

## Genesis Chapter 31 Continued

Verses 25-55” “Jegar-sahadutha” and “Galeed” mean “Heap of Witness,” in Aramaic and Hebrew, respectively. The expression in verse 49 is not meant to convey a benediction, as Christians usually cite it. Rather, it is a spoken curse: “May God destroy you if you cross this boundary!”

There is no more mention of Laban in Genesis, and this records the last contact the patriarchs had with their homeland and relatives.

**Genesis 31:32 "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. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them."**

"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 expressing death on him by the hand of God; "may he not live", but die, die immediately or before his time, as the Targum of Jonathan.

“Before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee”: Not only his gods, but any of his goods or cattle, whatsoever he could find in his tents, or in his flocks, that were his property, he was welcome to take; and this he declared before the men that Laban brought with him, whom he also calls his brethren, being his kinsfolks and neighbors.

And these he appeals to as witnesses of his honesty, integrity, and fair dealing; being conscious to himself that he had took nothing but what was his own.

"For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them": The images or gods; or he would have been more careful of his expression, in love and tenderness to his most beloved wife.

Jacob made this statement, before he realized that his precious Rachel was the one who took the false Gods.

**Genesis 31:33 "And Laban went into Jacob'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."**

"And Laban went into Jacob's tent": Into that first where he most suspected they were, being taken not out of value for them, but contempt of them.

"And into Leah's tent": And not Leah's tent next, whom next to Jacob he might suspect of taking them, out of veneration to them, because her tent lay next.

"And into the two maidservant's tents": Bilhah and Zilpah; or "the" tent of them; for the word is singular, and perhaps they had but one tent for them both, which distinguished them from the principal wives.

"But he found them not": In either of these tents.

"Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent": Which he went into last of all, as least suspecting her, being less addicted to the superstition and idolatry of his family than Leah and the maidservants.

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. From this account, it more clearly appears that men and their wives had separate tents or apartments (see Gen. 24:67).

Verses 34-35: One dishonest deed needed further dishonesty and trickery to cover it up.

**Genesis 31:34 "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."**

"Now Rachel had taken the images": 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": Perhaps the camel's furniture she rode on, and therefore it was in her tent, which some understand of the saddle on which she rode; rather, it seems to be the saddle cloth or housing, in which she might wrap the images and put them under her clothes.

"And sat upon them": The images, which, if she had the respect for, as some suggest, she would never have used in such a manner. And Laban searched the entire tent, but found them not; excepting the place where Rachel sat.

**Genesis 31:35 "And she said to her father, Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee; for the custom of women [is] upon me. And he searched, but found not the images."**

"And she said to her father": As he approached nearer to her, having searched her tent all over.

"Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee": She addresses him with great honor and respect; calling him her lord, being her father, though an unkind one, and entreats him not to be displeased that she did not rise up and yield that obeisance to him which was due from her to a father.

"For the custom of women is upon me": Her menstrual cycle; 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 (Lev. 15:19).

"And he searched": All about her, and around her; but did not oblige her to get up, nor could he imagine that the images could be under her in such circumstances.

"But found not the images": And so he quit searching; nor do we find that he searched the flock for any of his cattle there, knowing full well Jacob's honesty and integrity.

It seems that these false gods were more important to Laban than the lives of his daughters. Had he found them, they would have been killed. Rachel now committed another sin. She lied to cover up the fact that she stole the images.

Jacob had already spoken death to anyone who was found with the images. Whether Rachel worshipped these, or she wanted them for their monetary value, or she did it to provoke her father, we are not certain. We will find out it not only provoked Laban, but angered God, as well.

**Genesis 31:36 "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?"**

"And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban": 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 nervous, and his reasoning very just and pathetic; whatever may be said for the temper he was in, and the wrath and resentment he showed.

"And Jacob answered and said to Laban": That whereas he had suggested that he had done a very bad thing, he asks him.

"What is my trespass? What is my sin?" What heinous offence have I committed? What law of God or man have I broke?

"That thou hast 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.

**Genesis 31:37 "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."**

"Judge betwixt us both": Rachel's theft and dishonest cover-up had precipitated a major conflict between her father and her husband which could only be resolved by judicial inquiry before witnesses.

Jacob had become very put out with Laban. In modern day language, he said show us if you have found any sin in our camp, if not I don't want to hear about. Jacob told him to let their servants judge who was in error.

Verses 38-42: Jacob registered his complaint that he had unfairly borne the losses normally carried by the owner and had endured much discomfort in fulfilling his responsibility. Jacob also delivered his conclusion that except for the oversight of God, Laban may very well have fleeced him totally.

**Genesis 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."**

"This twenty years have I been with thee": So that he now must have been ninety seven years of age.

"Thy ewes and thy 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.

"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 (Ezek. 34:3).

**Genesis 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."**

Jacob was telling Laban that Laban was blessed. His flocks increased, because Jacob had done over and above what was expected of him. God blessed the young, as well. Laban had gotten more than was expected of any worker.

