

Pentwater Bible Church

Laban Confronts Jacob *Genesis Message Sixty-Five* *Genesis 31: 22-42*



Laban Seeking his idols by Peitro da Cortona (1596-1669)

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

HE LEADETH ME

1. He lead - eth me: O bless-ed tho't! O words with heav - 'nly com-fort fraught!
2. Some-times 'mid scenes of deep-est gloom, Some-times where E - den's bow - ers bloom,
3. Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine, Nor ev - er mur - mur nor re - pine,
4. And when my task on earth is done, When by Thy grace the vic-t'ry's won,

What - e'er I do, wher - e'er I be, Still 'tis God's hand that lead - eth me.
By wa - ters still, o'er trou - bled sea Still 'tis His hand that lead - eth me.
Con - tent, what - ev - er lot I see, Since 'tis my God that lead - eth me.
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee, Since God thru Jor - dan lead - eth me.

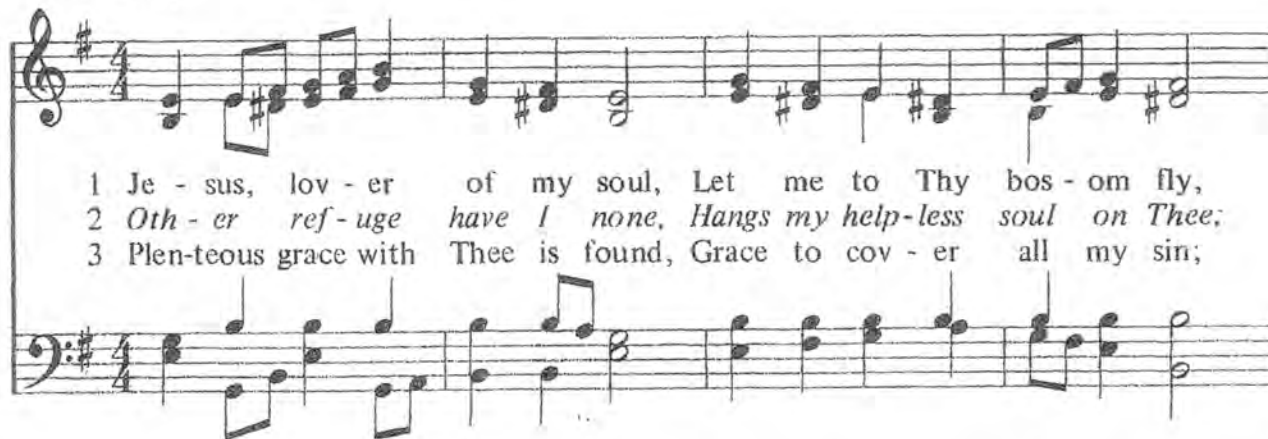
Chorus

He lead - eth me, He lead - eth me, By His own hand He lead - eth me;

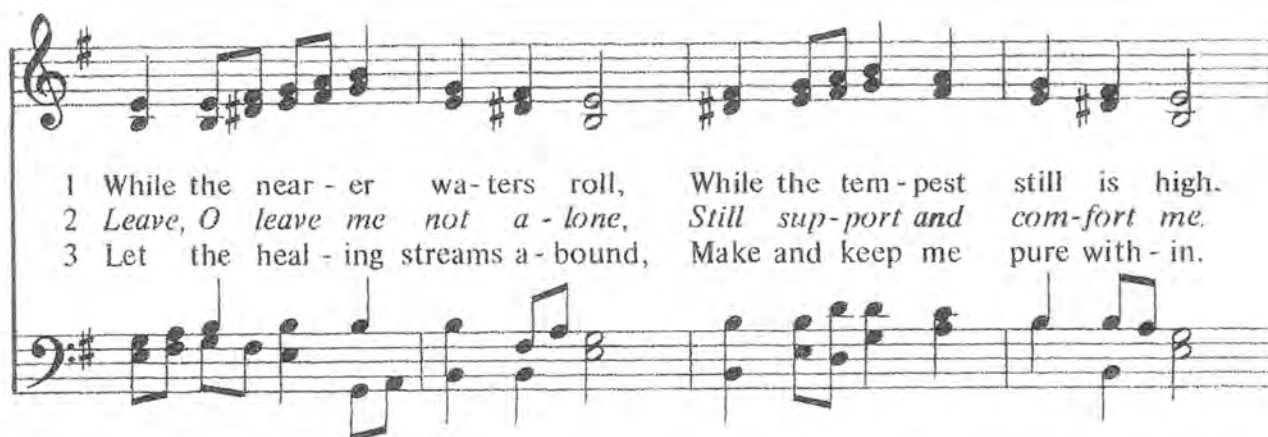
His faith - ful fol - low'r I would be, For by His hand He lead - eth me.

