rose up and kissed his children and his daughters, and blessed them and departed and went unto his place again. But Jacob went forth on his journey. And the angels of God came and met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said: this is Gods host: and called the name of that same place, Mahanaim. Tyndale, ever the rebel, includes the first two verses of Genesis 32 as a part of Genesis 31. So, however, he numbered them, they are included with 31:55 for context. |
| H. C. Leupold         | <b>CHAPTER XXXII</b><br><b>(8) Preparations for Meeting Esau (31:55-32:32).</b><br>And Laban arose early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Thereupon Laban went and returned to his place; whereas Jacob continued along his route. Even though Leupold preserves the English verse numbering of this passage, he places v. 31:55 with the next section. V. 32:1 is included for context.   |
| Lexham English Bible  | And Laban arose early in the morning and kissed his grandsons and his daughters, and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his homeland.  |
| Urim-Thummim Version  | Then at sunrise Laban got up, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them, and Laban departed and returned to his region.  |

### Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Christian Community (1988) | Next morning Laban rose early and, after kissing his sons and daughters, he blessed them and left for home. This is v. 32:1 in the CCB.  |
| The Heritage Bible         | And Laban loaded up early in the dawn, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them, and walked, and Laban returned to his place.   |
| New American Bible (2011)  | Early the next morning, Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them; then he set out on his journey back home.<br>[32:1–22] Jacob's negotiations with Esau. Laban kisses his daughters and grandchildren good-bye but not Jacob. On leaving Mesopotamia, Jacob has an encounter with angels of God (vv. 2–3), which provokes him to exclaim, "This is God's encampment," just as he exclaimed upon leaving Canaan, "This is the house of God, the gateway to heaven" (28:11–17). |
| New Jerusalem Bible        | Early next morning, Laban kissed his grandchildren and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban left to return home. This is v. 32:1 in the Jerusalem Bible.   |
| New English Bible          | <sup>55</sup> Laban rose early in the morning, kissed his daughters and their children, blessed them and went home again. <sup>49</sup> it was also named Mizpah [That is Watch-tower], for  |

Laban said, 'May the LORD watch between you and me, when we are parted from each other's sight. This is how the NEB puts this altogether.

Revised English Bible

Laban rose early in the morning, kissed his daughters and their children, gave them his blessing, and then returned to his home.

### Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:

Complete Jewish Bible

**(Maftir)** Early in the morning Lavan got up, kissed his sons and daughters, and blessed them. Then Lavan left and returned to his own place. Ya'akov went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Ya'akov saw them, he said, "This is God's camp," and called that place Machanayim [two camps]. This is Genesis 32:1 in the Jewish Bible. Their vv. 32:2–3 are included for context.

exeGesés companion Bible

...and early in the morning Laban starts and kisses his sons and his daughters and blesses them:

and Laban goes and returns to his place.

JPS (Tanakh—1985)

Early in the morning, Laban kissed his sons and daughters and bade them good-by; then Laban left on his journey homeward.

Kaplan Translation

*Jacob's Journey, Marriage and Children*  
32:1

Laban got up early the next morning and kissed his grandsons and daughters goodbye. He then blessed them and left to return home.

Orthodox Jewish Bible

And early in the boker (morning) Lavan rose up, and kissed his banim and his banot, and made on them a brocha; and Lavan departed, and returned unto his makom.

### Expanded/Embellished Bibles:

*The Amplified Bible*

Early in the morning Laban got up and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters [goodbye] and pronounced a blessing [asking God's favor] on them. Then Laban left and returned home.

The Expanded Bible

Early the next morning Laban kissed his ·grandchildren [<sup>l</sup>sons] and his daughters and blessed them, and then he left to return ·home [<sup>l</sup>to his place].

Kretzmann's Commentary

And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them, thus taking leave of them in a very tender manner, a contrast to his former harshness: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place. From the story of this covenant we learn that the believers, so far as it is possible without denying the truth, will try to have peace with all men, even with the unbelievers, which does not change the fact, however, that there is constant warfare on their part against sin.

NET Bible®

Early in the morning Laban kissed [*Heb* "and Laban got up early in the morning and he kissed."] his grandchildren [*Heb* "his sons."] and his daughters goodbye and blessed them. Then Laban left and returned home [*Heb* "to his place."].

Beginning with 31:55, the verse numbers in the English Bible through 32:32 differ by one from the verse numbers in the Hebrew text (BHS), with 31:55 ET = 32:1 HT, 32:1 ET = 32:2 HT, etc., through 32:32 ET = 32:33 HT. From 33:1 the verse numbers in the ET and HT are again the same.

The Pulpit Commentary

And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters,—i.e. Rachel and Leah and their children. It does not appear that Laban kissed Jacob on taking final leave of him as he did on first meeting him (Genesis 29:1–35:39)—and blessed them (cf. Genesis 14:1–24:60; Genesis 28:1): and Laban departed, and returned unto his place—Padan-aram (cf. Genesis 18:33; Genesis 30:25)

The Voice

Early the next morning, Laban got up, kissed his grandchildren and his daughters, and blessed them; and then he left and returned home.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Benner's Mechanical Trans. | ...and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> departed early in the morning and he kissed his sons and his daughters and he respected them and he walked and Lavan <sup>[White]</sup> turned to his place,... |
| Concordant Literal Version | And early is Laban rising in the morning, and kissing is he his sons and his daughters and blessing them. And going is Laban, and returning to his place.                                       |
| Context Group Version      | And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and esteemed them: and Laban departed and returned to his place.   |
| English Standard Version   | Early in the morning Laban arose and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned home.  |
| Young's Updated LT         | And Laban rises early in the morning, and kisses his sons and his daughters, and blesses them; and Laban goes on, and turns back to his place.  |

**The gist of this passage:** Laban gets up early the next morning, kisses his sons and daughters and blesses them. Then he leaves, returning to his home.

| Genesis 31:55a                                    |  |   |                             |
|---|--|---|-----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                              | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #          |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]                   | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                          | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253   |
| shâkam (שָׁכַם) [pronounced shaw-KAHM]            | <i>to start, to rise, to rise early, to make an early start; morning (in the Hiphil infinitive absolute)</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect | Strong's #7925<br>BDB #1014 |
| Lâbân (לָבָן) [pronounced law <sup>b</sup> -VAWN] | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>  | masculine singular proper noun; location                    | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526  |
| b <sup>e</sup> (ב) [pronounced b <sup>eh</sup> ]  | <i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>          | a preposition of proximity                                  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #88    |
| bôqer (בֹּקֶר) [pronounced BOH-ker]               | <i>morning, daybreak, dawn; the next morning</i>   | masculine singular noun with a definite article             | Strong's #1242<br>BDB #133  |

**Translation:** Laban rose up early in the morning... Laban is a man with great responsibilities, despite some of his sleazy character flaws. He has settled things with Jacob and now he must return to his home and his flocks and herds.

| Genesis 31:55b                         |  |   |                            |
|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation                   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced wah]        | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>                    | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| nâshaq (נָשַׁק) [pronounced naw-SHAHK] | <i>to kiss, to passionately kiss, to kiss with great emotion; to touch, to have close contact with</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect | Strong's #5401<br>BDB #676 |

| Genesis 31:55b  |   |   |                            |
|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation  | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                                  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>                                | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bânîym (בְּנֵי) [pronounced <i>baw-NEEM</i> ]                           | <i>sons, descendants; children; people; sometimes rendered men</i>    | masculine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #1121<br>BDB #119 |
| w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ, or ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i> ] | <i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though; as well as</i> | simple wâw conjunction  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #251  |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>e</sup> ]                                  | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>                                | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510  |
| bath (בַּת) [pronounced <i>bahth</i> ]                                  | <i>daughter; village</i>  | feminine plural noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix  | Strong's #1323<br>BDB #123 |

**Translation:** ...and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters;... The word *sons* can be understood to mean *grandsons*. Laban has his two daughters there and their sons and the sons of their handmaids. So he takes this opportunity to kiss them all goodbye.

| Genesis 31:55c   |   |   |                            |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings   | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #         |
| wa (or va) (וּ) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                               | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>   | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253  |
| bârak <sup>e</sup> (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ] | <i>to invoke God, to praise, to celebrate, to adore, to bless [God]; to bless [men], to invoke blessings; to bless [as God, man and other created things], therefore to cause to prosper, to make happy; to salute anyone [with a blessing]; to curse</i> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Piel imperfect                             | Strong's #1288<br>BDB #138 |
| 'êth (אֹת) [pronounced <i>ayth</i> ]                                   | <i>them; untranslated mark of a direct object; occasionally to them, toward them</i>  | sign of the direct object affixed to a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix | Strong's #853<br>BDB #84   |

**Translation:** ...and he also blessed them. Whatever blessing that he bestowed upon them is lost. Jacob will bless each of his sons and we will study that in the future.

Gen. 31:28 [Laban, speaking to Jacob] *And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? Now you have done foolishly.* (ESV)

Genesis 31:55 *Laban woke up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and blessed them all. Then he departed and returned to his home in Paddan-aram.*

## Laban kisses and blesses his sons and daughters (various commentators)

Clarke: *That is, his grandchildren, Jacob's eleven sons with Dinah their sister, and their mothers Leah and Rachel. All these he calls his children, Genesis 31:43. **And blessed them** – prayed heartily for their prosperity, though we find from Genesis 31:29 that he came having bound himself by a vow to God to do them some injury. Thus God turned his intended curse into a blessing.*<sup>925</sup>

The Geneva Bible: *We see that there is always some seed of the knowledge of God in the hearts of the wicked.*<sup>926</sup>

Gill: ***and kissed his sons and his daughters**; Jacob and his sons, who were his grandsons, and his daughters Rachel and Leah, with Dinah his granddaughter, as was the custom of relations and friends in those countries and times, at parting: **and blessed them**; wished all happiness to them.*<sup>927</sup>

Dr. Peter Pett: *When the feasting was over Laban said farewell to his sons and daughters giving them the patriarchal blessing. All is now at peace. 'Sons' probably includes Jacob his son-in-law, and also his grandsons. No doubt daughters included his granddaughter Dinah. Words depicting relationship were not as specific then as now.*<sup>928</sup>

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *Laban did not altogether lack affection for his own family as demonstrated that he kissed his grandsons and daughters goodbye and gave them a blessing. He must have known that his daughters had come to resent him and he was probably feeling guilty about that. Notice, he was so arrogant and proud that he could not bring himself to apologize to his daughters and Jacob.*<sup>929</sup>

Henry M. Morris: *Laban came back early in the morning from his own camp, somewhat softened in attitude. He did not altogether lack affection for his own family, so he wanted to kiss his grandsons and daughters goodbye, and to give them his fatherly blessing. He knew that they must have come to resent him by now (at the very least), and he was probably feeling a measure of remorse.*<sup>930</sup>

Whedon: *There is something most touching and impressive in this affectionate farewell. The bad passions of the previous day and the wrongs of former years are all forgotten, and the two parties separate; the one to be the chosen people of God, the depository of his oracles, the religious teachers of the world; the other to be lost from history.*<sup>931</sup>

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<sup>925</sup> Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:55.

<sup>926</sup> Geneva Bible Translation Notes; courtesy of e-sword; 1599; Genesis 31:55.

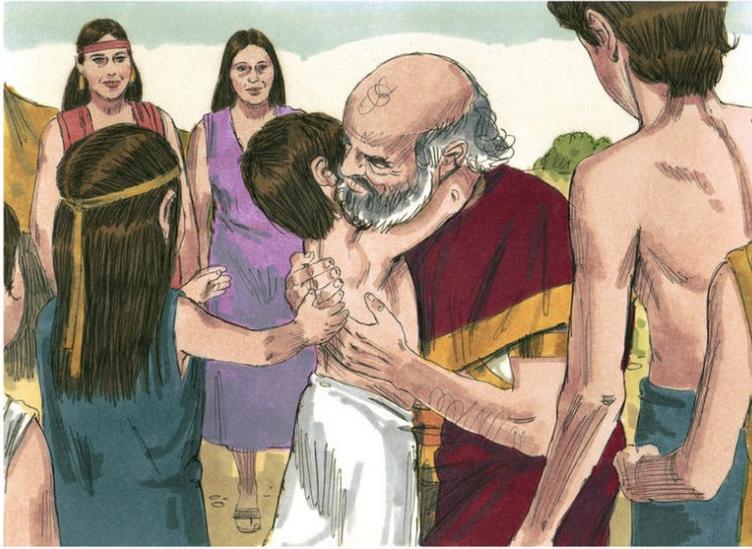
<sup>927</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:55.

<sup>928</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:55.

<sup>929</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 509); accessed October 18, 2017.

<sup>930</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 491.

<sup>931</sup> *Whedon's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Editor: Daniel D. Whedon, D.D. L.L.D.; ©1874–1909; from e-Sword; Genesis 31:55.



**Laban Hugs and Kisses His Daughters and Grandchildren** (a graphic by Jim Padgett); from Wikimedia; accessed October 21, 2017.

It is too easy to dismiss Laban or to speak of him in a completely negative way. He had his shortcomings—of this, there is no doubt. However, that does not mean that he lacked true affection for his daughters and his grandchildren.

Laban treated his daughters shabbily after they married Jacob, not setting aside an inheritance for them and apparently focusing upon his sons instead. Taking that as a given, I think that Laban recognizes that he will never see his daughters or grandchildren again, so that this hugging and kissing at the end is not simply perfunctory, but an expression of his true feelings.

### Genesis 31:55d

| Hebrew/Pronunciation   | Common English Meanings  | Notes/Morphology  | BDB and Strong's #                  |
|--|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                            | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הלך) [pronounced <i>haw-LAHK<sup>e</sup></i> ] | <i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk; to advance</i>  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                          | Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229 |
| wa (or va) (ו) [pronounced <i>wah</i> ]                            | <i>and so, and then, then, and; so, that, yet, therefore, consequently; because</i>  | wâw consecutive   | No Strong's #<br>BDB #253           |
| shûwb (שוב) [pronounced <i>shoo<sup>b</sup>v</i> ]                 | <i>to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution</i>                   | 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect                          | Strong's #7725<br>BDB #996          |
| Lâbân (לבן) [pronounced <i>law<sup>b</sup>-VAWN</i> ]              | <i>white; shining; gentle; brittle; and is transliterated Laban</i>  | masculine singular proper noun; location  | Strong's #3838<br>BDB #526          |
| lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l<sup>e</sup></i> ]                       | <i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>   | directional/relational preposition  | No Strong's #<br>BDB #510           |
| mâqôwm (מוקם) [pronounced <i>maw-KOHM</i> ]                        | <i>place, situated; for a soldier, it may mean where he is stationed; for people in general, it would be their place of abode (which could be their house or their town)</i> | masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix | Strong's #4725<br>BDB #879          |

**Translation:** Then Laban departed and went to his place. Laban departs and returns to his home in Padan-aram.

As has been clear in our study, both Jacob and Laban are very flawed men, possessing very similar characteristics; but Laban was better at double-dealing and manipulating than Jacob. Let me say that this final covenant between the two men is as good as it could possibly get between them. All of Laban's issues concerning his daughters were dealt with; whatever Laban believed was owed him was no longer held against Jacob; and these men would go their separate ways, in peace. I do not believe that any man in the future seriously considered coming back to the other to excise some imagined debt from him. Given who and what these men are, I do not believe that there is a better dissolution of their relationship that could have come about.

First, let me deal with a minor consideration: v. 55 in the English is actually Genesis 32:1 in the Hebrew. However, even a superficial reading indicates that this verse properly belongs in chapter 31.

*Fuller: Laban had professed his regret that he had not an opportunity to enjoy a day of feasting and of mirth at parting with his children. Such a parting would hardly have been seemly, even in a family which had no fear of God before their eyes. Jacob, however, makes a religious feast previous to the departure of his father-in-law. "He offered sacrifices upon the Mount Galeed." Laban departed, and this parting proved final. We hear no more of Laban, nor of the family of Nahor. They might, for several ages retain some knowledge of Jehovah; but mixing with it the superstitions of the country, they would in the end sink into gross idolatry, and be lost among the heathen.<sup>932</sup>*

From hereon in, we will only hear Laban's name mentioned 3 in reference to his being a relative of someone (Genesis 32:4 46:18, 25), but we will never see Laban again in Scripture. No one will refer to him in the New Testament and his appearance in history is essentially over. We have two men here with the same spiritual heritage; both men are believers in Jesus Christ. Both men, on their worst days, are devious and self-serving. However, Laban falls into God's plan only insofar as his relationship to Jacob. God rejected him and told Abraham to separate from him. He eventually even had household idols, although he several times seemed to recognize the preeminence of Jesus Christ, the God of Abraham. Jacob, on the other hand, although he is not a spiritual giant by any means, we have seen that his character has improved over the years. He is still not a person who has reached full maturity, yet; however, his youngest son, Joseph, will emerge as the spiritual giant of his day. As Thieme made reference: Joseph will be the **spiritual Atlas** of his generation. It will be Joseph who will carry the world on his back. Every few generations, there is a man whose spiritual greatness is such that the generation that he is in receives somewhat of a free ride from him. They are blessed and preserved due to his greatness.

This will mark one of the many times in Scripture that the genealogy of salvation will go one way; and the genealogy of death will go the other.

Genesis 31:55 Laban woke up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and blessed them all. Then he departed and returned to his home in Paddan-aram.

