THE GOD OF PADDAN ARAM (II) (Jacob Builds His Wealth)

Genesis 31:1-55                                                                     Lesson 21

Key Verse: 31:13**13**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.’”

Jacob worked for his selfish desire, but God worked to accomplish his will, which is to make Jacob a father of 12 tribes, a father of many nations. In all things God works for the good of those who love him…

In chapter 30 God let Jacob builds his family. In chapter 31 God let Jacob builds his wealth and go back to his home. Why? There is God’s bigger plan for Jacob’s descendants.

**1. Look at 31:1-3. Why did Jacob decide to leave Paddan Aram? (31:1-3; 13-16) Why was it necessary that he return? What was the importance of his vow at Bethel in his life? (v.13; 28:18-22)**

**Jacob Flees From Laban**

**31**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.” **2**And Jacob noticed that Laban’s attitude toward him was not what it had been. **3**Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.”

1. Laban’s attitude toward Jacob was not what it had been---Laban was jealous of Jacob’s wealth and he was very deceitful.

God told Jacob to return to his father’s land.

1. Jacob made a vow with God at Bethel. God wanted to keep his vow

**18**Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. **19**He called that place Bethel,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28%3A18-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-793a)] though the city used to be called Luz.

**20**Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear **21**so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the Lord[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28%3A18-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-795b)] will be my God **22**and[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+28%3A18-22&version=NIV#fen-NIV-796c)] this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God’s house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.”

c) God used Jacob’s vow to have a personal relationship with Jacob. God wanted to become the God of Jacob.

**2. Look at v 4-16. Why did Jacob share his plan with his wives? What was their response? (14-16) Look at 17-21. Why did Jacob flee in this way?**

**4**So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. **5**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. **6**You know that I’ve worked for your father with all my strength, **7**yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, **God** has not allowed him to harm me. **8**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. **9**So **God** has taken away your father’s livestock and has given them to me. **10**“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. **11The angel of God** said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob.’ I answered, ‘Here I am.’ **12**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. **13**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.’”

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

**17**Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, **18**and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+31&version=NIV#fen-NIV-892a)] to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

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

1. Jacob wanted to prepare his wives to co-work with his plan. He did not want them to change their mind later.
2. His wives believed that it is God’s will. They didn’t trust their father, but the God of Jacob, their husband.
3. Jacob knew who Laban was. He did not trust Laban. He didn’t deceive him, but ran away without noticing him.

**3. Look at v. 22-30. When Laban caught up with Jacob, why did he not harm him? Of what did he accuse Jacob? Look at 31-42. How did Jacob explain his sudden departure? When Laban's search for the gods proved fruitless, how did Jacob rebuke him? (36-37; [38-42])**

**Laban Pursues Jacob**

**22**On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. **23**Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. **24**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.”

**25**Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. **26**Then Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done? You’ve deceived me, and you’ve carried off my daughters like captives in war. **27**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 timbrels and harps? **28**You didn’t even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters goodbye. You have done a foolish thing. **29**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.’ **30**Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father’s household. But why did you steal my gods?”

**31**Jacob answered Laban, “I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. **32**But if you find anyone who has your gods, that person 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.

**33**So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two female servants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah’s tent, he entered Rachel’s tent. **34**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.

**35**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.

**36**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? **37**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.

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

1. God appeared in Laban’s dream and warned him not to harm Jacob. **God intervened in Jacob’s danger.**
2. Laban accused Jacob of stealing his house gods, but Jacob did not know Rachael was stealing them.
3. Jacob accused Laban’s cheating even though Jacob worked hard for him for twenty one years and made him rich.

Jacob was afraid that Laban might send him home empty-handed, even though he worked Laban for 21 years and made him rich,

1. Jacob proved his innocence and rebuked Laban’s injustice and selfishness. Jacob believed that God was with him and rebuked Laban in his dream

**4. Look at 43-55. Describe the treaty which they made at their parting. What do these events reveal about Jacob's character? Think about his strengths and weaknesses. What do these events teach us about God?**

**43**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? **44**Come now, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us.” **45**So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. **46**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. **47**Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+31&version=NIV#fen-NIV-921b)] **48**Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” That is why it was called Galeed. **49**It was also called **Mizpah**,[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+31&version=NIV#fen-NIV-923c)] because he said, “May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. **50**If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me.” **51**Laban also said to Jacob, “Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. **52**This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. **53**May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac. **54**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. **55**Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+31&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-929d" \o "See footnote d)]

1. Jacob did not compromise with fear. He told the truth in the midst of danger. He also built an altar. He thanked God for protection and guidance.
2. Jacob was a hard-working man. He knew the value of God’s blessing. He did his best to achieve his goal. He used all his skills and wits to achieve his goal. He also knew the time for leaving. He did not remain in Paddan Haram, but returned to his father’s land. We should not remain in this world, but be ready to return to our promised land, the kingdom of God.
3. God of Jacob is the God of Bethel (31:13), God of Isaac is the God of Beersheba (26:33), God of Abraham is the God of *Jehovahjireh* (22:14)

* Mizpah: 1 Sam 7:3 “Samuel called all Israel to meet at Mizpah and repent
* Ps 37:4: “ he will give you the desires of your heart.