Jesus Lover of My Soul

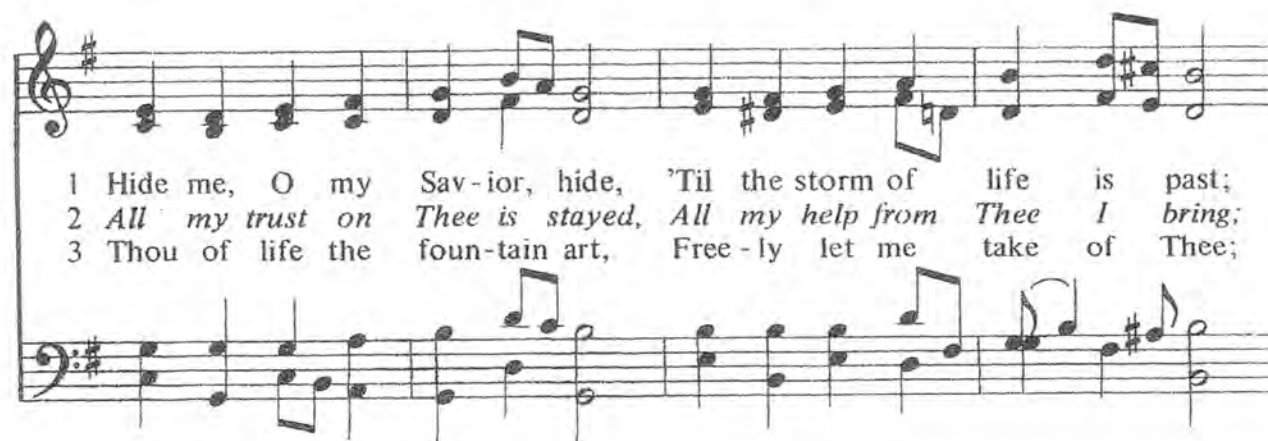
Charles Wesley



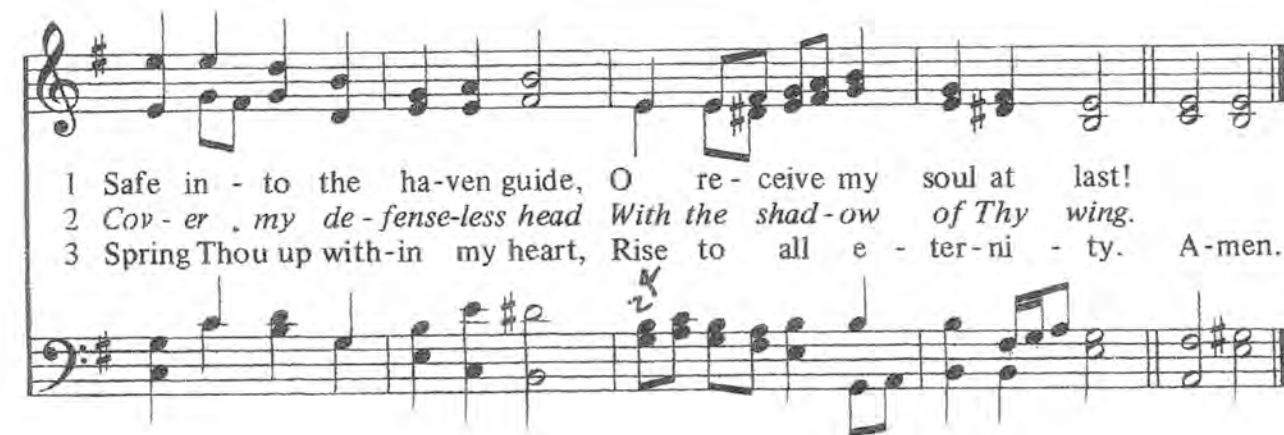
1 Je - sus, lov - er of my soul, Let me to Thy bos - om fly,
2 Oth - er ref - uge have I none, Hangs my help - less soul on Thee;
3 Plen - teous grace with Thee is found, Grace to cov - er all my sin;



1 While the near - er wa - ters roll, While the tem - pest still is high.
2 Leave, O leave me not a - lone, Still sup - port and com - fort me.
3 Let the heal - ing streams a - bound, Make and keep me pure with - in.



1 Hide me, O my Sav - ior, hide, 'Til the storm of life is past;
2 All my trust on Thee is stayed, All my help from Thee I bring;
3 Thou of life the foun - tain art, Free - ly let me take of Thee;



1 Safe in - to the ha - ven guide, O re - ceive my soul at last!
2 Cov - er my de - fense - less head With the shad - ow of Thy wing.
3 Spring Thou up with - in my heart, Rise to all e - ter - ni - ty. A - men.