### Laban departs and returns home (several commentators)

Dr. Peter Pett: *There is a contrast between this normality and the supernatural experience of Jacob ('the angels of God met him'). For Laban it was over and he returned to normal life and to the daily grind. But for Jacob there was a new beginning. He was to find that God was truly on his side.<sup>933</sup>*

Pastor William E. Wenstrom, Jr.: *So Laban walks off the pages of Scriptures here since never again do we hear of him. He was governed and controlled by the old Adamic sin nature and the cosmic system, which he loved.*

Wenstrom continues: *So we see the covenant ceremony has been concluded resulting in peace between Laban and Jacob. Laban's chase of Jacob has ended in a covenant guaranteeing respect for each other's family and territory in the future and so therefore, Laban heads home to Paddan Aram and Jacob to Canaan.<sup>934</sup>*

<sup>932</sup> *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary*; edited by Joseph S. Exell, 1892; from e-sword, Genesis 31:54–55 (suggestive comments).

<sup>933</sup> Dr. Peter Pett; *Commentary Series on the Bible*; from e-sword, Genesis 31:55.

<sup>934</sup> From [https://www.gracenotes.info/bible\\_studies/genesis.pdf](https://www.gracenotes.info/bible_studies/genesis.pdf) (p. 509); accessed October 18, 2017.

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Note that Jacob offers a sacrifice to commemorate this event and to offer homage to God the Father. and God the Son. Those in the Old Testament did not have a complete understanding of what it was that they were doing. They recognized that these animal sacrifices were crucial to their worship of Yahweh, although they did not understand exactly how. Whereas they saw through an opaque glass we now see clearly. It will be analogous to heaven where we will know God even as we are known.

Matthew Henry on the way that they left it: *After all this angry parley, they part friends, Genesis 31:55. Laban very affectionately kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them, and then went back in peace.*<sup>935</sup> I don't know that I would call this *parting as friends*; but they did part at peace with one another, closing this particular chapter of their lives.

Matthew Henry, from a different commentary: *After this angry parley, they part friends. God is often better to us than our fears, and overrules the spirits of men in our favour, beyond what we could have expected; for it is not in vain to trust in him.*<sup>936</sup>

Genesis 31:55 [Laban woke up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and blessed them all. Then he departed and returned to his home in Paddan-aram.](#)

**A last look at Laban (various commentators)**

Henry M. Morris: *Laban...had seen the reality of God in the life of Jacob, along with the power of God in His blessing and protection of Jacob. He himself had even enjoyed many of the blessings of God through his relationship to Jacob. Nevertheless, he continued in idolatry and covetousness, seeking material gain for himself to the exclusion of all other considerations. Rather than seeking to follow the truth of God's plan as witnessed by Jacob, he merely resented and coveted the blessing of God on Jacob. He finally ended up with neither. His life constitutes a sober warning to a great host of semireligious but fundamentally self-worshipping and self-seeking men and women today.*<sup>937</sup>

Barnhouse (or Guzik): *So, Rachel and Leah were wrong to look to their father Laban for their portion or inheritance (Genesis 31:14) once they were married to Jacob. He now was their portion and inheritance. "Since you are saved and joined to Christ, appraise the world and ask, 'Is there yet any portion for me?' If you think there is, you are mistaken.*<sup>938</sup>

Dr. John Gill: *and Laban departed, and returned unto his place; to the city of Haran, where he dwelt; and after this we hear no more of him, nor of any transaction of his in life, or when and where he died, only his name is once mentioned by Jacob, Genesis 32:4.*<sup>939</sup>

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Genesis 31:55 [Laban woke up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and blessed them all. Then he departed and returned to his home in Paddan-aram.](#)

<sup>935</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>936</sup> Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:43–55.

<sup>937</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record*; Baker Book House; ©1980; p. 492.

<sup>938</sup> *David Guzik's Commentary on the Old Testament*; courtesy of e-sword; ©2006; Genesis 31:51–55.

<sup>939</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31:55.

All of this is somewhat sad as Laban apparently had known the True God and still had some limited faith in Him (based upon his calling of the God of Abraham to witness their covenant and to oversee their actions); and Laban also testified, at an earlier time, his recognition that he was blessed by his association with Jacob. He recognized that giving his daughters to Jacob was a reasonable thing to do, even though Jacob had no dowry on hand. But Laban had allowed himself to give credence to the gods of his area, as evidenced by his possession of the teraphim and his concern over them being stolen. Furthermore, in his final words given at the end of the covenant, he seems to propose that the God of Abraham and the gods of Nahor were equivalent, but different. During the final 6 years of service, Laban could not take his eyes off Jacob's increase, and that consumed him—whereas, we would reasonably assume that Laban's flock also continued to increase.

So, even though Jacob is far from being a mature believer, we can easily understand why the blessings of God and the covenant of God would go with Jacob and not remain with Laban. Obviously, the covenant goes with the line of Abraham; but we can see why God's covenant goes with that line, despite Jacob's many deficiencies.

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

*Sons*, here, is actually a reference to *grandsons*. Laban realizes that he might not ever see these boys ever again. *Daughters* refers to Laban's female descendants, which would have been his two daughters and his one granddaughter (at least one granddaughter).

What we have in this chapter are the competing interests of at least 4 parties, most of whom do not take God into consideration.

### Competing Interests/Differing Realities

Objective truth:

1. God blesses Jacob, despite his own actions and despite the actions of others. Jacob does a number of things for blessing, but these are human works and none of it counts for anything. Yet, God still blessed him.
2. As Jacob's wives, Leah and Rachel can expect to be blessed through their spiritual heritage and their association with Jacob.
3. Laban and his sons have been greatly blessed in their association with Jacob. Despite all of the haggling, deception and dishonest business practices, Jacob was blessed and Laban was blessed. Jacob received God's direct blessing and Laban received blessing by association. Laban and his sons may have felt as if they were somehow being cheated, but what they observed was God blessing Jacob.
4. God told Jacob to leave Paddan-aram and to return to the Land of Promise. This is God's perfect timing. Esau's anger had subsided; the anger of Laban's sons was increasing by the day, and Jacob had the wherewithal to make the trip.
5. Jacob has been a hard worker and faithful servant to Laban. Jacob may not have been the most wonderful person in the world; but he was an honorable employee.
6. All that Jacob leaves with has its origin with Laban. Jacob leaves with Laban's daughters and livestock (which Jacob worked for). Jacob does not appear to fully appreciate Laban's contribution to his wealth (even though, ultimately, all of our blessing comes from God). Recognizing that all blessing comes from God is no excuse to be ungrateful to others (to your parents, your employer, etc.).
7. Jacob apparently saw to the care of Laban's livestock when he left. Laban does not complain about his livestock being abandoned or left unattended.
8. Rachel did go into her father's tent and she stole his deity figures. This suggests that both she and her father had some esteem for these figurines—probably not unlike the Catholic who carries about with him a figurine of Mary. This is evidence of Laban's syncretism.
9. Jacob left surreptitiously, intending to leave Laban and return to the Land of Promise before Laban realized what was happening. Jacob's timing was intended to give him the greatest amount of time before Laban realized that he had taken off.
10. No matter what stunt Laban pulls, God will overrule it, if necessary, in order to bless Jacob and his family.

## Competing Interests/Differing Realities

Laban is unable to remove the blessing God has for Jacob.

11. As we have studied, wealth is a relative concept—God made Laban wealthy just as He made Jacob wealthy; however, Jacob's wealth appeared to increase at a greater rate than Laban's, which was what Laban and his sons had a problem with.

The reality for Laban's sons: they believe that Jacob is taking away from their father's wealth. Probably they have a concern for their own inheritance as well. They do not appear to give any respect to Jacob's work ethic or to his faithfulness to Laban.

Laban's reality: His son-in-law Jacob was receiving a payment for services which was too high (even though Laban himself determined what that payment would be); and Jacob was gaining too much financially. I assume that Laban believed Jacob to be the thief of his religious figurines (or one of Jacob's servants).

Leah and Rachel's Realities: Their father will no longer give them an inheritance, so they have no reason to remain in Paddan-aram with him. Their loyalties are realigned with Jacob, their husband. Possibly because there will be no inheritance from her father, Rachel steals little deity statues from her father.

Jacob's Reality:

1. God has told Jacob to go west.
2. He carefully determines the loyalty of his wives.
3. Laban has changed his salary on many occasions, every time to benefit Laban.
4. Jacob himself has been a loyal, hard worker. He knows this.
5. Jacob does not appear to express any appreciation toward Laban. Without Laban, Jacob has no family and no wealth. Interestingly enough, twice when Laban is named again, it is in relation to him giving his daughters personal maids. These personal maids also become Jacob's mistresses (they are surrogate mothers for their mistresses); so 4 of Jacob's sons are a result of these gifts that Laban gave to his daughters (Genesis 46:18, 25).
6. Because of his past experience with Laban, Jacob believed it best to sneak out of town. Right or wrong, he plans his exit from Paddan-aram quite carefully. However, God did not tell Jacob to slink away.

Neither man appears to realize that they have been greatly blessed by knowing one another, even though that is clearly the case. Certainly, there are a great many negative things which could be said about Laban and his personal greed. However, all that Jacob is at this point is because of Laban.

Neither man appears to appreciate how much they have truly benefitted from their mutual association.

Had Jacob been properly focused upon God, his great blessings would be obvious to him. Jacob does not appear to understand how God has overruled, time and time again, the machinations of Laban.

### Chapter Outline

### Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Trapp: *Laban leaves him, Esau meets him, and both with a kiss. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him". {Proverbs 16:7}.<sup>940</sup>*

Snider's translation of Genesis 31:54–55 *Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; (and called to his brothers to eat bread) And they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain. (and they ate bread and stayed the night on the mountain) and early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban left and returned to his place. (and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them--and he walked and Laban returned to his place)*

<sup>940</sup> John Trapp *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*; Edited by W. Webster and Hugh Martin; e-sword, Genesis 31:55 (slightly edited).

### Ron Snider's Summary of Genesis 31:54–55

1. The events of vs 25-54 have taken almost an entire day.
2. While Moses recorded the essence of what occurred, there is no doubt that more was said and done of which we have no record.
3. No doubt, Laban had much to say to attempt to cover his tracks and make Jacob out to be a dangerous foe.
4. Jacob offers a sacrifice to God to celebrate the conclusion of his affairs with Laban and deliverance from this despicable man.
5. The term kinsmen or brothers was used previously in vs 32 and 37 to refer to the relatives of both Laban and Jacob.
6. Here it becomes evident that while there was physical relationship, there is a spiritual kinship which also existed.
7. Apparently some of those in the family were like Jacob, positive, while most were like Laban, religious reversionists.
8. Those who are like-minded are the ones who came to the celebration dinner after the offering of the
9. This is not the same meal of vs 46.
10. Jacob ate a meal to conclude the covenant with Laban, but he did not eat with him thereafter.
11. Jacob practiced the doctrine of separation, and only positive types were at the fellowship dinner.
12. The business dinner was something he must attend and conclude, but Jacob does not have fellowship with Laban and his crowd.
13. It was late in the day, and after all this, Jacob and his associates stay the night on the mountain.
14. In the Hebrew text, vs 55 actually begins chapter 32.
15. Laban arises in the morning and kisses his grandchildren and his daughters good-bye.
16. Laban pronounces a meaningless blessing upon Jacob's family.
17. The words of Laban are not to be considered in the same vein as the blessing which Abraham and Isaac pronounced upon their offspring.
18. He is a religious reversionist just going through the same motions as adjusted believers, but with no internal realities in the soul.
19. Going to Bible class, praying, or any activity prescribed by the WOG is meaningless apart from positive volition.
20. Laban returns to his place, living a lie, pretending to pursue the plan of God while truly pursuing the sinful trend of Adam.
21. Laban is a believer who loses out in time and eternity.
22. Summary of Laban:
  - 1) He was physically related to Abraham, his nephew.
  - 2) His grandfather and father were polytheistic idol worshipers who did not truly adhere to the faith.
  - 3) He was, like them, a believer.
  - 4) He was a monetary reversionist.
  - 5) He used religiosity as a smoke screen for his activities.
  - 6) He relied on pseudo-affection to attempt to snow people as to what he really was.
  - 7) He did not possess any true concern for anyone but himself.
  - 8) He was more than willing to use others to further his own cause.
  - 9) He became quite prosperous during the first 14 years of Jacob's stay.
  - 10) He lost all that he pursued in the final 6 years of Jacob's employment with him.
  - 11) He was arrogant and attempted to pressure others verbally to get his way.
  - 12) He consistently attributed his own sinful ideas and actions to others.
  - 13) He was polytheistic and engaged in occult practices.
  - 14) He was very self-righteous.
  - 15) He was used by God to demonstrate to Jacob the evil of deceitfulness.
  - 16) Never acknowledged his problems and died the sin unto death.

## Chapter Outline

## Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

Barnes: *This passage, recording Laban's farewell and departure, closes the connection of Jacob with Haran and all its toils of servitude.*<sup>941</sup>

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## A Set of Summary Doctrines and Commentary

### An Abbreviated Exegesis of Genesis 31:

Bible translation used: The Scriptures 2009. Unless otherwise noted, all other quotations will be taken from this translation as well.

In the Scriptures 2009, instead of *God*, we have the word *Elohim*, which is a transliteration from the Hebrew. The other name for God, YHWH (or Jehovah, Yahweh, Adonai, Lord, JHWH, Y<sup>e</sup>howah) is represented with the actual Hebrew יהוה. The reason for there being so many different words used here is interesting. Originally, the Hebrew was written without vowels—not just YHWH, but every single Hebrew word. Because the Hebrew Scriptures (which we know as the Old Testament) were read aloud so often, the reader could look at the Hebrew consonants and know the word that was there. In fact, the Masoretes, who preserved the Bibles' pronunciation, introduced diacritical marks in the 7th century A.D. (these are vowel points, which was added above and below the original Hebrew text). Up to that time, every word in the Bible was read aloud except for one, and that was YHWH. When the Jews came to this proper name, they said, *Adonai* (= *Lord*). As a result, the Jews preserved the pronunciation of the Biblical text for all but one word. Of the nearly 100 translations of the Old Testament to which I refer, any one of those eight forms may be found—and one of them, the Message (I believe) uses *GOD*. Furthermore, Bible translations are not necessarily consistent at this point. One place we may read *Lord*, and elsewhere we may read *Jehovah* in the same translation.

In the previous chapter, Jacob indicated to Laban that he was ready to split up.

Genesis 31:1 [And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Ya'aqob \[= Jacob\] has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth."](#)

Laban's sons believe that they will be cheated out of some of their inheritance based upon what Jacob is doing. Their father understands that God is blessing Jacob, and spreading that blessing around to him (Genesis 30:27). His sons do not understand this.

Note that Laban's sons are not even named here. This suggests to me that they are not even saved.

Genesis 31:2 [And Ya'aqob would look at the face of Laban and see that it was not toward him as before.](#)

<sup>941</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Genesis 32:1–32.

Laban, unfortunately, finds himself being convinced by his sons, so now he is seeing Jacob as an interloper (despite the fact that he is married to Laban's two daughters).

Genesis 31:3 And הוֹרִי [= YHWH, Y<sup>e</sup>howah] said to Ya'aqob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives. And I am with you."

God knows that it is time. God tells Jacob that it is time to return to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 31:4–5 And Ya'aqob sent and called Raḥēl [= Rachel] and Lě'ah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, "I see your father's face, that it is not toward me as before, but the Elohim of my father has been with me.

To take off and leave, Jacob believes that he needs to sneak away in order to preserve all of his wealth.

Genesis 31:6 "And you know that I have served your father with all my strength.

Rachel and Leah know their father and they know Jacob. When Jacob says these things, they ring true to the daughters.

Genesis 31:7 "Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but Elohim [= God] did not allow him to do evil to me.

Apparently, we did not get the full story in the previous chapter. Laban changed his mind about Jacob's wages ten times, and the daughters know this to be true.

Genesis 31:8 "When he said this, 'The speckled are your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And when he said this, 'The streaked are your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked.

When Laban agreed that certain markings would be considered Jacob's wages, the sheep and goats would bear lambs and kids with those markings. When Laban changed this, what Jacob's flock bore provided him with more wealth. Laban could not do anything to stop the flow of blessing to Jacob. Remember that fact.

Genesis 31:9 "So Elohim has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.

Jacob is no longer talking about his famous trick of the previous chapter. He has a large number of livestock based upon what God has done. He understands that his blessings come from God and not from some foolish experiment he thought up. Genesis 30:37–40

Genesis 31:10 "And it came to be, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and looked in a dream and saw the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and mottled.

This was revealed to Jacob in a dream. What he did was not the key to his prosperity. What God does is the key to our prosperity. Remember this.

Just in case you think, *does this mean that God will speak to me in my dreams?* He will not! We have the full revelation of God in the Bible. There was not some detail which God forgot about and left out. He is not going to add some tasty bit of revelation to your dreams (no matter how weird your dreams are).

Genesis 31:11 "And the Messenger of Elohim spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Ya'aqob.' And I said, 'Here I am.'

God spoke to Jacob in some of his dreams. No doubt, he has shared this with his two wives.

Genesis 31:12 "And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.

God recognized that Laban was cheating him.

Genesis 31:13 I am the Ĕl of Běyth Ĕl, where you anointed the standing column and where you made a vow to Me. Now rise up, get out of this land, and return to the land of your relatives.' ”

God tells Jacob that He is the Ĕl of Bethel. “It is time for you to return home.”

Genesis 31:14 And Raḥĕl and Lě'ah answered and said to him, “Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house?

Rachel and Leah had a promised inheritance. However, they are wondering if that inheritance still exists.

Genesis 31:15 “Are we not reckoned by him as strangers? For he has sold us, and also entirely consumed our silver.

