

Genesis 31:1-16. *Laban & Jacob—What a Confounding Conflict.* Leah & Rachel's brothers were kvetching about Jacob's wealth, asserting Jacob has taken everything their father, Laban, owned (and they would inherit). Jacob was not deaf.

Then the Lord God Yahweh told Jacob—go home to the land of your fathers; I will be with you.

Jacob summons Rachel & Leah to the fields where the flocks were gathered. Noting their father's negative attitude and the positive attitude "of the God of my father," Jacob asserted Laban had cheated him by changing wages, ten times no less [20 years—7 for each of you, and 6 for the flocks].

But God has not allowed him to harm me—whether speckled or streaked, God made all the sheep mine. It was all revealed in a dream—an angel noted that all the male goats mating are streaked, speckled or spotted. Laban has been unfair. I am the God of Bethel where you vowed to Me—now leave this land, and go home.

Rachel & Leah (Ewe & Cow) felt left out—what about our inheritance? Are we now foreigners. "Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us. Surely all the wealth God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So, do whatever God has told you."

- Q To what extent were the boys concerned about their wealth? Was Laban actually concerned about losing his wealth?
- Q How did the Lord God protect Jacob's wealth? How did the Lord God Jehovah serve as an ancient FDIC?
- Q What were Leah & Rachel's concern about all this wealth transition?
- Q What did you learn about their value in verse 15?
- Q So do whom does all this wealth belong?

### GENESIS 31:1-16

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." <sup>2</sup>And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.

<sup>3</sup>Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

<sup>4</sup>So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. <sup>5</sup>He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.

<sup>6</sup>You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, <sup>7</sup>yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me. <sup>8</sup>If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young. <sup>9</sup>So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me.

<sup>10</sup>"In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted. <sup>11</sup>The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.' <sup>12</sup>And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. <sup>13</sup>I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.' "

<sup>14</sup>Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? <sup>15</sup>Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us. <sup>16</sup>Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."

Genesis 31:17-30. Rachel Steals—Reality Bites. So, Jacob puts all the kids and wives in the SUVs of the time—camels. Driving his livestock ahead of him, he takes off for home where Isaac lives in Canaan.

So Jacob deceives Laban. And when dad is shearing sheep, Rachel steals her father's household gods/idols. Jacob gets beyond the Euphrates and into the hills of Gilead.

Around the third day, Laban is told that Jacob has gotten out of Dodge. Taking his relatives with him, Laban pursues Jacob for a week and catches up to him in Gilead. But God has some advice—in a dream God warns Laban, say nothing to Jacob, good or bad.

Laban confronts his less-than-open son-in-law—

*What have you done? You've lied to me, and you've taken my daughters off like spoils of war, captives no less! Why? I could have celebrated sending you away—tambourines, harps, singing—the whole shebang. You didn't even let me kiss the grandkids and my daughters goodbye! You've done a foolish thing. Now I've got the power to hurt you, but last night "the God of your father" said to be careful not to say anything to Jacob, good or bad. Now you've gone off because you wanted to go home, but why steal my gods?*

- Q To whom was Jacob returning?
- Q Besides clothing and food for a long journey, what else did Rachel pack?
- Q And who warned Laban not to bother Jacob?
- Q What was Jacob really irritated about? (verse 30)

## GENESIS 31:17-30

Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, <sup>18</sup>and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram [northwest Mesopotamia], to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

<sup>19</sup>When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. <sup>20</sup>Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. <sup>21</sup>So he fled with all he had, and crossing the Euphrates, he headed for the hill country of Gilead.

<sup>22</sup>On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled.

<sup>23</sup>Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. <sup>24</sup>Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

<sup>25</sup>Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. <sup>26</sup>Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You've deceived me, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war. <sup>27</sup>Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and harps? <sup>28</sup>You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters good-bye. You have done a foolish thing. <sup>29</sup>I have the power to harm you; but last night the God of your father said to me, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.' <sup>30</sup>Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods?"

Genesis 31:31-42. *Jacob & Laban—Not So Much*. Jacob excuses his deceit by expressing fear of Laban's force. But, he said, if you find any of my people who have stolen your gods, he will not live! Take a look (Jacob didn't know Rachel had stolen the gods.)

Laban searches everywhere in the tents, but Rachel had hidden the idols in her camel's saddle and was sitting on the saddle. Laban found nothing. Rachel excused her seated posture—I'm having my period.

Now Jacob was angry. What is my crime he kvetched? Where's the evidence of my sin? I've been with you for 20 years; your sheep & goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. When animals were taken by predators, I absorbed the loss. And you demanded payment for whatever was stolen. Trust me, it was hot during the day, and cold at night—for twenty years I worked in your household. 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 have sent me away, empty-handed, poor and alone. But God has seen my hardship, the work of my hands, and last night you were rebuked.

Q Afraid of Laban—rhetorical ploy, or admission of contrition?

Q What did Rachel hide in her camel's saddle? Why?

Q Why was Laban upset? To what extent was his anger justified? Do you suppose the idols were ever discovered?

## GENESIS 31:31-42

Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. <sup>32</sup>But if you find anyone who has your gods, he shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

<sup>33</sup>So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent.

<sup>34</sup>Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them inside her camel's saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched through everything in the tent but found nothing.

<sup>35</sup>Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I'm having my period." So he searched but could not find the household gods.

<sup>36</sup>Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "What sin have I committed that you hunt me down? <sup>37</sup>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.

<sup>38</sup>"I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. <sup>39</sup>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. <sup>40</sup>This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. <sup>41</sup>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. <sup>42</sup>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."



**Laban Searching the Belongings of Jacob**  
**Sébastien Bourdonc. 1634 - 1637**