

**Jacob
Leaves Laban**
Genesis 31:7-55

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Begin with prayer

Read: Genesis 31:7-55

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Dear God,

Thank You for being our faithful protector and promise-keeper. When we face hostility or unfair treatment, remind us that You see our affliction and will intervene. Help us trust Your timing, obey Your voice, and leave our grievances in Your hands.

Amen.



God Tells Jacob to Leave



Genesis 31:7-55

Jacob now recognizes that the influence of Laban's household is not good for his growing family. **The boys will be leaders of the 12 tribes of Israel, and God is working to get them out from that environment and back into the country He had promised to Abraham.**

God finally tells him it's time to go. **"Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you"** (Genesis 31:3). Jacob calls Rachel and Leah to meet him in the field because **he is afraid to talk about his plans at home for fear that someone will overhear them.**

Laban's countenance had turned sour toward Jacob, **since his flocks and wealth were growing larger than Laban's.** Jacob explained to Rachel and Leah that it was **God who had blessed them**, so that Laban and his sons had become very jealous of him.

Jacob had worked hard for Laban for 20 years (and Laban had changed Jacob's wages ten times!) But when he was perplexed and frustrated, not knowing where to turn, God intervened.

Then Jacob shared the actual reason why he wanted to leave. **He told his wives about how God had spoken to him in a dream and explained how he multiplied the breeding of the cattle.** God said, **"I did it! I saw what Laban was doing to you, and I blessed you."**



God Reminds of His Promise

"I am the God of Bethel." God reminded Jacob of the night He appeared to him when he was running away from home, that first night he spent at Bethel. **"Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family"** (Genesis 31:13). God wants Jacob to leave Haran because his 11 sons at that time are growing up, and are already beginning to learn bad practices from a home filled with idolatry.

Rachel and Leah **were supportive of Jacob's decision because their father had not been fair to them, either, and they likely would have no inheritance.** They told Jacob to do whatever he thought was best, and that they would stand with him. **So Jacob prepared to leave in a hurry.** Remember this was the same way he left home when he was escaping from his brother. Now he is leaving his uncle, but this time he was not at fault.

Family Deception and God's Intervention

What Jacob didn't know was that Rachel had stolen the household idols that belonged to her father. **Rachel had been brought up in a home of idolatry, and she decided to take her gods with her.**

They waited until Laban had gone to shear his sheep miles away, and they snuck out in the direction of Mount Gilead, which is just east of the Jordan River. They covered a good distance quickly. **But by the third day, Laban found out that Jacob had run, and Laban left quickly to find them.** He was angry enough to kill Jacob and recover all the possessions Jacob had taken, and bring back his two daughters and their children. **But God intervened.**

That night in a dream, **God spoke to Laban, and warned him, "Be very careful what you say and do."** All the while, Laban was coming in anger, but now he changed his pace. How clever Laban was, and so diplomatic! **He tried to make Jacob feel guilty for depriving his family of a wonderful farewell party.** He said he wanted to have a great celebration and a fond farewell. But his words weren't true.

Laban admitted that he wanted to do them harm, but that Jacob's God spoke to him in the night and prevented him from doing anything bad.

Next, he asked about the stolen gods. **Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the gods, and he didn't believe Laban.** But Laban didn't believe Jacob.

After 20 years, they knew each other well. Laban searched everyone's tents but couldn't find the family idols. Rachel had put them in the camel's box and then sat on it. When he came into her tent, she said she wasn't feeling well and didn't want to get up. Rachel is like her father, so clever and deceptive.

Rachel's taking of the family idols (the teraphim) from her father was much more serious than we know. **Whoever possessed the household gods implied leadership of the family, which meant that Jacob could claim to inherit everything old Laban had!** That is the reason Laban was so upset by it. He didn't want Jacob to inherit his wealth. He felt he had gotten too much already.



“God did not let him get away with it.”