The wives recognize that Laban to treating them as strangers or immigrants. They are apparently aware that all of the silver promise to them is gone.

Genesis 31:16 “For all the wealth which Elohim has taken from our father is ours and our children's. Now then, do whatever Elohim has told you.”

The wives tell Jacob, “We are with you all the way. Whatever God has told you do to, do it. We will go with you.”

Genesis 31:17–18 So Ya'aqob [= *Jacob*] rose and put his sons and his wives on camels, and he drove off all his livestock and all his possessions which he had acquired, his property of the livestock which he had acquired in Paddan Aram, to go to his father Yitsḥaq [= *Isaac*] in the land of Kena'an [= *Canaan*].

Jacob gathers all of his accumulated wealth and puts it, his sons and his wives on camels.

Genesis 31:19 And when Laḅan had gone to shear his sheep, Raḥĕl stole the house idols that were her father's.

Rachel, angry that the silver she was promised is gone, she grabs up some home idols, which would be the most expensive thing that she could walk away with (I am guessing that she could not find the silver).

Genesis 31:20 And Ya'aqob deceived Laḅan the Aramean, because he did not inform him that he was about to flee.

Jacob is going to sneak off. He is not telling Laban what he is going to do.

Genesis 31:21 And he fled with all that he had. And he rose up and passed over the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gil'ad.

Jacob, with his family and belongings, cross over the river and go into the mountains, which would give them cover.

Genesis 31:22 And on the third day Laḅan was told that Ya'aqob had fled.

Recall that Jacob was a three-day journey away from the others, so it takes them three days to realize that he has gone.

Genesis 31:23 Then he took his brothers with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gil'ad.

The brothers pursue Jacob and catch up to him in seven days.

Genesis 31:24 But in a dream by night Elohim came to Laban the Aramean, and said to him, "Guard yourself, that you do not speak to Ya'aqob either good or evil."

God also speak to Laban and warns him not to speak good or evil of Jacob. "Hold your tongue, Laban; make no judgments on Jacob."

Genesis 31:25 Then Laban overtook Ya'aqob. Now Ya'aqob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brothers pitched in the mountains of Gil'ad.

Laban also overtakes Jacob. Laban confronts Jacob directly.

Genesis 31:26 And Laban said to Ya'aqob, "What have you done, that you have deceived me, and driven my daughters off like captives taken with the sword?"

Laban is very upset over what has taken place and accuses Jacob of taking his daughters from him by force.

Genesis 31:27 "Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and not inform me, and I would have sent you away with joy and songs, with tambourine and lyre?"

Laban makes some reasonable points. "You departed like a sneak. Why could we not all celebrate your departure?"

Genesis 31:28 "And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have been foolish to do this.

"You gave me no chance to say goodbye to my own family."

Genesis 31:29 "It is in the power of my hand to do evil to you, but the Elohim of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Guard yourself, that you do not speak to Ya'aqob either good or evil.'

"I could really put the hurt on you," Laban warns Jacob, "but God told me not to."

Genesis 31:30 "And now you have gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my mighty ones?"

There are some stolen items taken from Laban's home (which is probably a tent). These are gods—little idols—which Laban had purchased. He probably paid a lot of money for them.

Now, as an aside. We do not know how people felt about idols in the ancient world. Let me suggest that it is very possible that they understood the idols to simply stand for a higher power, but they were not that higher power. Catholics have many symbols like statues of Mary. None of them believe that their statue actually is *Mary*; but it is a physical representation of her. However, that aside, it is still idolatry.

Genesis 31:31 And Ya'aqob answered and said to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I said, 'Lest you tear your daughters away from me.'

Jacob responds, "In my defense, I was really worried that you would try to take your daughters from me."

Bear in mind that Laban was a pretty sneaky individual. Jacob was not unwarranted in his concerns. That does not make him right.

Genesis 31:32 "With whomever you find your mighty ones, do not let him live. In the presence of our brothers, see for yourself what is with me and take it with you." For Ya'aqob did not know that Raḥēl had stolen them.

"Whoever has stolen those idols, he should not live," Jacob proclaims, not knowing that it was Rachel who did this.

As an aside, apparently everyone knew about Laban's idols (not a bad name for a group, by the way).

Genesis 31:33 *And Laban went into Ya'aqob's tent, and into Lě'ah's tent, and into the tents of the two female servants, but he did not find them. And he came out of Lě'ah's tent and entered Raḥěl's tent.*

Laban checks out all of the tents.

Genesis 31:34 *Now Raḥěl had taken the house idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find them.*

Rachel had placed these idols in the camel's saddle and was sitting on them.

Genesis 31:35 *And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my master that I am unable to rise before you, for the way of women is with me." And he searched but did not find the house idols.*

Then Rachel says, "Listen, I am on my period, so I cannot rise up before you." In other words, she is going to sit right where she is.

Genesis 31:36 *And Ya'aqob was wroth and contended with Laban, and Ya'aqob answered and said to Laban, "What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me?"*

Apart from the accusation about the idols, Jacob has left with only that which belongs to him. "You have hotly pursued me for what exactly?" he demands.

Genesis 31:37 *"Now that you have searched all my goods what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my brothers and your brothers, and let them decide between the two of us!"*

Jacob is now rather insulting, making light of Laban's accusations.

Genesis 31:38 *"These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your sheep.*

"I have worked for you for 20 years, and obviously, I have done right by you for that entire time." Laban knows that this is true. Despite his negative thoughts about Jacob, he did not want Jacob to leave him.

Genesis 31:39 *"That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you, I myself bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night.*

On some occasions, Jacob bore the loss for animals lost to wild beasts.

Genesis 31:40 *"Thus I was! By day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.*

Jacob indicates that he worked hard for Laban all of this time, enduring very hot and very cold weather, losing sleep often.

Genesis 31:41 *"These twenty years I have been in your house. I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.*

"Now that you are here," Jacob says, "let me tell you why I have a problem with you. You told me to name my price and I did; but then you unilaterally changed my wages ten times."

Genesis 31:42 “Unless the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham and the Fear of Yitshaq, had been with me, you would now have sent me away empty-handed. Elohim has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rendered judgment last night.”

Jacob makes it clear that all of this blessing came from the God of Abraham and of Isaac.

Genesis 31:43 And Laban answered and said to Ya'aqob, “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock, and all that you see is mine. But what shall I do today to these, my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?”

Then Laban says, “From my perspective, everything that you have come from me. You wives, your servants, your children, your livestock.”

In one way, he is correct; but in another, he is not. This was an agreement which he made with Jacob and Jacob did the work to gain these things. Much of what Laban had at this point was gotten by Jacob's work.

Genesis 31:44 “And now, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and it shall be a witness between you and me.”

Jacob and Laban agree to make a covenant between the two of them.

Genesis 31:45 So Ya'aqob took a stone and set it up as a standing column.

These stones standing up would be a sign of this peace treaty being made.

Genesis 31:46 And Ya'aqob said to his brothers, “Gather stones.” And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.

The two groups of men ate together at this heap of gathered stones.

Genesis 31:47 And Laban called it Yeḡar Sahaḡutha, but Ya'aqob called it Gal'ēḡ.

They had different names for it, but the different names represent different languages rather than different meanings.

Genesis 31:47 And Laban called it in Syrian, *Heap of the Testimony*, and Jacob called it in Hebrew, *Heap of Testimony*. (MKJV)

Remember that Laban has already been called an Aramæan in this chapter; their language would be Syrian (which we also call Aramæan).

Genesis 31:48–49 And Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” That is why its name was called Gal'ēḡ, also Mitspah, because he said, “Let הוה watch between you and me when we are out of each other's sight.

The two men were going their separate ways, but Laban's two daughters were going with Jacob.

Even though many Christians and Jews have used this saying when two lovers or two friends part, Jacob and Laban are hardly either. These rocks represent what is between them.

Genesis 31:50 “If you afflict my daughters, or if you take other wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us; see, Elohim is witness between you and me!”

Laban expresses concern for his daughters, for their treatment, and than Jacob not take additional wives.

Genesis 31:51 **And Laban said to Ya'aqob, "See this heap and see this standing column, which I have placed between you and me.**

Laban calls for this pile of rocks to stand as a witness between them. Laban would go one direction and Jacob would go another direction from here.

Genesis 31:52 **"This heap is a witness, and this standing column is a witness, that I do not pass beyond this heap to you, and you do not pass beyond this heap and this standing column to me, for evil.**

Neither man was to cross over this heap of rocks to pursue the other for evil.

Genesis 31:53 **"The Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Nahor, and the Elohim of their father rightly rule between us!" And Ya'aqob swore by the Fear of his father Yitshaq.**

They all had believed in the Revealed God. Abraham was a believer and so was his brother Nahor. However, God chose Abraham because God looked at Abraham and his future line. Abraham's line would lead to Jesus.

Genesis 31:54 **And Ya'aqob slaughtered a slaughtering on the mountain, and called his brothers to eat bread. And they ate bread and spent the night on the mountain.**

A sacrifice was also offered up. They all spent this night on the mountain.

Genesis 31:55 **And Laban rose up early in the morning, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. And Laban left and returned to his place.**

The next morning, Laban rose up, kissed his grandsons and his daughters and blessed them. Then he returned home.

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The idea here is, there are things which we find in this chapter which are extremely important.

### **Why Genesis 31 is in the Word of God**

1. Two of the big topics of this chapter are envy and divine guidance.
2. With this chapter, we see Jacob, Rachel and Leah bound together as a family. Leah is no longer simply a third wheel that Jacob is stuck with.
3. We see how the envy of Laban and his sons actually work against them. Their eyes are on Jacob's increase and they cannot seem to get over that.
4. This chapter allows us to better pinpoint Jacob's current spiritual growth and maturity level. Some commentators give him too much credit; and some give him no recognition at all. Jacob did not choose to leave Paddan-aram simply because God told him to go. This chapter reveals that Jacob sat on this information for an unspecified amount of time.
5. We get to see some of Jacob's good points in this chapter, which we had never observed before.
6. We get a more accurate understanding of Jacob, his character, and his limited spiritual advance which took place while in Paddan-aram.
7. We learned a little bit about the early languages of Hebrew and Aramaic; but there is not enough information in this chapter to lead us to many conclusions.
8. In our study, I believe that we will develop a more reasonable and honest view of both Laban and Jacob.

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These are things which we learn while studying this particular chapter.

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## What We Learn from Genesis 31

1. We see that the writing of this chapter is quite sophisticated, in a literary sense, when it comes to the search by Laban for his idols (teraphim). We know who stole them (Rachel), we know that her own husband has pronounced death for the person found with the idols, and we follow Laban in his step-by-step search through the tents of Jacob and his wives. There is an intentional building up of suspense as we read through the narrative.
2. We discuss the relative nature of wealth and how your excessive focus on others or on yourself is personally harmful and of no help to you.
3. We study the importance of Jacob's impact on history. We know about the men Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob during a time when there are many mighty nations, great kings and great warriors, about whom we know nothing. This is seeing human history through the divine lens.
4. We discussed our impact as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ; which impact is real and can be eternal. We compare this to people who try to matter by their adherence to the cause of global warming.
5. This gave us a chance to study the false movement of the 99% versus the 1% and how this is just thinly disguised greed.
6. Mention was given to the homeless and to the reduction of mental healthcare facilities.
7. We contrast the envy of Laban's sons with the concept of health competition.
8. The events of this chapter allowed us to do a study of the various lusts; and the concept of envy and greed.
9. Clearly Laban was a bad boss and Jacob worked under poor working conditions. This is not a good enough reason to leave a job. This is discussed regarding the Christian and his work.
10. We have a better idea as to why the line of promise goes through Jacob. Laban appears to have believed in the Revealed God in the past; but his spiritual priorities seem to be upside down at this point, and it is unclear which God he respects (as he has the teraphim in his home). His sons are never named and they are probably unbelievers for that reason. Jacob, his wives, his mistresses and all of his children appear to have trusted in the Revealed God.
11. We made the application to today of how God does not come and speak to us individually and tell us to make a left or a right turn up ahead.
12. We had opportunity in this chapter to discuss a wide range of unusual topics: polygamy (which is not a big deal now; but it could be in American culture); gay marriage; and what happens if a member of such a relationship believes in Jesus Christ.
13. We also discussed, what if you have a confused transgender child in your classroom as a teacher—how do you deal with this, as he/she is a person for whom Christ died.
14. We discussed Jacob and how he dishonorably ended his relationship with Laban.
15. We studied the situation from both Laban and Jacob's viewpoints, so that we can see that neither man was completely right or completely wrong.
16. We studied Jesus warning *not to judge*.
17. We studied the change which occurs in some human societies (using the United States as an example).
18. I probably spent far too long on the deity statues that Rachel stole (commentators spent a great deal of time discussing this particular topic).
19. We studied the telephone and capitalism.
20. We do not use anything technological discoveries from China, Russia, Cuba or Venezuela.
21. Some commentators made light of Laban's concern for his daughters. We find that Laban may have been genuine in his concern, despite his bad behavior towards them in the previous 13 years.
22. We compare and contrast the covenant (contract, agreement, treaty) between Jacob and Laban; and recognize how differently we view contracts today where they mean nothing to some of the signatories.

Many chapters of the Bible look forward to Jesus Christ in some way or another. A person or situation might foreshadow the Lord or His work on the cross (or His reign over Israel in the Millennium). The chapter may contain a prophecy about the Lord or it may, in some way, lead us toward the Lord (for instance, by means of genealogy).

## Jesus Christ in Genesis 31

Jesus Christ appears twice in this chapter. He had appeared to Jacob as the Angel of God in a dream during the mating season of Jacob's livestock (his own; and that which he watched for Laban). The dream is mentioned in v. 3 where the primary message is given: **The LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."**

Later in the chapter, Jacob will tell his wives about this dream (vv. 11–13), where we are given more details about this dream. God clearly identifies Himself and the God of Bethel, to Whom Jacob set up the pillar; and that He is fully aware of all that Laban is doing to him. Then Jacob tells his wives that God told him to return to Paddan-aram.

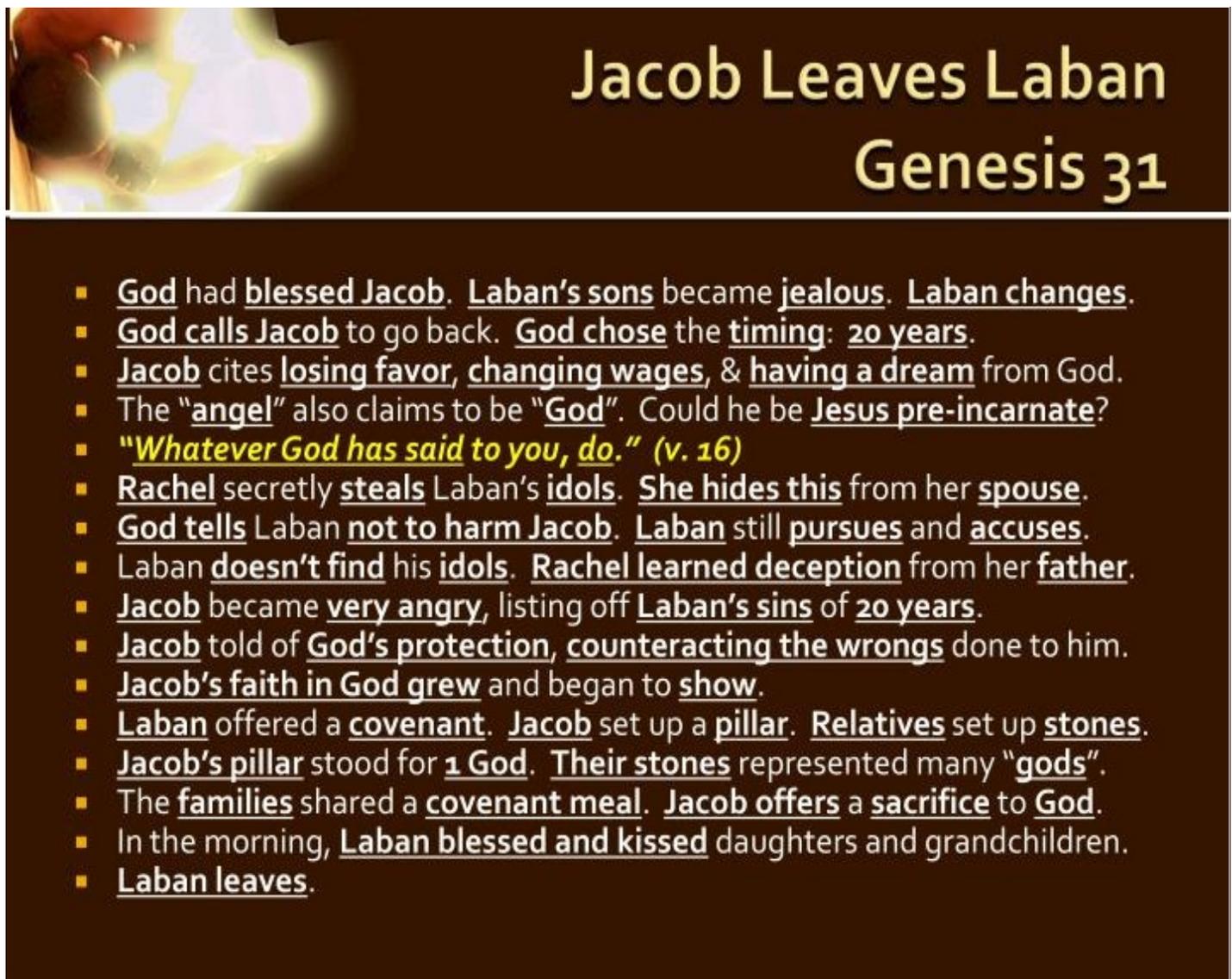
God also appears to Laban on the night that he catches up to Jacob. It appears that they are encamped on the same mountain or in the same mountain range. Laban will come into Jacob's camp the next morning. God warns Laban, **"Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob regarding the morality of his leaving."**

There may be a reason the *Angel of God appears to Jacob* and *God comes to Laban*.