Jacob had even taken all the losses on his herd destroyed by wild animals. Jacob did not even kill and eat animals from Laban's flock. Laban had no reason to complain.

**Genesis 31:40 "[Thus] I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes."**

"Thus I was": In such a situation, as well as in the following uncomfortable plight and condition.

"In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night": The violent heat in the daytime scorched him, and the severe frosts in the night pinched him. That is, in the different seasons of the year, the heat of the day in the summertime, and the cold of the night in the wintertime.

For it cannot well be thought that there should be excessive heat in the day and sharp frosts in the night, in the same season of the year. It looks as if Laban did not allow Jacob the proper

conveniences of clothes, and of tents to secure him from the inclemency of the weather, which other shepherds usually had.

"And my sleep departed from mine eyes": Through diligent care and watchfulness of the flocks in the night season, which on some occasions were necessary (see Luke 2:8).

Jacob told Laban that day and night in all kinds of weather, he saw to the flock even to the point of punishing his own body.

**Genesis 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."**

"Thus have I been twenty years in thy house": Attended with these difficulties, inconveniencies, and hardships.

"I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters": Rachel and Leah; first seven years for Rachel; and having Leah imposed upon him instead of her, was obliged to serve seven years more, which he did for her sake. Whereas he ought to have given them, and a dowry with them, to one who was heir to the land of Canaan, and not have exacted servitude of him.

"And six years for thy cattle": to have as many of them for his hire, as were produced from a flock of white sheep, that were speckled, spotted, or ringstraked, or brown.

"And thou hast changed my wages ten times" (see Gen. 31:7).

Here was the first mention of the exact time that Jacob labored for Laban. Twenty years was a very long time. Jacob reminded Laban that Leah and Rachel were no longer Laban's, and neither were the cattle. Jacob owed Laban nothing. Jacob fulfilled his part of the bargain, now Laban wanted to back out of the deal.

**Genesis 31:42 "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, 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."**

"Fear of Isaac": Also see "the fear of his father Isaac" (verse 53). This was another divine name, signifying Jacob's identification of the God who caused Isaac to reverence Him.

Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of "Isaac, had been with me" (verse 53). 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 that:

"Surely thou hadst sent me away now empty": coming with such force upon him, he would have stripped him of all he had, of his wives and children, and servants and cattle.

"God hath seen my affliction, and the labor of my hands": What hardships he endured in Laban's service, and what pains he took in feeding his flocks.

Jacob was telling Laban that if God had not intervened and given Laban a dream, Laban would have come into camp with a large group of men, and would have taken his daughters and all of Jacob's animals and things by force. God protects His own, and this was no exception. Jacob was divinely protected by God Himself.

**Genesis 31:43 "And Laban 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?"**

"And Laban answered and said unto Jacob": Not denying the truth of what he had said, nor acknowledging any fault he had been guilty of, or asking forgiveness for it, though he seemed to be convicted in his own conscience of it. Laban pled his case, amounting to nothing more than the manifestation of his grasping character, by claiming everything was his.

"These daughters are my daughters": Though thy 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 thou seest 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.

"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.

You can easily see from this above Scripture that Laban claimed everything and everyone that Jacob had worked for. Laban said the reason that he would not take it by force was that he loved Rachel and Leah and the children. The real reason was because God intervened, and he was afraid of Jacob's God.

**Genesis 31:44 "Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee."**

“Let us make a covenant”: Although Laban did regard all in Jacob’s hands as his, after all Jacob had arrived 20 years before with nothing, nevertheless, the matter was clearly ruled in Jacob’s favor, since Laban left with nothing.

A treaty was struck in the customary fashion (verses 45-51), in which they covenanted not to harm one another again (verse 52).

With heaps of stones as testaments to the treaty named and in place (verses 47-49), with the consecration meals having been eaten (verses 46, 54), and with the appropriate oaths and statements made in the name of their God (verses 50, 53), the agreement was properly sanctioned and concluded and thus they parted company.

All contact between Abrahams’s kin in Canaan and Mesopotamia appears to have ended at this point.

Laban decided he would like a peace agreement between him and Jacob. He knew if Jacob were to mount an army and come against him, that he would be destroyed. He knew full well that God was with Jacob. Laban knew he was no match for God, so he asked Jacob for a treaty.

**Genesis 31:45 "And Jacob took a stone, and set it up [for] a pillar."**

"And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar": To show his readiness to agree to the motion, he immediately took a large stone that lie 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.

**Genesis 31:46 "And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made a heap: and they did eat there upon the heap."**

"And Jacob said unto his brethren, gather stones": Not to his sons, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi state; 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, and were most proper to be made use of in it; unless it can be thought the men Laban brought with him, whom Jacob before calls his brethren (Genesis 31:37), are meant. Then the words must be understood as spoken, not in an authoritative way, but as a request or direction, which was complied with.

"And they took stones, and made a heap": They fetched stones that lay about here and there, and laid them in order one upon another, and so made a heap of them.

"And they did eat there upon the heap": They made it like a table, and set their food on it, and ate off of it; or they "ate by", it being usual in making covenants to make a feast. At least to eat and drink together, in token of friendship and good will.