God's Lesson: Whatever a Man Sows, that He Will Also Reap

Jacob gained some confidence. They could not locate the idols, and Jacob is sure they aren't anywhere around. **He wanted to rebuke his father-in-law who had come after him. "So what's my sin?" he demanded.** "Why do you come after me with such anger?"

He had served him well for 20 years, yet he was treated unfairly and harshly at times, while he took care of Laban's investments. Jacob was clever, and thought that he could get by with sin. But God didn't let him get away with any of it, because God made it very clear that whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Jacob refused to submit to God at his home, so he had to submit to Laban. Jacob had come to receive a wife with dignity, but he was made a servant instead, because God respects the rights of the firstborn.

Jacob had deceived his father, so he was deceived by his father-in-law. Jacob, the younger, became like the older. Then he found out that he was given the older, when he thought he was getting the younger. **He revealed a selfish spirit that displayed itself in the way he got the birthright, allowing his mother to cover his hands with the skins of goats.** Later on in Jacob's life, his own sons would deceive him in a similar way. **They killed a young goat and in its blood they dipped Joseph's coat of many colors.** He had deceived his father about being his favorite son, and **he would later be deceived about his favorite son, Joseph.** Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Jacob concluded that God was his judge. "Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and God 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." (Genesis 31:42)

A comparison table illustrating the biblical principle "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" based on the text provided about Jacob's life:

What Jacob Sowed (His Actions & Sins)	What Jacob Reaped (His Consequences & Harvesting)
Refused to submit to God at his home.	Forced to submit to his uncle, Laban and was treated unfairly as a servant.
Disrespected the rights of the firstborn by taking his older brother's birthright.	Made a servant rather than receiving a wife in dignity, because God respects the rights of the firstborn.
Deceived his father to steal the blessing.	Deceived by his father-in-law, Laban.
Acted as the older brother, even though he was the younger.	Was given the older sister (Leah), when he thought he was getting the younger sister (Rachel).
Used the skins of goats on his hands to deceive his father.	His sons killed a goat and dipped his favorite son's (Joseph) coat in its blood to deceive him.
Deceived his father about being his favorite son.	Deceived by his own sons about his favorite son, Joseph.

Ultimately, though Jacob thought he could get by with sin due to his cleverness, God did not let him get away with it. As Jacob concluded after 20 years of labor, **God was his ultimate judge who saw his affliction and intervened to protect him.**

Now he was ready to leave Laban. They bid each other goodbye and made a contract. Jacob set up a stone for a pillar, a heap of stones was gathered, and a contract was made. **The two agreed that God was their witness.** They agreed: "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another" (Genesis 31:49). In other words, this was a contract made between two men who are going to stop stealing from each other. 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.

God's Eternal Truths

Relevant to us from *Genesis 31*

God is our Ultimate Protector and Promise-Keeper.

- Despite Jacob's flaws and Laban's unfair treatment (changing his wages ten times), **God faithfully intervened.** (*2 Thessalonians 3:3*) When Laban pursued Jacob with the intent to do him harm, God appeared to Laban in a dream and warned him to be careful, physically protecting Jacob. **God reminded Jacob, "I am the God of Bethel," proving that He honors His covenants** (*Hebrews 13:5-6*), and **protects His people even when they are in messy or hostile environments.**



- New Testament Connection:** *2 Thessalonians 3:3* - "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one." *Hebrews 13:5-6* - "I will never leave you nor forsake you."



Reflection Questions

Question 1

Reflecting on God's Protection: When you are frustrated, or mistreated by others, as Jacob was by Laban, do you trust that God sees your affliction and will intervene in His timing, or do you try to take matters into your own hands?

Question 2

Hidden Idols: Rachel secretly took her father's household idols with her. Are there "idols" - habits, attachments, or worldly comforts that you are quietly carrying from your old life into your walk with God?

Question 3

Living by Faith: What specific situation in your life right now requires you to stop scheming like Jacob, and instead rest entirely on God's promises and His Word?

Question 4

Cooperating with the Spirit: How can you invite the Holy Spirit this week to help you make decisions built on the foundation of God's truth, rather than relying on the world's methods for success?



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