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**Jacob Leaves Laban** (a summary on a slide); from [Slide Serve](#) (Slide 9); accessed March 9, 2019.



## Jacob Leaves Laban Genesis 31

- God had blessed Jacob. Laban's sons became jealous. Laban changes.
- God calls Jacob to go back. God chose the timing: 20 years.
- Jacob cites losing favor, changing wages, & having a dream from God.
- The "angel" also claims to be "God". Could he be Jesus pre-incarnate?
- "Whatever God has said to you, do." (v. 16)
- Rachel secretly steals Laban's idols. She hides this from her spouse.
- God tells Laban not to harm Jacob. Laban still pursues and accuses.
- Laban doesn't find his idols. Rachel learned deception from her father.
- Jacob became very angry, listing off Laban's sins of 20 years.
- Jacob told of God's protection, counteracting the wrongs done to him.
- Jacob's faith in God grew and began to show.
- Laban offered a covenant. Jacob set up a pillar. Relatives set up stones.
- Jacob's pillar stood for 1 God. Their stones represented many "gods".
- The families shared a covenant meal. Jacob offers a sacrifice to God.
- In the morning, Laban blessed and kissed daughters and grandchildren.
- Laban leaves.

H. C. Leupold: *We cannot drop the chapter without indicating 2.859 to what unwarranted extremes critical analysis has gone. Procksch assigns to J verses 1, 3, 10, 12, 20-23, 26, 27, 31, 36, 38-40, 42, 45, 49-51b, 53b, 54. The rest, with the exception of a part of verse 18, is ascribed to E. The tortuous reasoning by which this separation is supported is one feature against the analysis. The manifest desire to see two threads in a narrative marked by singleness of purpose constitutes a second count on which we reject the whole approach. Add to this Koenig's verdict, "the attempt to separate the successive strata rests very often on indecisive criteria."*<sup>942</sup>

Throughout, Leupold has made disparaging remarks about the JEPD crowd. I have left them out, even though he and I are of one mind on this topic. The idea that this particular narrative was written by two different men and then later woven together by a third is ridiculous on its face. I cannot imagine that, if we separated the verses as suggested above, that we would end up with two sensible sounding narratives. Instead, we would have two halves of a chapter, completely disjointed lacking the other half.

<sup>942</sup> From <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/leupold/genesis.xxxii.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

## Multiple Authors for Genesis 31 (James Burton Coffman)

We shall pay but little attention to the fulminations of the critics who are continually preoccupied with their search for multiple sources, missing altogether the startling magnificence of this marvelous story of Jacob, the Israel of God. Critical allegations include the assertions that:

- I. Genesis 31:1,2, give "different reasons" for Jacob's decision to leave the vicinity of Haran. As anyone may read himself, the text gives three or four reasons why Jacob decided to leave, all of which are related and presented here in a most logical and consistent fashion, all of the elements thus mentioned constituting in the aggregate the basis of Jacob's decision.
- II. Genesis 31:17,18 and Genesis 31:21 give duplicate accounts of Jacob's flight with all his possessions. This is simply an untruth. Genesis 31:17,18 record the patriarch's start of the journey, and Genesis 31:21 relates the irrevocable beginning of it by his passing beyond "the River," the purpose of it being to tell HOW he left, as plainly stated in the text: "So he fled with all that he had."
- III. Genesis 31:23,25 report twice that Laban overtook Jacob. Again, this is not a true allegation. Genesis 31:23 stated that Laban undertook to catch up with Jacob and his mission was successful. The mention that he "overtook him" is plainly proleptic, for the very next verse recounts God's appearance to Laban, an event that occurred before he actually came near Jacob. The statement of Genesis 31:25, "that Laban came up with Jacob," was necessary to show that, despite the warning of God, Laban went ahead and "drew alongside" of Jacob, "came up with him," a far different thing from what was said in Genesis 31:23, not a duplication at all but an additional fact necessary to the intelligent continuity of the narrative.
- IV. Genesis 31:31,36 present "two different replies" of Jacob to Laban. So what? Two different replies were necessary, because they were made under widely different circumstances, and in starkly different situations. In Genesis 31:31, Jacob pleaded his fear, and responded to Laban's allegation of the theft of his gods by offering to submit his possessions to Laban's search. In Genesis 31:36-42, the accumulated wrath and resentment in Jacob's heart burst out of the inhibitions which had restrained him for twenty years; and, as we would say, "he let the old hypocrite have it!" (Only a critic would find fault with this narrative).
- V. The memorial is called "a pillar" in Genesis 31:45, and "a cairn of stones" in Genesis 31:46. So what! It was both. First, Jacob erected the upright pillar, and then his retainers and sons, aided by Laban and his retainers, gathered stones and piled them around the pillar. Josephus explains this fully: "They erected a pillar in the form of an altar." [1]
- VI. The principal objection, however, lies in what is alleged to be two different accounts in Genesis 30 and Genesis 31 of how Jacob came into possession of so many of Laban's cattle. They do not understand that God's revelation to Jacob of the increase of vast numbers of the parti-colored cattle came before the agreement with Laban on Jacob's wages, and is related here retrospectively in order for Jacob's wives to understand the providential aid he had received. Prejudice alone can account for the charge that Jacob here lied about that in order to impress his wives. See our comment on this in Genesis 30. Many scholars and all of the critics overlook this.

I only include this as an aside. Most people do not have an interest in this.

Coffman has very strong feelings on this matter. Elsewhere on this same page, he called the work of JEPD enthusiasts, *picayune, nit-picking, fault findings of Biblical enemies*. Tell me how you really feel, James. ©

Many years ago, it was believed that no writing existed during the time of Genesis; and, therefore, none of this could have been written down. So, a theory, based upon that assumption, was, two primary authors, writing long after the fact, put together the book of Genesis; and that some third party wove their narratives together; and that is how we got the book of Genesis. This is known as the JEPD theory or Documentary Hypothesis. See **Documentary Hypothesis (HTML) (PDF) (WPD)** for more information on this topic. Even given that their assumptions are true (they aren't), this is still a very bad theory which stands against our concept of divine inspiration.

From <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/genesis-31.html> accessed October 28, 2017.

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I need to seriously edit this down.

### Adam Clarke closes out Genesis 31

The most important topics in this chapter have already been considered in the notes, and to those the reader is referred. Jacob's character we have already seen, and hitherto have met in it little to admire; but we shall soon find a blessed change both in his mind and in his conduct. Laban's character appears in almost every instance to disadvantage; he does not seem to be what we commonly term a wicked man, but he was certainly both weak and covetous; and covetousness extinguished in him, as it does in all its votaries, the principles of righteousness and benevolence, and the very charities of human life. Provided he could get an increase of property, he regarded not who was wronged or who suffered. In this case he hid himself even from his own bowels, and cared not that his own children should lack even the necessaries of life, provided he could increase his own store! How watchful should we be against this destructive, unnatural, and degrading vice! It is impossible for a man who loves money to love either God or man; and consequently he must be in the broad way that leads to destruction.

For the difficulties in the chronology of Jacob's sojourning in Padan-aram, I beg leave to refer to the following remarks.

Remarks upon Gen\_31:38, etc., relative to the time spent by Jacob in the service of his father-in-law Laban, in Mesopotamia; from Dr. Kennicott. "If every reading which introduces but a single difficulty demands our attention, much greater must that demand be when several difficulties are caused by any one mistake, or any one mistranslation. Of this nature is the passage before us, which therefore shall be here considered more fully, especially as I have not already submitted to the learned any remarks upon this subject. Jacob's age at the time of his going to Laban, has (till very lately) been fixed, perhaps universally, at seventy-seven years. But I think it has been shown by the learned Mr. Skinner, in an excellent dissertation, (4th. 1765), that the number seventy-seven cannot here be right.

"Jacob was one hundred and thirty when he went down (with sixty-six persons) into Egypt. Joseph had then been governor ten years; and when made governor was thirty; therefore Jacob could not be more than ninety at the birth of Joseph. Now, upon supposition that Jacob was seventy-seven at going to Laban, and that he had no son till he was eighty-five, and that he, with eleven sons, left Laban at ninety-seven, there will follow these amongst other strange consequences which are enumerated by Mr. Skinner page 11, etc.:

1. Though Isaac and Esau married at forty, Jacob goes at seventy-seven to look for a wife, and agrees to marry her seven years after.
2. Issachar is born after the affair of the mandrakes, which Reuben finds and brings home when he (Reuben) was about four years old; that is, if Issachar was born before Joseph, agreeably to Gen\_30:18, Gen\_30:25.
3. Judah begets Er at thirteen; for in the first of the following tables Judah is born in Jacob's year eighty-eight, and Er in one hundred and two.
4. Er marries at nine, and is destroyed for profligacy. Er, born one hundred and two, marries in one hundred and eleven. See also Gen\_38:7.
5. Onan marries at eight; for Onan, born in one hundred and three, marries in one hundred and eleven.
6. Shelah, being grown at ten, ought to be married; for Shelah, born in one hundred and four, is marriageable, but not married to Tamar in one hundred and fourteen. See Gen\_38:14.

## Adam Clarke closes out Genesis 31

7. Pharez kept from marrying while young, yet has a son at thirteen; for Pharez, born in one hundred and fifteen, had two sons at going to Egypt in one hundred and thirty.

8. Esau goes to Ishmael and marries his daughter, after Jacob went to Laban at seventy-seven; though Ishmael died when Jacob was sixty-three.

9. If Jacob had no son till he was eighty-five, and if Joseph was born when his father was ninety, then the eleven sons and Dinah were born in five years.

Lastly, if Jacob had no son till eighty-five, and he went to Egypt at one hundred and thirty, with sixty-six persons, only forty-five years are allowed for his family; whereas the larger sum of sixty-five years seems necessary for the births of so many children and grandchildren. On this subject Le Clerc has pronounced, *Hisce in rebus occurrunt nodi, quos nemo hactenus solvit; neque porro, ut opinor, solvet.* There are difficulties here which have never been explained, and in my opinion never can be explained. But upon the single principle of Mr. Skinner, that Jacob went to Laban at fifty-seven, (instead of seventy-seven), these difficulties are solved. And it only remains to wish that some authority may be found to support this conjecture, thus strongly founded on the *exigentia loci*. The common opinion is formed by reckoning back from the age of Joseph, when governor of Egypt, to the time of his birth, and from the twenty years which Jacob was with Laban. This number, Mr. Skinner thinks, was originally forty; and I think that the Hebrew text as it now stands confirms the conjecture, and furnishes the very authority which is so much wanted.

“After Jacob had served Laban fourteen years for his two wives, where was Jacob to reside? Esau was still living; and Jacob might well be afraid of returning to him, till more years of absence had disarmed his resentment; and had the death of Esau happened, Jacob would then have been secure. But let us also remember that Isaac was still alive, and that Esau had determined to kill Jacob whenever their father should die. It would therefore be no wonder if Jacob should have desired to continue longer in Haran. And to carry this point more effectually, he might offer to take care of Laban’s cattle, and to live in his neighborhood, upon such terms of advantage to Laban as could not easily be withstood. Lastly, when the good effects to Laban from this connection had been experienced, without profit, nay with some losses, to Jacob, for twenty years, Jacob might naturally grow tired of thus assisting Laban without providing for his own growing family. Accordingly we find that Jacob covenants with Laban for six years of more close attendance and service in Laban’s own house, for which the wages were expressly settled. Agreeable to the preceding possibilities seems to have been the fact, Jacob living in Haran forty years, and in this manner: -

14 years in Laban’s house, a covenant servant for his wives.

20 in Laban’s neighborhood, as a friend.

6 in Laban’s house, a covenant servant for cattle.

40 “Now the twenty concurrent years of neighbourly assistance, and the disjointed twenty of covenant service, seem both of them distinguished in the history itself. For upon Laban’s pursuit of Jacob he mentions twenty years twice; which two sets of twenty, if really different, make forty. Each mention of the twenty years is introduced with the word *zeh*, which word, when repeated, is used by way of distinction; as when we say, this and that, the one or the other. Thus, *Exo\_14:20* : So that the one came not near the other. *Ecc\_6:5* : This hath more rest than the other. And with the two words at a great distance, *Job\_21:23* : One dieth; *Job\_21:25*; and another dieth, etc. So here, in *Gen\_31:38*, Jacob says to Laban, *זֶה עֲשִׂים שָׁנָה אֶנֶכִי* *zeh esrim shanah anochi immach*, during the One set of twenty years I was with thee, etc.; meaning the time in which he lived, not in Laban’s house, but in his neighborhood; not as a servant, but a friend; after he had served in Laban’s house fourteen years for his daughters, and before he served six years for his cattle. But then, as to the other twenty, he tells Laban, at *Gen\_31:41*, varying the phrase very remarkably *זֶה לִי עֲשִׂים שָׁנָה בְּבֵיתְךָ אֲבֹתֶיךָ* *zeh li esrim shanah bebeithecha abadticha*, during the other twenty years (לִי *li*) For Myself (for my own benefit) In Thy House; I served thee fourteen years, and six years, etc. And during this last period, though only six years, he charges Laban with changing his wages ten times. So that Jacob insists upon having well earned his wages through the twenty years when he served for hire; but he makes a far greater merit of having, for another twenty years, assisted him without wages, and even with some losses; and therefore, with particular propriety, he reminds Laban of that set of twenty years in the first place.

The following Tables, taken chiefly from Mr. Skinner, will greatly elucidate the true chronology of Jacob:

## Adam Clarke closes out Genesis 31

Table 1 - On Jacob's being at Haran only twenty years.

0 Jacob (and Esau) born.  
 40 Esau marries two wives, Hittites Gen\_26:34.  
 63 Ishmael dies, aged 137 Gen\_25:17.  
 77 Jacob goes to Haran.  
 84 marries Leah and Rachel Gen\_29:20, Gen\_29:21, Gen\_29:27, Gen\_29:28.  
 85 Reuben born of Leah  
 86 Simeon born of Leah Gen\_29:32-35.  
 87 Levi born of Leah  
 88 Judah born of Leah  
 89 Dan born of Bilhah  
 Naphtali born of Bilhah  
 Gad born of Zilpah  
 Asher born of Zilpah  
 Issachar born of Leah  
 Zebulun and Dinah born of Leah

Genesis 30:6-24.

91 Joseph born of Rachel  
 97 Jacob returns from Haran.  
 98 dwells in Succoth.  
 99 comes to Shalem, and continues there eight years  
 101 Judah marries Shuah's daughter.  
 102 Er born, - 103 Onan, - 104 Shelah.  
 106 Shechemites destroyed by Simeon and Levi.  
 107 Benjamin is born, and Rachel dies  
 108 Joseph sold when seventeen Gen\_37:2.  
 111 Tamar married to Er, and immediately afterwards to Onan.  
 114 Tamar's incest with Judah.  
 115 Pharez and Zarah born to Judah.  
 120 Isaac dies, aged 180 Gen\_35:28.  
 121 Joseph is made governor of Egypt Gen\_41:46.  
 130 Jacob goes into Egypt Gen\_47:9.  
 147 and dies. Gen\_47:28; Gen\_49:33.

Table 2 - On Jacob's Being at Haran Forty years.

0 Jacob (and Esau) born.  
 40 Esau marries two wives, Hittites Gen\_26:34  
 57 Jacob goes to Haran.  
 58 Esau goes to Ishmael, and marries his daughter. Gen\_28:9.  
 63 Ishmael dies, aged 137 Gen\_25:17.  
 64 Jacob marries Leah and Rachel Gen\_29:20, Gen\_29:21, Gen\_29:27, Gen\_29:28.  
 65 Reuben born of Leah  
 66 Simeon born of Leah Gen\_29:32-35.  
 67 Levi born of Leah  
 68 Judah born of Leah, Rachel, not bearing, gives Bilhah  
 69 Dan born of Bilhah  
 71 Naphtali born of Bilhah  
 Leah, not bearing, gives Zilpah Genesis 30:6-24.  
 72 Gad born of Zilpah

## Adam Clarke closes out Genesis 31

- 74 Asher born of Zilpah  
 78 Reuben at 13 finds the mandrakes  
 79 Issachar born of Leah  
 81 Zebulun born of Leah  
 82 Dinah born of Leah  
 86 Judah at 18 marries Shuah's daughter.  
 87 Er born, - 88 Onan, - 89 Shelah.  
 91 Joseph born of Rachel.  
 97 Jacob comes from Haran to Succoth and Shalem.  
 Dinah defiled, and the Shechemites destroyed.  
 98 Benjamin is born, and Rachel dies.  
 103 Beriah, fourth son of Asher, born.  
 105 Tamar married to Er - 106 to Onan.  
 108 Joseph, at seventeen, is carried into Egypt. Gen\_37:2.  
 109 Shelah, at twenty, not given to Tamar.  
 110 Pharez and Zarah born of Tamar, by Judah.  
 120 Isaac dies, aged 180 Gen\_35:28.  
 121 Joseph, at thirty, governor of Egypt Gen\_41:46.  
 123 Beriah, at twenty, marries.  
 125 Heber - 127 Malchiel - born to Beriah.  
 128 Pharez, at eighteen, marries.  
 129 Hezron - 130 Hamul - born to Pharez.  
 130 Benjamin, at thirty - two, has ten sons.  
 Jacob goes to Egypt Gen\_47:9.  
 147 and dies Gen\_47:28; Gen\_49:33.

