

## **Day 28 - SATURDAY: November 19<sup>th</sup>**

### Genesis 31

#### Genesis 31:1-55 NKJV

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." And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you." 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. 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. "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.' " Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it." Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. 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. And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. Then he took his brethren with him and

pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad." So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp? And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing. 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?" 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. And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' 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 searched all about the tent but did not find them. And she said to her father, "Let it not displease 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. 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? Set it 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, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. Unless 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-handed. God has seen my affliction

and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night." 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." 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. 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!" 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." 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. And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

### **Daily Deep Dive:**

Verse 3 – God is leading and directing.

Verse 41 – 20 years have passed since Jacob arrived at Laban's house and since he had seen his parents or his brother Esau.

Let's finish this week with the The UCG reading program:

"Jacob prospered with God's blessing and his own clever management of the flocks. But as Jacob increased, Laban decreased. This irritated Laban, especially since he thought his deal with Jacob to be overwhelmingly to his advantage. It also appears that Laban had gotten into the habit of living high while God blessed him because of Jacob, and the decrease in revenue meant an uncomfortable tightening of the belt. Indeed, Laban had wasted the bridal price of 14 years' labor Jacob had paid for his two wives (verses 15-16). In those days the bridal price was

kept by the father in behalf of the daughters as a trust, but Laban had improperly consumed the money. Finally, seeing their father's fortune decline, Laban's sons became concerned that they would inherit nothing if something was not done soon.

With increasing hostility between Laban and Jacob and the possibility that Laban's sons might take some action against Jacob and his family, it was time to leave. Jacob's speech to his wives prior to departure reveals the duplicity of Laban, the faith of Jacob and the providence of God. During the six years that Jacob tended Laban's flocks (verse 41), Laban changed the terms of the deal between himself and Jacob many times. But with each change Jacob faithfully relied on God for continued blessing. And with each change, God provided that blessing. Finally, God commanded Jacob to leave. So Jacob left, but without telling Laban, attempting to avoid a confrontation.

Before he left, though, Rachel stole Laban's household idols. It is possible that she took the idols because it was commonly believed that the possessor of the idols would enjoy the blessing of the gods; Rachel, according to the paganism in which she was raised, may have attempted to "secure" her husband's good fortune. Yet she and Leah had apparently both come to worship the true God, seeing Him as the one who had blessed them with children and wealth and the one from whom to seek direction (see Genesis 29:32; Genesis 30:22-23; Genesis 31:16). Why, then, did Rachel take the idols? A number of commentators point out that the most likely explanation is that she stole them because they represented ownership of Laban's possessions. The one who had the idols could thereby prove himself or herself to be the legitimate owner or heir to the property. For instance, the *Broadman Bible Commentary* states: "The possession of household gods was legal proof of the right to inheritance. Since Rachel believed that the property should be theirs, she 'appropriated' what she considered to be hers by right. This did not make the act any less wrong" (vol. 1, p. 220).

Laban, of course, pursued, angered not only by Jacob's fortune, but also Jacob's sudden departure and the disappearance of Laban's household idols. However, God warned him in a dream not to speak "good or bad" to Jacob. Nevertheless, Laban upbraided Jacob for leaving, feigning that he would have sent them away with a great feast. Since he could not compel Jacob's return, Laban turned his attention to the household idols. After an unsuccessful search of Jacob's goods—

Rachel having hidden the idols—Jacob upbraided Laban. Take note of how Jacob attributes his success to God and portrays God as having judged Jacob's cause as righteous. Again, this is more evidence of the character development of Jacob.

In parting, Jacob and Laban erected a pillar stone. This stone, however, was different from the stone that Jacob erected in Bethel. This stone was not a sacred stone, but a memorial stone. It stood in that place as a reminder to all who passed by of the covenant made there between Laban and Jacob.

It should perhaps be mentioned that in spite of Laban's chicanery and double-dealing, he may have been expressing genuine fatherly concern in the end (see Genesis 31:49-50, Genesis 31:53, Genesis 31:55). He didn't have to make it part of the agreement that Jacob take no other wives. (It is interesting in verse 50 that Laban does not regard the *maidservants* as wives, as these concubines were looked upon as "surrogate mothers" for his daughters). And it is interesting to note his repeated references to the true God. While he was shaken by his dream to be sure, there would seem to be more to it than that. God had used Laban to bring about a dramatic change in Jacob's character over the course of 20 years. Yet in all that time, Jacob had in turn served as quite a witness to *Laban*—there were certainly lessons in it for him too. Perhaps here at the end—broke, losing his family and seeing everything he had plotted and schemed after for so long now slipping away—Laban had finally gotten the point." [END]