The Chinese call friendship that is most firm and stable, and not to be rescinded, "stony friendship": whether from a like custom with this does not appear.

They built a monument to remind them of their peace treaty. They broke bread together to seal their friendship.

Verses 47-49: Jegar-sahadutha ... Galeed ... Mizpah": The first two words mean in Aramaic and also in Hebrew, "heap of witnesses." The third word means "watchtower".

**Genesis 31:47 "And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed."**

"And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha": Which in the Syriac and Chaldee languages signifies "a heap of witness"; it being, as after observed, a witness of the covenant between Laban and Jacob.

"But Jacob called it Galeed": Which in the Hebrew tongue signifies the same, "a heap of witness"; or "a heap, the witness", for the same reason. 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.

**Genesis 31:48 "And Laban said, This heap [is] a witness between me and thee this day. Therefore was the name of it called Galeed;"**

"And Laban said, this heap is a witness between me and thee this day": A witness of the covenant now about to be made between them that day, and a witness against them should they break it.

"Therefore was the name of it called Galeed": By Jacob, as before observed (see Gen. 31:47).

**Genesis 31:49 "And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another."**

"And Mizpah": Which being a 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.

"For he said, the Lord watch between me and thee, 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.

**Genesis 31:50 "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."**

"If thou shalt 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, and the like.

"Or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters": Which also would be an affliction and vexation to them (see Lev. 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 doing.

"No man is with us": The sense is not that there were none with them at the present time, for the men or brethren that Laban brought with him were present. Or that there were none fit to be witnesses, because these were kinsmen, for they are appealed to by Jacob as judges between them (Genesis 31:33).

But this refers to time to come, and may be supplied thus, "when no man be with us"; when there is none to observe what is done by either of us, contrary to mutual agreement, and to report it to one or other: then see, take notice, and observe.

"God is witness betwixt me and thee": Who is omniscient and omnipresent, sees and 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 shall behave in observing, or not observing, the terms of our covenant.

**Genesis 31:51 "And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold [this] pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;"**

"And Laban said to Jacob": Continued speaking to him, as follows:

"Behold this heap, and behold this pillar which I have cast betwixt me and thee": 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" etc., agreeably to (Genesis 31:45).

**Genesis 31:52 "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."**

"This heap be witness": Agreeably to its name, which both he and Jacob gave unto it.

"And this pillar be witness": Which was set up for the same purpose.

"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": 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 intent to do hurt to each other.

Laban warned Jacob, that if he mistreated his daughters in any way the deal was off. They set up a boundary and neither one was to cross over that boundary to war with the other. God was the witness to the agreement they made with each other.

**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."**

"God of Nahor": Laban's probable reconciliation or integration of differing systems of belief, paralleling of the God of Abraham with that of Nahor and Terah, his brother and father respectively, elicited Jacob again using "the fear of Isaac," a reference to the true God (verse 42), for he certainly could not give credence to any of Laban's religious allusions.

These men sware by the one they worshipped. We know who the God of Abraham was, but Abraham's father was an idolater. It was not known who Nahor worshipped. Jacob swore by his father, Isaac.

**Genesis 31:54 "Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount."**

"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", 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 Gen. 26:30).

"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 are called bread.

"And they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount": This affair between Laban and Jacob had taken up the whole day, at evening they feasted together upon the covenant being made, and then tarried all night to take their rest.

Jacob gave thanks to God for protecting him in all of this. We should always remember and thank God for His goodness.

**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 unto his place."**

"And early in the morning Laban rose up": In order to prepare for, and set forward on his journey home.

"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.

"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).

Laban was finally satisfied, after kissing his children and grandchildren, he returned home.

### **Genesis Chapter 31 Continued Questions**

1. What did Jacob say was to happen to the one the images were found with?
2. Was Jacob aware who had them?
3. Where did Laban search?
4. Where had Rachel hidden them?
5. What excuse did Rachel give for not rising?
6. What additional sin did Rachel commit?
7. What reasons might she have taken them for?
8. Besides provoking Laban, who was angered?
9. What question did Jacob ask Laban?
10. Who did Jacob say should judge between him and Laban?
11. In our modern English, what did Jacob say to Laban?
12. How many years had Jacob been with Laban?

13. How many years had he worked to get Leah and Rachel?
14. Who took the loss, when a wild animal tore one of the flock?
15. Why was Laban blessed?
16. Was Jacob an eight hour a day worker? Explain.
17. Who did Jacob give credit for saving him?
18. Why did God protect Jacob?
19. What did Laban claim as his own that was Jacob's?
20. Laban said because of Leah and Rachel he would not harm Jacob, but what was the real reason?
21. How did Jacob and Laban settle this?
22. What did the two men build?
23. What did they do to seal the friendship?
24. "Galeed" Means What?
25. What was another name for the place?
26. What does "Mizpah" mean?
27. What was the heap and pillar to remind them of?
28. Who was their witness?
29. Who did they swear by?
30. What did Jacob do after all the treaty was over?
31. What was the last thing Laban did before he went home?