\* Not placed in order of time, Genesis 38.

(57-71 = 14 years' service; 72-91 = 20 years' assistance)

"Our translation now is, Gen\_31:38 : This Twenty Years Have I Been With Thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. Gen\_31:39. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Gen\_31:40. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Gen\_31:41. Thus Have I Been Twenty Years In Thy House: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

"The alteration here recommended is this, Gen\_31:38 : During The One Twenty Years I Was With Thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams, etc., etc. Gen\_31:41. During The Other Twenty Years For Myself, In Thy House, I served, etc. The same distinction is expressed in Gen\_30:29 : Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me; i.e., how I behaved during the time I was with thee as thy servant, and how thy cattle fared during the time they were with me as thy friend.

"It must not be omitted that Archbishop Usher and Bishop Lloyd ascribe sons to Jacob very soon after his coming to Laban; nay, assert that he was married almost as soon as he came to Haran, instead of waiting seven years, as he most evidently did. And Mr. Jackson allows that some of the sons of Benjamin, who are expressly numbered as going into Egypt with Jacob, might be born in Egypt! From such distresses, and such contradictions, does the distinction of two sets of twenty years happily deliver us,"

Hoc temporis intervallo nemo concipere poterit tot res contingere potuisse.

Spinosa.

In such a short space of time, it is impossible that so many transactions could have taken place.

I shall leave this subject with chronologers and critics, and shall not attempt to decide on either opinion. That of Dr. Kennicott I think the most likely, and to it I have adapted the chronology in those cases to which it relates; but there are difficulties in both cases. See Clarke on Gen\_38:1 (note).

Do I want to keep this, edit it down, or remove it?

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### Morgan G. Campbell's Overview of Genesis 31

In the midst of Jacob's success the second divine communication came to him, commanding him to return to the land of his fathers and giving him the promise, "I will be with thee." Thus, after at least twenty years' absence, he set his face again toward home. The same cunning which had been manifested throughout is seen in the stealth with which he broke away from Laban.

Much may happen in twenty years. However, one thing can never happen. The wrongdoing of the past cannot be undone and Jacob started for home with fear, for Esau his brother was yet alive. Nevertheless, the call of God was supreme to him and he went obediently.

Rachel practiced deceit in that she stole the teraphim of her father. This led to one more meeting between Laban and Jacob. After heated controversy, they separated, having erected a stone or a heap and named it Mizpah. It was the symbol of suspicion and called on God to watch between them. It is really a sad spectacle of two men calling on God, not to ratify their comradeship, but to watch over them on behalf of each other in order that neither may wrong the other. The account of the connection between these two men has been full of interest, but its final message is that selfish partnership invariably issues in suspicion and separation.

Morgan G Campbell, *Exposition on Bible*; from e-Sword, Genesis 31.

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Carroll summarizes portions of the Genesis narrative very much like Edersheim does.

### B. H. Carroll Summarizes Genesis 31

Jacob's flock began to multiply beyond all human calculation. What follows? Laban's sons begin to talk about it: "This stranger has come up here. He did not have a thing when he came to our house. He is managing this business and getting all of our father's property. After a while there won't be anything to divide between us." Laban heard the boys talking and he agreed with them. When he would pass Jacob he would look at him sideways and would not speak to him. Jacob saw a storm was brewing. God came to him in a vision and said, "[Return to thy native land. It is time to go, twenty years have passed.](#)" Jacob did not know how his wives would stand on the matter. So he sent for them to come out to the field. He would not talk to them about it at the house. He stated the case fairly: how badly he had been treated, and wanted to know if the wives would stand by him and would go with him. They told him they would, and he might have known it. A man need never be afraid, if he is a good husband, of her not standing by him. Everybody else in the world may go back on him, but a good wife will be true. Laban was away on a three days' journey, so they decided to strike out without letting him know. And to add to it, Rachel went into Laban's house and stole his teraphim, little images of idolatry and divination. Just as Demetrius, the silversmith at Ephesus, made little models of the temple of Diana at Ephesus, so they could tie them around their necks or put them in their pockets and carry them around with them. Wherever they felt like worshipping, they could bow down before this little trinket, or as they now tie crosses around their necks, or when they get up they bow down before that cross or little image of the virgin Mary. Now, the question comes up, Why did Rachel steal the teraphim? That is what I want you to answer. I have my own opinion, but I don't want to force it on you now. One may answer that she was herself at heart an idolater, at least in part. Now, you may adopt that, if you want to, for your answer. It is not mine. They started at a good time. Laban was gone to that other flock, and they knew he would not be back for three days and that they would have three days the start. So they crossed the Euphrates and set out with many servants, cattle, sheep, goats, and quite a sprinkling of children and only four wives. It was a pretty big caravan. I don't know

## B. H. Carroll Summarizes Genesis 31

just which way Jacob went. He may have gone down to Damascus, and from Damascus to Gilead.

Three days passed before Laban heard of it. He came home after shearing his sheep and wanted to find his little gods, but he could not find them. Then he went out to look for his interests in that other herd, and lo, Jacob was gone. So he rallied a party, a flying column, without women or children, flocks, or other hindrances, on swift dromedaries, or horses – suppose dromedaries – and at the end of seven days he caught them near the mountains of Gilead. But the night before he caught up with them old Laban had an experience that he had never had before in his life. In that night Almighty God in a vision comes to him and says, "Laban, don't you speak either good or evil to Jacob. Keep your hands off." Unquestionably that is the only thing that prevented the killing of Jacob and taking the wives and children and that property – God's divine intervention. It sobered Laban very much. They had a meeting, and it was one of the most touching incidents in human history. Why some novelist has not brought it out I don't know. Old Laban said, "**You have stolen my goods, my cattle, my teraphim.**" Jacob knew nothing about these little gods and denied it, and said he had carried off only what was his own. Now comes Jacob's speech which I would like for you to be able to memorize. "**And Jacob answered and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that you have hotly pursued after me? Whereas you have felt about all my stuff, what have you found of all your household stuff? set it here before my brothers and your brothers, that they may judge betwixt us two. These twenty years have I been with you; your ewes and your she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of your flocks have I not eaten. That which was torn of the beasts I brought not unto you; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst you require it, whether stolen by day or by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes. These twenty years have I been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock; and you have changed my wages ten times. Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty. God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked you yesternight.**" Old Laban could not say a word to that. The promise that God had made to Jacob that he would be with him had been literally fulfilled. Laban then proposes that a covenant be made between them. They erected and consecrated a pillar, that Laban's crowd should never pass that pillar toward the Holy Land to do evil to Jacob, and Jacob's crowd could never pass that pillar going to Laban's country to do evil to him.

Now open wide your eyes and ears: "**And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha; but Jacob called it Galeed.**" The first is Aramaic, and the second word is Hebrew, and they mean exactly the same thing. Dr. Joseph Parker of England has preached a great sermon on the text entitled "Logomachy," i.e., strife about words. "**And Laban said, This heap is witness between me and you this day,**" and he called it Mizpah. Here I am going to tell you a fragment of a very touching story. In the first year of the war, just before a young man had started to the army, he paid very pointed attention to a lady, and they became engaged. During the war, the man, in passing the time in absence and with new faces, changed his feelings. His first letters were very loving and glowing. Then they began to lose the glow and diminish in length, and at last he quit writing. One evening just before a terrible battle in which many were killed, I was standing by the side of this man when one of the men who had been on a furlough brought a letter and handed it to him. He looked at the letter and said, "Pshaw! that is from that bothersome woman." He opened it and there wasn't a thing in it except a piece of colored paper, and on it was written in capital letters: "**Mizpah, THE LORD WITNESSES BETWEEN ME AND You.**"

He turned white as he looked at it. This woman knew the Bible story and knew that, where a covenant had been made in the name of God and God's name brought in, whoever violated that covenant not only wronged a human being but was guilty of sin toward God. His hand shook as he looked at it. He told me about it, and I said, "If you are a man, you go right to your tent and send her a humble, penitent letter." He said, "I won't do it." And I said, "Then watch out. That woman has quit appealing to you. She has appealed to God. Mizpah, the Lord witness between me and thee." He says, "I reckon I can take care of myself." The next day we went into battle. He was shot through the heart and fell on me. That saved my life. When the battle was over I went back and found him thoroughly dead, and in going through his pockets to send home to his family, I found that piece of paper and through the center of the word "Mizpah" the Yankee bullet had gone right into his heart.

## B. H. Carroll Summarizes Genesis 31

My reason for calling your attention to this is that he is a profane person who is irreverent toward God in anything. He is profane in the East who breaks an oath, and it is counted an everlasting degradation. Whenever you agree to anything in the name of God, you bring God in as a witness. Then you do what is said in another Old Testament book, "When I swear to my hurt, I will keep my word." Stick to your word. Notice when Jacob meets Laban it is diamond cut diamond, but when Jacob meets Esau, it is rapier meeting hammer.

From *An Interpretation of the English Bible*, by Dr. B.H. Carroll; from e-sword; Genesis 25:19-28:9. Updated.

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Alfred Edersheim wrote a book called *The Bible History, Old Testament*, which is very similar to Josephus, where he simply rewrites much of what is in the Bible, and adds in notes and comments as he deems to be relevant. This volume of the book is entitled *The World Before the Flood, and The History of the Patriarchs*.

This comes from CHAPTER 17 *Jacob's Vision at Bethel - His Arrival at the House of Laban - Jacob's double Marriage and Servitude - His Flight from Haran - Pursuit of Laban, and Reconciliation with Jacob* (GENESIS 28:10-31:55)

## Edersheim Summarizes Genesis 31

In his own peculiar fashion Laban, with pretended candor and liberality, now invited Jacob to name his wages for the future. But this time the deceiver was to be deceived. Basing his proposal on the fact that in the East the goats are mostly black and the sheep white, Jacob made what seemed the very modest request, that all that were spotted and speckled in the flock were to be his share. Laban gladly assented, taking care to make the selection himself, and to hand over Jacob's portion to his own sons, while Jacob was to tend the flocks of Laban. Finally, he placed three days' journey betwixt the flocks of Jacob and his own. But even so, Jacob knew how, by an artifice well understood in the East, to circumvent his father-in-law, and to secure that, though ordinarily "the ringstraked, speckled, and spotted" had been an exception, now they were the most numerous and the strongest of the flocks. And the advantage still remained on the side of Jacob, when Laban again and again reversed the conditions of the agreement. (Genesis 31:7) This clearly proved that Jacob's artifice could not have been the sole nor the real reason of his success. In point of fact, immediately after the first agreement with Laban, the angel of God had spoken to Jacob in a dream, assuring him that, even without any such artifices, God would right him in his cause with Laban. (Genesis 31:12, 13) Once more, then, Jacob acted, as when in his father's house. He "made haste;" he would not wait for the Lord to fulfill his promise; he would use his own means - and employ his cunning and devices - to accomplish the purpose of God, instead of committing his cause unto Him. And as formerly he had had the excuse of his father's weakness and his brother's violence, so now it might seem as if he were purely on his defense, and as if his deceit were necessary for his protection - the more so as he resorted to his device only in spring, not in autumn,\* so that the second produce of the year belonged chiefly to his father-in-law.

\* Thus we understand Genesis 30:41, 42. The spring-produce is supposed to be stronger than that of autumn.

The consequences proved very similar to those which followed his deceit in his father's house. The rapidly growing wealth of Jacob during the six years of this bargain so raised the enmity and envy of Laban and of his sons, that Jacob must have felt it necessary for his own safety to remove, even if he had not received Divine direction to that effect. But this put an end to all hesitancy; and having communicated his purpose to his wives, and secured their cordial consent, he left secretly, while Laban was away at the sheep-shearing, which would detain him some time. Three days elapsed before Laban was informed of Jacob's flight. He immediately pursued after him, "with his brethren," his anger being further excited by the theft of his household gods, or "teraphim," which Rachel, unknown, of course, to Jacob, had taken with her. On the seventh day Laban and his relatives overtook Jacob and his caravan in Mount Gilead. The consequences might have been terrible, if God had not interposed to warn Laban in a dream, not to injure nor to hurt Jacob. Being further foiled in his search after the missing teraphim, through the cunning of his own daughter, Laban, despite his hypocritical

## Edersheim Summarizes Genesis 31

professions of how affectionate their leave-taking might have been if Jacob had not "stolen away," stood convicted of selfishness and unkindness. In fact, if the conduct of Jacob, even in his going away, had been far from straightforward, that of Laban was of the most unprincipled kind. However, peace was restored between them, and a covenant made, in virtue of which neither party was to cross for hostile purposes the memorial pillar which they erected, and to which Laban gave a Chaldee and Jacob a Hebrew name, meaning "the heap of witness."

Hypocritically as in the mouth of Laban the additional name of Mizpah sounds, which he gave to this pillar, it is a very significant designation to mark great events in our lives, especially our alliances and our undertakings. For Mizpah means "watchtower," and the words which accompanied the giving of this name were:  
 "Jehovah watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."

From [http://philologos.org/\\_eb-bhot/vol\\_I/contents.htm](http://philologos.org/_eb-bhot/vol_I/contents.htm) accessed .

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When I study the dispute between Jacob and Laban, some lyrics from a song come to me:

### One too many mornings (Bob Dylan)

It's a restless hungry feeling  
 That don't mean no one no good  
 When ev'rything I'm a-sayin'  
 You can say it just as good  
 You're right from your side  
 I'm right from mine  
 We're both just one too many mornings  
 An' a thousand miles behind

Lyrics from <https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/663015/>

A wonderful Beau Brummels rendition of this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5u-egmNBww4>  
 I guess this reveals me for the aging hippie I once was?

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## Addendum

One of the points which I have made many times is, most of us relate to Jacob more than we do to Abraham. Although Abraham was not a perfect man, he had a great deal more faith than most of us have. Jacob, on the other hand, the schemer, the manipulator, the man who wants to do everything his own way—well, that's more like we are.

J. Vernon McGee made some similar observations: *We are in a section of the Word of God which God has given to minister to our needs. It deals with a man who is a very sinful man in many ways and a man whom God would not give up. You and I can take courage from this. The Lord will never give us up as long as we keep coming back to Him. He will always receive us. If He will take a fellow like Jacob and a fellow like I am, He will take you, my friend.*<sup>943</sup>

Rom 8:28 **And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose.** (ESV, capitalized)

### Romans 8:28 in the Life of Jacob

1. We have known from day 1 that Jacob was far from being a perfect man.
2. We have seen him a number of right things in a wrong way.
3. That Jacob was concerned about his spiritual heritage was a good thing; that he got his twin brother Esau to trade his spiritual heritage as the firstborn for a bowl of red lentil soup was the wrong way to do it.
4. That Jacob got the blessing of his father illegitimately through deception was clearly a violation of morality. It was good that Jacob was concerned about receiving his father's blessing, and receiving the spiritual heritage of his family, but it was wrong for him to do this as an adult, as influenced by his mother, with the clear intent to deceive his own father.
5. As a result, his brother Esau vowed to kill him; and his mother quickly arranged for Jacob to go live with Laban.
6. All of this was quite a mess—of Jacob's own doing—and yet God will still bless Jacob and all Israel through this mess. Even though his mother, Rebekah, influenced Jacob, he is clearly an adult at this point in time.
7. Insofar as we know, Jacob never saw his mother again. His mother Rebekah had too much influence over him, and convinced Jacob, as an adult, to deceive his own father. His spiritual inheritance was important; but trying to take it by deception was going at it the wrong way.
8. There has been a great deal of jealousy in Esau's soul toward Jacob; and when Jacob stole his blessing by deceiving Isaac, their father, that was the last straw. Esau was filled with hatred for his brother. Esau vowed to kill him.
9. As a result, Jacob had to leave the Land of Promise temporarily. The reason given was for him to find a wife from his family, who worshiped Y<sup>e</sup>howah; but the real reason was to get him out of town and away from Esau, who would have killed him.
10. God put Jacob face to face with a man who was every bit the conniver and manipulator that Jacob was—his Uncle Laban. Jacob learned what it was like to work for a man who was only out for himself.
11. One of the things that Laban did to Jacob was to trick him on his wedding night. Jacob was in love with Rachel, but Laban saw to it that her older sister, Leah, was delivered to Jacob's bed as his bride. The next morning, because they cohabited, Jacob was married to Leah.
12. Since Jacob loved Rachel, he worked an additional 7 years for Laban, in order to marry her. However, most of his sons would be born by Leah.
13. The line of Jesus Christ, the line of promise, would actually go through Jacob and Leah.
14. Because Rachel appeared to be infertile at first, Jacob fathered sons by the two sisters' maids. This results in a healthier bloodline, having 4 different women as the mothers of Jacob's 13 or more children (he had 12 sons along with other daughters besides Dinah, but they are never named). These 12 sons would become the 12 tribes of Israel.
15. It will become apparent that Rachel is not as strong as her sister Leah in giving birth, and she will die giving birth to her second son. God, by withholding children from her, gave Jacob and Rachel a lengthy period of time together as husband and wife.
16. All this time, while Jacob is in Paddan-aram, God is blessing Esau greatly, so that his anger toward Jacob is subsiding.
17. So now, in leaving Laban's household and returning to the Land of Promise, Jacob has 2 wives and 2 mistresses; he has 12 sons who will become the 12 tribes of Israel; he is being guided by God (God told

<sup>943</sup> From [https://archive.org/stream/01\\_Genesis/01-GENESIS\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/01_Genesis/01-GENESIS_djvu.txt) (Genesis 31); accessed October 28, 2017.

## Romans 8:28 in the Life of Jacob

him to leave the land of Laban); and Esau (sorry to give this away) will no longer be filled with hatred toward Jacob.

18. Furthermore, Jacob and Laban enter into a non-aggression pact.
19. All of these things further the plan of God, and are better for Jacob as well, despite the many missteps that Jacob has made. God has greatly blessed Jacob, in spite of himself.

Jacob, in his life and actions, has put himself at odds with God on many occasions; yet God will overrule Jacob's actions over and over again.

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## Is there any evidence that Rachel's stealing the idols turned her around?

1. I suggested earlier that Rachel stole the idols—perhaps revealing a lack of spiritual growth—but all the came after may have turned her around. That is, she may have become more spiritually mature.
2. The one reason we might assume that she became spiritually mature is, Joseph stands out from the other sons. He seems to have some sense of right and wrong, whereas his brothers do not (see Genesis 34 38).
3. What is unique about Joseph? He would have been raised by Rachel almost exclusively for the first 8 or 10 years of his life. This is an experience not enjoyed by his other brothers.
4. Therefore, we might reasonably assume that Rachel's early training of the young man was fruitful; and that she made a solid impression on him.
5. The second reason that Rachel may have turned more toward God is, in this chapter, she will steal her fathers idols, her own husband will agree that the thief ought to be executed; and she comes very close to being found out.
6. Often, when a person faces possible death, it changes their thinking somewhat. Sometimes, pressure like Rachel was under, causes a person rethink portions of their life. How many veterans in a wartime situation are almost killed, and, as a result, they consider God more fully? How many in the midst of battle, having never prayed before, suddenly pray to God?
7. Neither of these two things tell us that, undeniably, Rachel grew spiritually; but her spiritual growth would be consistent with the facts of the Genesis narrative.

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## Jacob at Haran; or, The disciplinary retributions of life (by W. Roberts)

- I. THE RETRIBUTIONS THAT MARKED THE LIFE OF JACOB.
  1. Jacob had sought by fraud, position and possession in his father's house. He is now an exile from his father's house—an outcast and a wanderer.
  2. He who had defrauded Esau, is now himself defrauded by Laban.
  3. He who had deceived his father was afterwards himself deceived by his sons.
  4. Another form of retribution that awaited Jacob, was the having to encounter and deal with the brother whom he had so cruelly and foully wronged.
- II. THE DISCIPLINARY CHARACTER OF THE RETRIBUTIONS THAT MARKED THE LIFE OF JACOB. We are slow to learn the lessons of a godly life by precept. God therefore teaches us them by experience. Jacob's character did certainly advance under the discipline.

## Jacob at Haran; or, The disciplinary retributions of life (by W. Roberts)

1. At Haran he applied himself at once to honest industry, instead of having recourse to artifice and cunning.
2. A spirit of magnanimity marked many of his dealings with his uncle, contrasting favourably with his earlier indications of self-seeking.

*The Biblical Illustrator*; by Joseph S. Exell; Pub. 1900; from E-sword; Genesis 31:22–42.

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I should really edit this down.

## The Covenant and Other Related Doctrines (from College Press Bible Study)

6) The Treaty (Genesis 31:45–55). “Two traditions appear to have been combined here: 1. A formal pact regulating the frontier between Laban and Jacob i.e., between Aram and Israel, Genesis 31:52, together with an explanation of the name Gilead (Galed). 2. A private agreement concerning Laban’s daughters, wives of Jacob, Genesis 31:50, together with an explanation of the name Mizpah, ‘watch–post,’ where a stele is erected. On the other hand it is possible that we have not here two traditions but simply explanations of the traditional composite name Mizpah of Gilead, ‘watch–post of Gilead’; the place is known from Judges 11:29 and lies south of the Jabbok in Transjordan” (JB, 53 n.). Laban proposed that they cut a covenant and let it be for a witness between them (Genesis 31:44). Jacob assented to the proposal at once, and the two proceeded to ratify the covenant. (7) The Cairn of Witness. “The way in which this covenant was ratified was by a heap of stones being laid in a circular pile, to serve as seats, and in the center of this circle a large one was set up perpendicularly for an altar. It is probable that a sacrifice was first offered, and then that the feast of reconciliation was partaken of by both parties, seated on the stones around it (cf. Genesis 31:54). To this day heaps of stones, which have been used as memorials, are found abundantly in the region where this transaction took place” (CECG, 212). Jacob proceeded at once to furnish a practical proof of his assent to his father–in–law’s proposal, by erecting a stone as a memorial and calling on his relatives also (‘his brethren,’ as in Genesis 31:23, by whom Laban and the kinsmen who came with him are indicated, as Genesis 31:54 shows) to gather stones into a heap, thus forming a table, as is briefly related in Genesis 31:46 b, for the covenant meal (Genesis 31:54). This stone–heap (cairn) was called Jegar–Sahadutha by Laban, and Galeed by Jacob (Genesis 31:47). “Jegar–sahadutha is the exact Aramaic equivalent of Galeed, ‘cairn of witness’” (JB, 53, n.): this incident, of course gave occasion to the name Gilead, the name applied to the mountainous region eastward of Argob (see Josephus, Antiquities, I, 19, 11). (It should be understood that the setting up of the stone–pillar by Jacob as a witness of the covenant about to be formed (Genesis 31:52) was a different transaction from the piling up of the stone–heap next referred to: cf. Genesis 28:18, Joshua 24:26–27). “Very strangely the critics, who are intent upon proving that two documents giving two recensions of the event are woven together, here hit upon the pillar or monolith, and the heap or cairn, and claim these two as one of the things that prove their point. Instead of pointing to a double recension or to two authors this merely points to the fact that Jacob was willing to go the limit to keep peace and harmony, as he had always been doing. The critics’ argument is a non sequitur. All the rest of their so–called proof is of the same sort and too flimsy to refute, Genesis 31:47. Here Moses inserts a notice to the effect that Laban and Jacob each gave a name to the cairn, and each man in his native tongue, that of Laban being Aramaic and that of Jacob Hebrew. Nothing indicates that this was a later insertion. Why might not Moses consider it a matter worthy of record that in Mesopotamia Aramaic prevailed, whereas in Canaan Hebrew, perhaps the ancient Canaanite language, was spoken? The exactness of his observation is established by this definite bit of historical information. The two names are not absolutely identical, as is usually claimed, though the difference is slight. Jegar–sahadutha means ‘heap of testimony,’ gal’ed means ‘heap of witness’ or witnessing heap. For ‘testimony’ is an abstract noun, ‘witness’ is a personal noun or name of a person. We observe, therefore, that at the beginning of their history the nation Israel came of a stock that spoke Aramaic but abandoned the Aramaic for the Hebrew. After the Captivity the nation, strange to say, veered from Hebrew back to Aramaic” (EG, 853, 854).

## The Covenant and Other Related Doctrines (from College Press Bible Study)

(8) The Purport of the Covenant, Genesis 31:50–52, was twofold: (1) Jacob swears that he will not maltreat Laban's daughters, nor even marry other wives besides these (i.e., Leah and Rachel). "The stipulation against taking other wives is basic to many cuneiform marriage documents" (ABG, 248). Leupold thinks that "both these cases mentioned by Laban are in themselves harsh and unjust slanders." "Jacob had never given the least indication of being inclined to treat his wives harshly. Gentleness and goodness are characteristic of Jacob. Besides, as the account reads, Jacob had more wives already than he had ever desired. He apparently recognized the evils of bigamy sufficiently in his own home" (EG, 856). (2) Neither of the two was to pass the stone-heap and memorial-stone with a hostile intention towards the other. ("But they may pass over it for purposes of trade" (SC, 187). Note Genesis 31:52—The heap was Jacob's idea, now Laban appropriates what Jacob had proposed as if the entire transaction had been his very own. Moreover, Laban bound himself never to pass over the heap which he had erected as his witness, whereas Jacob was required to swear that he would never cross the pillar and the pile, both of which were witnesses on his part. (Laban was undoubtedly even yet a very suspicious person). "That I will not pass over. Here this covenant thought is purely negative, growing out of a suspicious nature, and securing a safeguard against mutual injuries; properly a theocratic separation" (Lange, 544). This treaty seems to have had even more extensive significance, however: as Morgenstern writes: "Mizpah, a secondary name for this heap of stones, meaning 'watchpost,' 'place of lookout.' Actually the district was called Gilead, while Mizpah (Mizpeh) was probably the name of the particular spot where the covenant was thought to have been made. It probably lay close to the boundary line between Syria and Gilead. It was the site of the covenant between Laban the Aramean and Jacob the Israelite by which the boundary line between the two peoples was fixed. Note the compact entered into between Syria and Israel, probably in Ahab's time; the hegemony of Israel in the affairs of the several little states of Western Asia seems to have been nominally acknowledged by Syria, 1 Ki., ch. 20" (JIBG, in loco). Concerning the location of the site of Gilead and Mizpah, it seems evident that we are not to understand this to be the mountain range to the south of the Jabbok, the present Jebel Jelaad, or Jebel es Salt. "The name Gilead has a much more comprehensive signification in the Old Testament; and the mountains to the south of the Jabbok are called in Deut. 3:12 the half of Mount Gilead; the mountains to the north of the Jabbok, the Jebel-Ajlun, forming the other half. In this chapter the name is used in the broader sense, and refers primarily to the northern half of the mountains (above the Jabbok); for Jacob did not cross the Jabbok till afterwards, Genesis 32:23–24" (K–D, 300). It is held by some that the words, "and Mizpah, for he said," etc., are a later explanatory interpolation. "But there is not sufficient ground even for this, since Galeed and Mizpah are here identical in fact, both referring to the stone heap as well as to the pillar. Laban prays specifically to Jehovah, to watch that Jacob should not afflict his daughters; especially that he should not deprive them of their acquired rights, of being the ancestress of Jehovah's covenant people. From this hour, according to the prayer, Jehovah looks down from the heights of Gilead, as the representative of his rights, and watches that Jacob should keep his word to his daughters, even when across the Jordan. But now, as the name Gilead has its origin in some old sacred tradition, so has the name Mizpah also. It is not to be identified with the later cities bearing that name, with the Mizpah of Jephthah (Judges 11:11; Judges 11:34), or the Mizpah of Gilead (Judges 11:29), or Ramoth–Mizpah (Joshua 13:26), but must be viewed as the family name which has spread itself through many daughters all over Canaan" (Lange, CDHCG, 544). (Note disagreement with K–D quoted above). "Laban, forewarned by God not to injure Jacob, made a covenant with his son-in-law; and a heap of stones was erected as a boundary between them, and called Galeed (the heap of witness) and Mizpah (watch-tower). As in later times, the fortress on these heights of Gilead became the frontier post of Israel against the Aramaic tribe that occupied Damascus, so now the same line of heights became the frontier between the nation in its youth and the older Aramaic tribe of Mesopotamia. As now, the confines of two Arab tribes are marked by the rude cairn or pile of stones erected at the boundary of their respective territories, so the pile of stones and the tower or pillar, erected by the two tribes of Jacob and Laban, marked that the natural limit of the range of Gilead should be their natural limit also" (OTH, 102). (Cf. the various Mizpahs, or Mizpehs, mentioned in the O.T., e.g., Joshua 11:3; Joshua 15:38; Judges 10:17; Judges 20:1; 1Samuel 22:3 : it seems that the name might have been given to any high point.) Skinner's treatment of the Gilead geographical problem is based on the presupposition that the account embodies "ethnographic reminiscences in which Jacob and Laban were not private individuals, but represented Hebrews and Arameans respectively." He goes on to say: "The theory mostly favored by critical historians is that the Arameans are those of Damascus, and that the situation reflected is that of the Syrian wars which raged from

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c. 860 to c 770 B.C. Gunkel has, however, pointed out objections to this assumption; and has given strong reasons for believing that the narratives refer to an earlier date than 860. The story reads more like the record of a loose understanding between neighboring and on the whole friendly tribes, than of a formal treaty between two highly organized states like Israel and Damascus; and it exhibits no trace of the intense national animosity which was generated during the Syrian wars. In this connexion, Meyer's hypothesis that in the original tradition Laban represented the early unsettled nomads of the eastern desert acquires a new interest. Considering the tenacity with which such legends cling to a locality, there is no difficulty in supposing that in this case the tradition goes back to some prehistoric settlement of territorial claims between Hebrews and migratory Arameans" (ICCG, 403, 404). It should be noted here that the critical tendency so prevalent soon after the turn of the present century to interpret the outstanding personal names occurring in the patriarchal narratives as tribal rather than individual names has been all but abandoned in recent years. On the whole, this supposition (largely a priori on the part of the critics) has been pretty thoroughly "exploded" by archaeological discoveries. There is no longer any doubt that the patriarchs were real historical personages, (The student who wishes to delve into the irreconcilable analysis of the early twentieth-century critics should make a study of the classic work on this subject, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, by William Henry Green, onetime Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary. This book, first published in 1895, is now out of print, of course. Hence it goes unnoticed and even unknown, either through ignorance or by design, in present-day theological seminaries. It may be procured, however, from secondhand book stores, or rescued from out-of-the-way places on the dusty shelves of these same seminary libraries.) We now close this phase of our subject with the following quotation from Leupold: "We have nothing certain as to the location of the heap called 'Galed' or 'Mizpah' in Mount Gilead. 'Mizpah' itself is a rather general term: there were many points of eminence in the land which could serve as 'watch-stations.' We personally do not believe that the Mizpah located in Jebel Ajlun is far enough to the north. We can only be sure of this, that according to chapter 32 it must have lain to the north of the River Jabbok" (EG, 859).

(9) The Mizpah Benediction, Genesis 31:49. "Mizpah (Mizpeh), watchtower,' . . . an unknown site in the N. highlands of the Jordan overlooking the Jabbok, where Jacob and Laban witnessed their covenant by erecting a cairn and pronouncing words now known as 'the Mizpah benediction,' Genesis 31:45–52" (HBD, 450). J. Vernon McGee (*Going Through Genesis*, 42) has an interesting comment on this point, as follows: "Verse 49 has been made into a benediction which many church groups use habitually. This is unfortunate for it does not have that sort of derivation. It actually is a truce between two crooks that each will no longer try to get the better of the other. The pile of stones at Mizpah was a boundary line between Laban and Jacob. Each promised not to cross over on the other's side. In other words Jacob would work one side of the street and Laban would take the other. Each had but little confidence in the other. Surely the Mizpah benediction has been misplaced and misapplied." Certainly these statements deserve serious consideration.

(10) The Covenant Oath, Genesis 31:53. "Although Laban proposed to swear by the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the latter might include idols, so Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, viz., the true God" (SC, 187). On Genesis 31:49, "God is called as a witness so that if either Jacob or Laban breaks the agreement the LORD will enforce the covenant" (HSB, 53). Genesis 31:50—"no man is with us"—i.e., "no one but God only can be judge and witness between us, since we are to be so widely separated" (Lange, 544). Of the terms of the covenant "the memorial was to serve as a witness, and the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father (Terah), would be umpire between them. To this covenant, in which Laban, according to his polytheistic views, placed the God of Abraham upon the same level with the God of Nahor and Terah, Jacob swore by 'the Fear of Isaac' (Genesis 31:42), the God who was worshipped by his father with sacred awe" (K–D, 300). The verb judge, Genesis 31:53, is plural, "either because Laban regarded the Elohim of Nahor as different from the Elohim of Abraham, or because, though acknowledging only one Elohim, he viewed him as maintaining several and distinct relations to the persons named. Laban here invokes his own hereditary Elohim, the Elohim of Abraham's father, to guard his rights and interests under the newly-formed covenant; while Jacob in his adjuration appeals to the Elohim of Abraham's son" (PCG, 387). "In conclusion Laban offers his most solemn adjuration, stronger than Genesis 31:50 b; for God is called upon not only to 'witness' but to 'judge.' Besides, he is called by the solemn title, 'God of Abraham.' In fact, another god is

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invoked, 'the god of Nahor.' If Genesis 31:29 and Genesis 31:42 are compared, it seems most likely that two different deities are under consideration; the true God, and Nahor's, that is also Laban's idol. The plural of the verb 'judge' therefore points to two different gods, So the polytheist Laban speaks. The more gods to help bind the pact, the better it is sealed, thinks Laban. Without directly correcting Laban or his statement of the case, Jacob swears by the true God under the same as that used in Genesis 31:42, the Fear (i.e., the object of fear, or reverence) of his father Isaac. Had the renegade Laban perhaps meant to identify his own god with the true God of Abraham? And is Jacob's statement of His name an attempt to ward off such an identification? This is not impossible" (Leupold, EG, 857, 858). Skinner writes: "Whether a polytheistic differentiation of the two gods is attributed to Laban can hardly be determined." Genesis 31:52—"this heap be witness." "Objects of nature were frequently thus spoken of. But over and above there was a solemn appeal to God; and it is observable that there was a marked difference in the religious sentiments of the two. Laban spoke of the God of Abraham and Nahor, their common ancestors; but Jacob, knowing that idolatry had crept into that branch of the family, swore by the Fear of Isaac. It is thought by many that Laban comprehended, under the peculiar phraseology that he employed, all the objects of worship in Terah's family, in Mesopotamia; and in that view we can discern a very intelligible reason for Jacob's omission of the name of Abraham, and swearing only by 'the Fear of his father Isaac,' who had never acknowledged any deity but 'the Lord.' They who have one God should have one heart; they who are agreed in religion should endeavor to agree in everything else" (Jamieson, CECG, 212). "The monotheism of Laban seems gliding into dualism; they may judge, or 'judge.' He corrects himself by adding the name of their common father, i.e., Terah. From his alien and wavering point of view he seeks for sacredness in the abundance of words. But Jacob swears simply and distinctly by the God whom Isaac feared, and whom even his father-in-law, Laban, should reverence and fear. Laban, indeed, also adheres to the communion with Jacob in his monotheism, and intimates that the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor designate two different religious directions from a common source or ground" (Lange, 544). "The erection of the pillar was a joint act of the two parties, in which Laban proposes, Jacob performs, and all take part. The God of Abraham, Nahor, and Terah. This is an interesting acknowledgement that their common ancestor Terah and his descendants down to Laban still acknowledged the true God, even in their idolatry. Jacob swears by the Fear of Isaac, perhaps to rid himself of any error that had crept into Laban's notions of God and his worship" (Murphy, MG, 407).

(11) The Covenant of Reconciliation, Genesis 31:54–55, was now ratified by the common sacrifice and the common meal. Jacob "then offered sacrifices upon the mountain, and invited his relatives to eat, i.e., to partake of a sacrificial meal, and seal the covenant by a feast of love" (K–D, 300). "We view Jacob's sacrifice as one of thanksgiving that this last serious danger that threatened from Laban is removed. We cannot conceive of Jacob as joining with the idolater Laban in worship and sacrifice. Consequently, we hesitate to identify 'the eating of bread' with the partaking of the sacrificial feast, unless the 'kinsmen' here are to be regarded only as the men on Jacob's side. . . . In that event the kinsmen are to be thought of as having the same mind as Jacob on questions of religious practices. But the summons to eat bread might also signalize that the transactions between Jacob and Laban are concluded. The events may well have consumed an entire day, and so the night had to be spent in the same place" (Leupold, EG, 858). According to Rashi, Jacob slaughtered animals for the feast; however, Rashi "apparently insists that it was not a sacrificial meal" (SC, 187). Whitelaw holds that "brethren" here referred to "Laban's followers, who may have withdrawn to a distance during the interview," and hence had to be "called to eat bread" (PCG, 887). The sacrificial meal later became an integral part of the Hebrew ritual (cf. Exodus 24:3–8; Exodus 29:27–28; Leviticus 10:14–15). "At all events, the covenant–meal forms a thorough and final conciliation. Laban's reverence for the God of his fathers, and his love for his daughters and grandsons, present him once more in the most favorable aspect of his character, and thus we take our leave of him. We must notice, however, that before the entrance of Jacob he had made little progress in his business. Close, narrow-hearted views, are as really the cause of the curse, as its fruits" (Lange, 545). The following morning Laban and his retinue departed and returned "to his place," that is, Paddan-aram (Genesis 28:2).

The following summarization of this section, by Cornfeld (AtD, 87–88), is excellent: "Laban pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the highlands of Gilead, east of Jordan. What troubled him more than

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the loss of his daughters, their husband and livestock, was the loss of the teraphim. He demanded indignantly, 'But why did you steal my gods?' As Rachel was unwell, religious custom prevented her father from forcing her off the saddle, and the theft remained unexposed. Laban and Jacob apparently agreed to maintain an amicable relationship on the basis of a new covenant. They exchanged blessings, made the covenant and set up a cairn and pillar ('matzeba') as a witness to their sincerity; the inanimate object was naively thought to 'oversee' the covenant. They swore that neither would transgress the boundary to harm the other. This patriarchal clan covenant seems to reflect either a remote separation of the clans, or the story may serve to justify territorial status of later times, when the Israelite and Aramean peoples upheld a treaty of amity and marked the boundary between them. . . . They invoked their respective ancestral gods to judge between them: 'The God of Abraham' and 'The God of Nahor.' Jacob also swore by a special epithet of God: the 'Fear of his father Isaac' (meaning, according to the interpretation, 'The Kinsman of Isaac'). This devotion to the God of one's father is one of the features of patriarchal religion that stemmed from the pre-Hebraic Semitic past. . . . An especially impressive conclusion of the compact was the animal sacrifice offered, and a meal at which the solemn covenant act was performed: to 'cut a covenant' (the rite of sacrifice) and to 'eat bread' remained a familiar idiom of Israelite religious symbols. In eating and drinking, life is perfectly symbolized, and gains profound religious connotation. This is the root of the Jewish and Christian practice of grace before meals, for eating is the epitome of man's dependence upon God and other men. The central ceremonies of Judaism, such as the Passover, and the Eucharist of Christianity, are reminiscent of such very ancient Hebrew cultic practices. The covenant between Jacob and Laban was of course a parity treaty made between equals, unlike the covenants between God as Lord and the Patriarchs, His servants." Thus we can readily grasp the idea of the relation of the eating of the bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine of the Lord's Supper to the spiritual life of the participant. Through the ministry of thanksgiving, commemoration, meditation, and prayer, the Christian does actually—and not in any magical way, either—effect the deepening of his spiritual life (cf. 1Corinthians 10:16–21; 1Corinthians 11:20–30; Matthew 26:26–29).

Concerning the alleged "sources" of the account of the Covenant of Gilead, we suggest the following: "There can be no doubt that Genesis 31:49–50 bear the marks of a subsequent insertion. But there is nothing in the nature of his interpolation to indicate a compilation of the history from different sources, That Laban, when making this covenant, should have spoken of the future treatment of his daughters, is a thing so natural, that there would have been something strange in the omission. And it is not less suitable to the circumstances, that he calls upon the God of Jacob, i.e., Jehovah, to watch in this affair [Genesis 31:49]. And apart from the use of the name Jehovah, which is perfectly suitable here, there is nothing whatever to point to a different source; to say nothing of the fact that the critics themselves cannot agree as to the nature of the source supposed" (K–D, 300, n.).

Stones were used for different purposes in ancient times. (1) Large stones were set up as memorials, that is, to commemorate some especially significant event (Genesis 28:18; Genesis 31:45; Genesis 35:14; Joshua 4:9; 1Samuel 7:12). Such stones were usually consecrated by anointing with oil (Genesis 28:18). A similar practice existed in heathen countries, and "by a singular coincidence these stones were described in Phoenicia by a name very similar to Beth-el, viz., baetylia. The only point of resemblance between the two consists in the custom of anointing" (UBD, 1047). (2) Heaps of stones were piled up on various occasions; e.g., the making of a treaty (Genesis 31:46), or over the grave of a notorious offender (Joshua 7:26; Joshua 8:29; 2Samuel 18:17); such heaps often attained a great size from the custom of each passer-by's adding a stone. (3) "That the worship of stones prevailed among the heathen nations surrounding Palestine, and was from them borrowed by apostate Israelites, appears from Isaiah 57:6 (comp. Leviticus 26:1). 'The smooth stones of the stream' are those which the stream has washed smooth with time, and rounded into a pleasing shape. 'In Carthage such stones were called abbadires; and among the ancient Arabs the asnam, or idols, consisted for the most part of rude blocks of stone of this description. . . . Stone worship of this kind had been practiced by the Israelites before the Captivity, and their heathenish practices had been transmitted to the exiles in Babylon' (Delitzsch, Com. in loc.)" (UBD, 1047). The notion expressed above that the pillar (matzeba) was per se naively thought to "oversee" the covenant (Genesis 31:52) in Gilead is surely proved erroneous by the fact that the true God and other ancestral gods were immediately invoked to do this witnessing (Genesis 31:53). We can see no

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reason for assuming animism or personification in this incident.

Hurrian evidences. We have already made note of different details of the transactions between Jacob and Laban which reflect details of Hurrian law. There are many instances of such correspondences. The following is a summary of many of these. “Hurrian customs are particularly in evidence in the record of Jacob.—Genesis 29:18–19, gaining a wife in return for service: in Nuzu a man became a slave to gain a slave wife, though Jacob was no slave, Genesis 31:15 to Genesis 31:15, Laban’s daughters objected to being ‘reckoned as foreign women,’ for native women had a higher standing.—Genesis 31:38—cf. how in Nuzu shepherds were tried for illegally slaughtering the sheep. Particularly, Jacob’s whole relation to Laban suggests a Hurrian ‘adoption’ contract: Genesis 29:18, Jacob got daughters in return for work, becoming a ‘son’; Genesis 31:50, he was to marry no other wives, as in Nuzu adoptions; Genesis 31:43, Laban had a claim over Jacob’s children, though God intervened to abrogate the custom, Genesis 31:24; Genesis 31:1, Laban’s sons were worried about heirship, while Genesis 31:31, Jacob claimed his wages were changed, perhaps a problem of heirs born after Jacob’s adoption, who were supposed to receive their percentage; and Genesis 31:15, Rachel stole the teraphim (household idols, Genesis 31:30, cf. 1Samuel 19:13, Zechariah 10:2, though she served God too, Genesis 30:24, and Jacob knew nothing of them, Genesis 31:32, and opposed idolatry, Genesis 35:2), which in Nuzu meant a legal claim on the property and which Laban was justified in demanding back for his own sons, Genesis 31:30. Knowledge of such Hurrian parallels is valuable to explain (though not necessarily excuse) the patriarchal actions, and to confirm the accuracy of the Biblical records” (OHH, 45).

Here the first phase of Jacob’s return to the land of his father comes to an end. Early in the morning of the day which followed the establishing of the Covenant in Gilead, Laban, after kissing his daughters’ sons and the daughters themselves, and blessing them (cf. Genesis 24:60, Genesis 28:1), set out on his journey “unto his place,” that is, his home, Paddan-aram (cf. Genesis 18:33, Genesis 30:25), and Jacob with his household went on his way to his home, Beersheba. (It is interesting to note that apparently Laban did not kiss Jacob on taking final leave of him as he did on first meeting him, cf. Genesis 29:13).

*The College Press Bible Study Textbook Series; (a compilation of many commentaries); from e-sword; Genesis 31:45–55.*

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You may or may not find this worthwhile to plow through. My primary problem is, I cannot assign Jacob to 40 years working with Laban.

## Jacob’s Age (from the NEV Commentary)

Consider the following: At the end of two years’ famine (Gen. 45:6) Joseph would have been between 39-40 (Gen. 41:46), and Jacob was 130 (Gen. 47:9). Joseph was thus born when Jacob was 90-91, and this is dated just prior to the six years that he served Laban for his cattle (Gen. 30:25). If, to that point of time, he had been only fourteen years with Laban, it would mean that he fled from Esau to seek a wife when he was about 77! Assuming that he first worked seven years for Leah, his first son would not be born before he was 85; and if Joseph were born when he was 90, he had eleven sons and at least one daughter in five years! In that case, also, he had children and grandchildren to the number of sixty-six in the short space of forty-five years. At that rate, Judah, the fourth son could not have been born before he was 88, and would have been about 42 when the events of Genesis 38 took place, or 48, if Jacob married Leah before the completion of the seven years that he worked for Laban to obtain her.

Esau visited Ishmael and married his daughter after Jacob left for Haran at the age of 77, though Ishmael died when Jacob was 63 (Gen. 25:17). Isaac married at 40 (Gen. 25:20). Jacob was born twenty years later (Gen. 25:26). Ishmael, thirteen years older than Isaac died at 137 (Gen. 25:17). These problems are solved if we can add a further twenty years to Jacob’s sojourn with Laban, making his age 57 when he fled from Esau, though still 97 when he left Laban. This would allow for forty years with Laban, the period of probation or trial. And that forty years seem to be provided for in Jacob’s conversation with Laban. He makes reference to two periods of

## Jacob's Age (from the NEV Commentary)

"twenty years" each (cp. vv. 38,41). The first twenty years, he was with Laban as a friend: "I have been with thee." The second twenty years, he was there as a covenant servant: "I have been twenty years in thy house; I served thee..." The first fourteen years he served Laban for his two daughters; the following twenty years, he was with Laban in his capacity as shepherd; the final six years, he served him for his cattle. The first fourteen years, and the last six years, represented twenty years of servitude; the intervening twenty years he was employed as a shepherd, during which Laban's flocks remarkably increased.

The Hebrew provides some warrant for this interpretation which also disposes of the difficulties mentioned above. The Hebrew zeh (rendered this: v. 38, and thus v. 41) when used in conjunction one with the other is often used by way of distinction as in Ex. 14:20, there rendered one and other; Ecc. 6:5-8: "this and that"; Job 21:23-25: "one and another". And so here. Jacob could have meant "this twenty years have I been with thee" and "that twenty years I have been in thy house." The first twenty years he served Laban as a friend. At some personal loss, but in gratitude to his father-in-law, he cared for his flocks (Vv. 38-40), the other twenty years he profited from his labour: first in the acquisition of his wives; and then from Laban's herds. The Hebrew zeh li esrim signifies "this for myself (li) twenty years..." In other words, during one twenty years he showed a profit; whilst during the other twenty years he showed a loss. In all, he was in Haran forty years: fourteen for his wives; twenty as a friend and son-in-law; six for the cattle. In all, forty years, a period of probation".

From <http://www.n-e-v.info/cm/gen31com.html> accessed October 21, 2017.

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The ancient historian Josephus seems to take the Old Testament texts at face value and uses them to record the history of this era.

## Josephus' History of this Time Period

### CHAPTER 19.

#### CONCERNING JACOB'S FLIGHT INTO MESOPOTAMIA, BY REASON OF THE FEAR HE WAS IN OF HIS BROTHER.

9. Now Jacob fed the flocks of Laban his father-in-law all this time, being twenty years, after which he desired leave of his father-in-law to take his wives and go home; but when his father-in-law would not give him leave, he contrived to do it secretly. He made trial therefore of the disposition of his wives what they thought of this journey; - when they appeared glad, and approved of it. Rachel took along with her the images of the gods, which, according to their laws, they used to worship in their own country, and ran away together with her sister. The children also of them both, and the handmaids, and what possessions they had, went along with them. Jacob also drove away half the cattle, without letting Laban know of it beforehand. But the reason why Rachel took the images of the gods, although Jacob had taught her to despise such worship of those gods, was this, That in case they were pursued, and taken by her father, she might have recourse to these images, in order obtain his pardon.

10. But Laban, after one day's time, being acquainted with Jacob's and his daughters' departure, was much troubled, and pursued after them, leading a band of men with him; and on the seventh day overtook them, and found them resting on a certain hill; and then indeed he did not meddle with them, for it was even-tide; but God stood by him in a dream, and warned him to receive his son-in-law and his daughters in a peaceable manner; and not to venture upon any thing rashly, or in wrath to but to make a league with Jacob. And he him, that if he despised their small number, attacked them in a hostile manner, he would assist them. When Laban had been thus forewarned by God, he called Jacob to him the next day, in order to treat with him, and showed him what dream he had; in dependence whereupon he came confidently to him, and began to accuse him, alleging that he had entertained him when he was poor, and in want of all things, and had given him plenty of all things which he had. "For," said he, "I have joined my daughters to thee in marriage, and supposed that thy kindness to me

## Josephus' History of this Time Period

be greater than before; but thou hast had no regard to either thy mother's relations to me, nor to the affinity now newly contracted between us; nor to those wives whom thou hast married; nor to those children, of whom I am the grandfather. Thou hast treated me as an enemy, driving away my cattle, and by persuading my daughters to run away from their father; and by carrying home those sacred paternal images which were worshipped by my forefathers, and have been honored with the like worship which they paid them by myself. In short, thou hast done this whilst thou art my kinsman, and my sister's son, and the husband of my daughters, and was hospitably treated by me, and didst eat at my table." When Laban had said this, Jacob made his defense - That he was not the only person in whom God had implanted the love of his native country, but that he had made it natural to all men; and that therefore it was but reasonable that, after so long time, he should go back to it. "But as to the prey, of whose driving away thou accusest me, if any other person were the arbitrator, thou wouldst be found in the wrong; for instead of those thanks I ought to have had from thee, for both keeping thy cattle, and increasing them, how is it that thou art unjustly angry at me because I have taken, and have with me, a small portion of them? But then, as to thy daughters, take notice, that it is not through any evil practices of mine that they follow me in my return home, but from that just affection which wives naturally have to their husbands. They follow therefore not so properly myself as their own children." And thus far of his apology was made, in order to clear himself of having acted unjustly. To which he added his own complaint and accusation of Laban; saying, "While I was thy sister's son, and thou hadst given me thy daughters in marriage, thou hast worn me out with thy harsh commands, and detained me twenty years under them. That indeed which was required in order to my marrying thy daughters, hard as it was, I own to have been tolerable; but as to those that were put upon me after those marriages, they were worse, and such indeed as an enemy would have avoided." For certainly Laban had used Jacob very ill; for when he saw that God was assisting to Jacob in all that he desired, he promised him, that of the young cattle which should be born, he should have sometimes what was of a white color, and sometimes what should be of a black color; but when those that came to Jacob's share proved numerous, he did not keep his faith with him, but said he would give them to him the next year, because of his envying him the multitude of his possessions. He promised him as before, because he thought such an increase was not to be expected; but when it appeared to be fact, he deceived him.

11. But then, as to the sacred images, he bid him search for them; and when Laban accepted of the offer, Rachel, being informed of it, put those images into that camel's saddle on which she rode, and sat upon it; and said, that her natural purgation hindered her rising up: so Laban left off searching any further, not supposing that his daughter in such circumstances would approach to those images. So he made a league with Jacob, and bound it by oaths, that he would not bear him any malice on account of what had happened; and Jacob made the like league, and promised to love Laban's daughters. And these leagues they confirmed with oaths also, which they made upon certain as whereon they erected a pillar, in the form of an altar: whence that hill is called Gilead; and from thence they call that land the Land of Gilead at this day. Now when they had feasted, after the making of the league, Laban returned home.

From: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-1.htm> accessed . Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*; Book 1, Chapter 1.

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[Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines](#)

It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:

### A Complete Translation of Genesis 31

**A Reasonably Literal Translation**

**A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase**

Jacob gets bad vibes from Laban and his sons/God tells Jacob to return to Canaan

| <b>A Complete Translation of Genesis 31</b>   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>A Reasonably Literal Translation</b>   | <b>A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase</b>   |
| Jacob [lit., <i>he</i> ] heard the words of Laban's sons, [which they kept] saying, "Jacob has taken all that [belonged] to our father and he has made all this wealth from that [which belongs] to our father."  | Jacob overheard what Laban's sons had been saying: "Jacob has taken all that belonged to our father and he made all of his wealth from taking what belongs to our father."   |
| Jacob observed the face of Laban and, he observed that it [lit., <i>behold</i> ] [was] not with him as before.  | Jacob looked carefully at Laban's face and he observed that they were no longer friends or allies as before.   |
| Furthermore, Y <sup>e</sup> howah had said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and [return] to your family [there] and I will be with you."   | Then Jehovah said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and return to your family there, and I promise that I will be with you."   |
| <b>Jacob calls for his wives to see if they would be willing to leave Paddan-aram</b>   |  |
| Jacob sent and called for [his wives] Rachel and Leah, [to come to] the field with his flock. He said to them, "I observe the face of your father, and he [is] no longer [favorable] to me as he has been previously. However, the Elohim of my father is with me.  | Jacob sent for his wives, Rachel and Leah, to come to the field where he was tending Laban's flock. He said to them, "I have observed the countenance of your father, and he no longer favors me as he did before. However, despite this, the God of my father is with me.   |
| You [both] know that I have served your father with all my strength. Nevertheless, your father has cheated me and he has changed my wages ten times. However, Elohim has not given him the occasion to do evil to me.   | You both know that I have worked very hard for your father. Nevertheless, your father has cheated me and he had changed my wages many times. However, God has not allowed him to do evil to me.  |
| If he first [lit., <i>so, thus, now</i> ] said, 'The speckled [ones] will be your wages;' the flock would bear speckled animals; and if he later said, 'The striped [ones] will be your wages;' then the flock would bear striped. God has taken away your father's cattle and He has given [them] to me. | If he first specified that speckled cattle would be my wages, the flock would bear speckled animals; but then he would change his mind and say, 'No, the striped ones will be your wage;' but the flock would then begin bearing striped animals. God has taken away your father's cattle and He has given them to me. |
| And it was during the mating season of the flock when I lifted up my eyes and I could see, in a dream, [that] he-goats were leaping over the flock—[they were] striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of Elohim said to me, 'Jacob.'   | During the flock's mating season, I lifted up my eyes in a dream and looked, and I saw he-goats leaping over the flock; the he-goats were striped, spotted and mottled. In the dream, the Angel of God said to me, 'Jacob.'  |
| I replied, 'Here I [am].'   | I replied, 'I am right here.'  |
| He then said, 'Lift up your eyes now and look at all of the male goats—those [which] are leaping over the flocks—the striped, spotted and marked [ones]; because I see all that Laban is doing to you.  | He then said, 'Lift up your eyes now and look at these male goats which are leaping over the flocks—the goats that are marked with stripes, spots and blotches. Know that I see all that Laban is doing to you.  |
| I [am] 'El of Bethel, [which is] where you anointed a pillar. You [also] vowed to Me there a vow. Now rise up [and] go forth from this land and return to the land of your birth [or, <i>kindred</i> ].' "  | I am the God of Bethel, which is where you anointed a pillar and also where you made a vow to Me. Now you need to rise up and leave this land and return to your birthplace.' "  |

| <b>A Complete Translation of Genesis 31</b>  |   |
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| <b>A Reasonably Literal Translation</b>  | <b>A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase</b>  |
| Jacob's wives reveal that they are more loyal to him than to their father  |   |
| Rachel and Leah responded, [by] saying to him, "What [remains] still to us? [Do we have] a portion or an inheritance in our father's estate? Are we not considered foreigners to him, for he sold us?"   | Rachel and Leah responded to him, saying, "What now remains to us? Do we even have a portion or an inheritance from our father's estate? Does he not consider us foreigners, because, after all, he did sell us to you?"                      |
| Therefore, our money has been eaten away, and Elohim has snatched away the property which [was] from our father to us—[we have] this [your livestock] and our sons. So now, all that Elohim has said to you, [that] do."   | Therefore, our money has been eaten up and God has snatched away the property which should have come from our father to us. So we have the livestock which is yours and our sons and nothing else. So, whatever God told you to do, do that." |
| Jacob secretly leads his family and livestock out of Paddan-aram and towards Canaan  |   |
| So Jacob rose up and he lifted up his sons and his wives onto camels, and he led away all his cattle and all his livestock which he had acquired—the cattle of his possession which he acquired in Paddan-aram—[and then he] went to his father Isaac toward the land of Canaan. | Jacob rose up and got his wives and sons onto camels, and he led them and his cattle and his livestock that he acquired in Paddan-aram, away toward the land of Canaan, returning home to Isaac his father.                                   |
| While Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which [belonged] to her father.   | While Laban had gone out to oversee the sheering of his sheep, Rachel stole the teraphim which belonged to her father.  |
| So, Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramæan, [and] he did not make know to him that he was fleeing. So he fled—he and all that he had. He rose up and crossed over the river. Then he set his face [toward] the hill country of Gilead.                                       | Jacob deceived Laban the Aramæan, and he did not inform him that he was leaving. So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed over the river. Then he went toward the hill country of Gilead.  |
| Laban catches up to Jacob; but God speaks to Laban first   |   |
| On the third day, it was made known to Laban that Jacob fled. So Laban [lit., <i>he</i> ] took his brothers with him and he followed after Jacob [lit., <i>him</i> ] [along] the way for seven days.   | Laban found out that Jacob fled on the third day. Therefore, he took his relatives with him and he followed after Jacob for seven days.   |
| He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead. But Elohim came to Laban the Aramæan in a dream of the night. He said to him, "Be careful for yourself that you do not speak to Jacob from good to evil."  | He came upon him in the hill country of Gilead. God came to Laban (the Aramæan) in a night dream, saying to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob regarding the morality of his leaving."   |
| So Laban had overtaken Jacob. While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, Laban with his brothers had pitched [his tent] [nearby] in the hill country of Gilead.   | So Laban did overtake Jacob. While Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, Laban was encamped nearby in the hill country of Gilead as well—he, his relatives and his slaves.  |
| Laban expresses his outrage to Jacob   |   |

| <b>A Complete Translation of Genesis 31</b>  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>A Reasonably Literal Translation</b>  | <b>A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase</b>  |
| Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You have deceived me [lit., <i>you have stolen my heart</i> ]; and you have led away my daughters as [if] captives by the sword. Why did you act in secret to flee [from me]? You deceived me and you did not make [this thing] known to me.                             | Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? Not only did you deceive me, but you have taken away my daughters as if they are your captives. Why did you secretly flee from me? You deceived me and did not tell me that you were going to do this.                    |
| I would have sent you away with joy and singing; with tambourine and lyre. Furthermore, you have not permitted me to kiss my sons and my daughters [goodbye]. Now you have done foolishly.   | Had I known, I would have sent you away with joy and singing; and with tambourine and lyre. Furthermore, you did not allow me to kiss my grandsons and granddaughters goodbye; in this, you have acted foolishly.   |
| There [is] the power of my hand to do harm to you; but the Elohim of your father spoke to me yesterday, saying, ‘Take personal care from speaking to Jacob either good or bad.’  | I have the power to do harm to you; however, the God of your father spoke to me yesterday, saying, ‘Do not speak to Jacob good or bad.’   |
| You left suddenly because you have longed greatly for your father’s house. But why did you steal my elohim [= gods]?”  | You left suddenly because you greatly longed for your father’s home. But why did you steal my gods?”  |
| Jacob explains why he left secretly and then says whoever stole Laban’s gods should die  |   |
| Jacob answered and said to Laban, “[I did this] because I was afraid, for I thought you would take your daughters from me. [Whomever it is] with whom you find your elohim [or, <i>your gods</i> ], he will not live before our brothers. Point out [what is] yours—whatever [it is that] I have—and take [them].” | Jacob answered Laban, saying, “I did this because I was afraid. I thought that you would take your daughters from me. Listen, whoever it is who has taken your gods, he will not live before our brothers. Show me whatever is yours that I have and take it back.” |
| Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen his idols [lit., <i>them</i> ].  | Jacob did not know that Rachel has stolen Laban’s gods.   |
| Laban searches for his idols but cannot find them/Rachel is sitting over them  |   |
| Consequently, Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find [them]. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel’s tent.  | Consequently, Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he did not find them. Then he went out of the tent of Leah and he goes into Rachel’s tent.   |
| Rachel had taken the teraphim and placed them in the camel’s saddle bag, and then she sat on them.   | Rachel had taken the household idols and hidden them inside the camel’s saddle bag, and then sat down upon them.  |
| At the same time, Laban [carefully] feels all around [Rachel’s] tent but he did not find [them]. She said to her father, “Do not allow the eyes of my adonai to become angry, for I am unable to rise up before you for the way of women [is] to me.”  | All the while, Laban is carefully feeling all around the tent, but without finding them. She said to her father, “Do not allow the eyes of my lord to become angry with me. I am unable to rise up because I am having my period.”                                  |
| So he continued to search, but he did not find the teraphim.   | So Laban continued to search for the idols, but he could not find them.   |

## A Complete Translation of Genesis 31

### A Reasonably Literal Translation

### A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase

When Laban cannot find his gods, Jacob unloads on him and testifies to God's oversight

Therefore Laban [lit., *he*] burned [in anger] toward Jacob and Jacob [lit., *he*] disputed [the allegations made] by Laban.

Laban was quite angry with Jacob and Jacob complained about Laban's treatment of him.

Therefore, Jacob answered and said to Laban, "What [exactly is] my infraction; what [is] my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? You [lit., *Because you*] have [carefully] felt [the tents and you have searched] all my possessions, [and] what have you found from all the possessions from your house? Set [them all] here in front of my kinsmen and your kinsmen and they will decide between the two of us.

Therefore, Jacob said to Laban, "What exactly is my infraction and how have I sinned against you, so that you have pursued after me? You have felt all around my tent and you have gone through all my possessions—and now, just what have you found from your possessions? Why not set all of those things right out here in front of my brothers and your brothers and let them decide between the two of us.

[For] these 20 years [that] I [have been] with you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flocks. I did not bring torn flesh to you [to account for a loss]; I bore its loss. You sought [remuneration] from my hand, [whether] stolen [in] the day or stolen at night.

For the 20 years that I have worked for you, your ewes and your she-goats have not miscarried; and I have not eaten the rams from your flock. I never brought an animal to you killed in the wild; I bore the loss of that animal. It was your policy that I cover that loss, even if an animal were stolen from me.

[Thus] I was consumed by heat in the day; and [by] cold in the night. My sleep departed from my two eyes. This has been my life [lit., *this to me*]: [for] the 20 years I have served you—14 for your two daughters and 6 for your flock. Yet you have changed my wages 10 times.

During the day, the heat was nearly unbearable; furthermore, it was bitterly cold on many nights. I was sleep deprived in order to protect your herds. This is what my life has been under you: I have served you for 20 years. I worked 14 years for your daughters and an additional 6 years for some of your sheep and cattle. Yet, throughout this time, you arbitrarily changed my wages 10 times.

If not for the Elohim of my father, the Elohim of Abraham and the fear-respect of Isaac being mine, you would have sent me away empty-handed. Indeed, Elohim has seen [both] my affliction and the work of my hands; consequently, He resolved [our conflict] last night [when He spoke to you in a dream]."

If it were not for the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the teaching of my father Isaac about this God, you would have found a way to send me away empty-handed. However, God has seen both my affliction and the work of my hands; consequently, when He came to you in that dream, He resolved our conflict."

Laban and Jacob make a non-aggression pact between one another

Laban answered and said to Jacob, "The daughters [are] my daughters; the sons [are] my sons; and the flocks [are] my flocks. Furthermore, all that you see—[all] this—[belongs] to me. And, my daughters, what can I do this day? Also, their sons, whom they have given birth to [what can I do for them?].

Laban answer Jacob, saying, "Those young women are my daughters; those young boys are my grandsons; all the flocks and cattle you see—they belong to me. My daughters and my sons, what can I do for you today?

Now then, come [and] let us make a covenant—you and I. It will be a witness between you and I."

Now then, come here and let's make a covenant together. It will be a witness between you and I."

| A Complete Translation of Genesis 31   |  |
|--|--|
| A Reasonably Literal Translation   | A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase  |
| Jacob then took a stone and raised it up [to be] a pillar. Jacob told his servants [lit., <i>brothers</i> ], “Gather up [some] stones.”  | Jacob then took a stone and set it on its end so that it was a pillar. Jacob told his servants, “Gather up some stones.”   |
| So they took the stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha; while Jacob called it Galeed.   | Therefore, they took a number of stones and made a heap, and then ate there next to the heap. Laban gave this place the name Jegar-sahadutha; while Jacob called it Galeed.  |
| Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob [lit., <i>he</i> ] named it Galeed.  | Laban said, “This heap of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore, Jacob named this place Galeed.  |
| Also [Laban called it] the Mizpah, where he said, “Y <sup>e</sup> howah will watch between you and me, when we are absent each one from the other. If you afflict my daughters or if you take wives instead of my daughters, [even though there is] no one [of us] near us, behold [that] Elohim [is] a witness between you and me.”   | Then, Laban also names this heap Mizpah, and he said, “Jehovah will watch over between us during the time that we are absent from one another. Recall that, if you harm my daughters or take wives instead of my daughters, even if we are apart, God remains a witness between the two of us.”  |
| Laban [also] said to Jacob, “Observe this heap [of stones] and the pillar which I have set between us—this heap [of stones is] a witness [that]; and the pillar [is] a witness [that], I will not pass over this heap [of stones] to you and you will not cross over this heap [of stones] and this pillar to me [to do] evil [to me]. The Elohim of Abraham and the Elohim of Nahor—[they] will judge between us—the Elohim of their father.” | Laban also said to Jacob, “Take note of this heap of stones and this pillar which are between us—they will act as witnesses between us for good or evil, even if I never pass over this heap to you and you never cross over this heap to come to me. May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor judge between us—and the God of their father.” |
| Accordingly, Jacob swears by the fear/respect of his father Isaac. Jacob then sacrificed an animal in the mountain [where they were]. He then called upon his brothers to eat bread and they ate bread [together]. Then they spent the night on the mountain.  | Accordingly, Jacob swore by the religion of his father Isaac. Jacob sacrificed an animal to God in the mountain where they all were. He then called upon his brothers to break bread; and so they all ate together. Then they spent the night on the mountain.   |
| Laban returns home   |  |
| Laban rose up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and he also blessed them. Then Laban departed and went to his place.  | Laban woke up early in the morning and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters; and blessed them all. Then he departed and returned to his home in Paddan-aram.   |
| <b>Chapter Outline</b>   | <b>Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines</b>  |

The following Psalms would be appropriately studied at this time:

R. B. Thieme, Jr. did not cover this chapter in any currently available study.

## Doctrinal Teachers\* Who Have Taught Genesis 31

| Series  | Lesson (s)  | Passage       |
|---|---|---------------|
| R. B. Thieme, Jr. does not appear to have covered this chapter in any available series. |   |               |
| 1976 Abraham (Genesis 11:26–22:24) (#600)   | #   | Genesis :1–   |
| 1963 Dispensations (#201)   | #   | Genesis :1–   |
| R. B. Thieme, Jr.   |   |               |
| Ken Reed  | <a href="https://www.lakeeriebiblechurch.org/exegesis/">https://www.lakeeriebiblechurch.org/exegesis/</a>   | Genesis 38–50 |
| Dr. Robert Dean   | <a href="https://deanbible.org/old-testament-menuitem/genesis-menuitem">https://deanbible.org/old-testament-menuitem/genesis-menuitem</a>   | Genesis 1–50  |
| Bill Wenstrom   | <a href="https://www.wenstrom.org/index.php?option=com_libwritten&amp;view=libwritten&amp;selCat=2&amp;Itemid=124">https://www.wenstrom.org/index.php?option=com_libwritten&amp;view=libwritten&amp;selCat=2&amp;Itemid=124</a> | Genesis 1–50  |
| Jack M. Ballinger   | <a href="http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/genesisindex.html">http://www.versebyverse.org/classnotes/Genesis/genesisindex.html</a>   | Genesis 1–49  |
| Ron Snider  | <a href="http://www.makarios-bible-church.org/oldtest.html">http://www.makarios-bible-church.org/oldtest.html</a>   | Genesis 1–50  |

\* By doctrinal teacher, I mean a man whose primary focus is the teaching of the Word of God, verse-by-verse and book by book. A believer under the teaching of such a man should fully understand the gospel and rebound after less than a month in attendance.

When it comes to teaching, I should think that a 45 minute teaching session would be the bare minimum; and that, at least 3x a week (with provisions for getting teaching in some way on the other days of the week). Although this man may interact or even learn from other teachers, he should clearly be the authority over his church; and the authority over him is the Word of God and God the Holy Spirit (Who guides the pastor in his study).

ICE teaching would also be a part of the package, ICE being an acronym standing for Isagogics (a teaching of the history of that time in order to understand the context of a passage), Categories (a study of categories of Bible doctrine), and Exegesis (a close study of each passage, word-by-word whenever necessary).