Dentwater Bible Church

Genesis Message Sixty-Five

Laban Confronts Jacob

May 6, 2012

Daniel E. Woodhead

Review:

JACOB RECEIVED ORDERS FROM GOD

Genesis 31: 1-13

Now Jacob heard what Laban's sons were saying about how they thought he had stolen from their father. Envy, a fruit of the flesh, never leads to a Godly end for those who choose to embrace it. Jacob needed this as additional motivation to leave Haran and journey back to his home in Bethel. They thought they would continue to receive the benefit of Jacob's servitude to Laban but now Jacob had become wealthy. Their principal complaint was that, *Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory*. Their statements were certainly false. Untruths does not seem to deter the worldly in their quest to acquire or advance at all cost. Laban had chosen not to abide to the agreement he made with Jacob and that was reflected in his son's attitude. Our children will see what we do and follow it as appropriate behavior. Further Jacob saw the Laban's negative attitude reflected in his countenance. He knew it was time to leave. He had the problem though that he had not heard from his mother Rebecca that Esau was no longer planning on killing him.

This was a dilemma for Jacob. He knew he had to leave but didn't know if it was safe to return or not. Jehovah God then came to Jacob again for the second time. It had been twenty years since the first appearance. This time he received instructions from Jehovah, to return to his home, together with assurance of divine protection. With God saying to Jacob *and I will be with thee*, he now had the promise that whatever happened when he returned he would be in God's will and therefore protected.

The rest of the family had never known Canaan. Their lives had always been lived in Haran. Jacob took that into consideration when he explained the situation to them. He sent for Rachel and Leah. He wanted them to come to him at work in the field. Jacob's trust of Laban and his sons had disintegrated to the point of needing to discuss this matter in the field so they could not eavesdrop. He simply told them that he saw it in Laban's face that his attitude toward him had changed and that God had assured him that he was with him. He further went on explaining that he served Laban for almost fourteen years and now Laban had changed his wages ten times and was forcing him out despite the good and faithful service he rendered to him. Jacob realized the true source of his wealth and protection and was now prepared to act upon God's command. Laban's deviousness had worked against him as it always does in the long run. God sees everything and *hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me*. Jacob then went on to elaborate just exactly what God did to cause the increase in Jacob's wealth and the reduction in Laban's.

The Lord said to Jacob that He was the source of the multi-colored flocks he had gained. Jacob still thought that it was the rods, which was the prevalent superstition

utilized at that time to force the recessive genes' to production of the desired characteristics in the flock's offspring's. God was essentially telling him (*God said unto me in the dream*) that the outcome would have been favorable to him regardless of whether he used the rods or not. The vision God gave him showed him that, *all the he-goats which leap upon the flock are ringstreaked, speckled, and grizzled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee*. What God had allowed Jacob to see as the flock mated were the characteristics of the recessive genes, which would become the characteristics of the offspring. God did not fault Jacob for anything. He saw Laban's manner and now put him under the cursing aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. Prior to this while Laban was being blessed through Jacob God was allowing the blessing aspect of the Covenant to be rendered to Laban. The Lord reminded Jacob of the vow twenty years earlier and told him to return to the Land of Canaan.

LEAH AND RACHEL REACT

Genesis 31: 14-16

Jacob did not consult the concubines only his wives in the decision to leave Haran. The concubines are excluded because their lower social status as acquired staff. They were not from the family of Laban so that makes it unnecessary for Jacob to seek their agreement to his plan. Both Leah and Rachel resented what Laban had done. Their inheritance was lost and they believed that Laban their father was treating them as outsiders and not family members. Instead of having some money for them he *hath sold us, and hath also quite devoured our money*. Laban was an unworthy father and used them as well as Jacob to advance himself. Their pent up feelings of bitterness come pouring out when Jacob told them that they would be leaving for Canaan. So they were delighted at the prospect of leaving a difficult situation and making a new life in Canaan away from the constricting grip of their father Laban. They realized that it was God making the provisions for their family and blessing Jacob. All they could say was *whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do*. They were all for leaving and told Jacob to do whatever God said. Go For It!

JACOB'S ESCAPE

Genesis 31: 17-21

Jacob then began his journey with his family, and all the property that he had acquired in Paddan-Aram, to return to his father in Canaan. He set them on camels, which is actually a "camel cushion" for hiding. He had traded some of the cattle affirming his skills as a businessman as well as at animal husbandry. At that time Laban had gone to the sheep shearing, which kept him a goodly distance from his home on account of the size of his flock.

It is quite clear why Jacob selected this particular time to leave. All of the men of Laban's house would be far away and busy with the sheep-shearing task.

Rachel then decided to rob him of his *teraphim*. These were small images of household gods in human form, which were worshipped as givers of earthly prosperity, and also consulted as oracles, and whosoever had possession of them could claim the family property. It was quite possible that she had not give herself over fully yet to

Jehovah God in spite of the blessing He had given this family. Or since she was angry at being disinherited she wanted to take something of value from Laban. She did steal them. and had no right to take them. One does not retaliate for a wrong by doing an unjustified act.

In the case of Jacob, however, the *terafim* could not have assured inheritance rights since he claimed nothing from Laban and, was leaving Mesopotamia for good. He left without Laban's knowledge.

Today's Message:

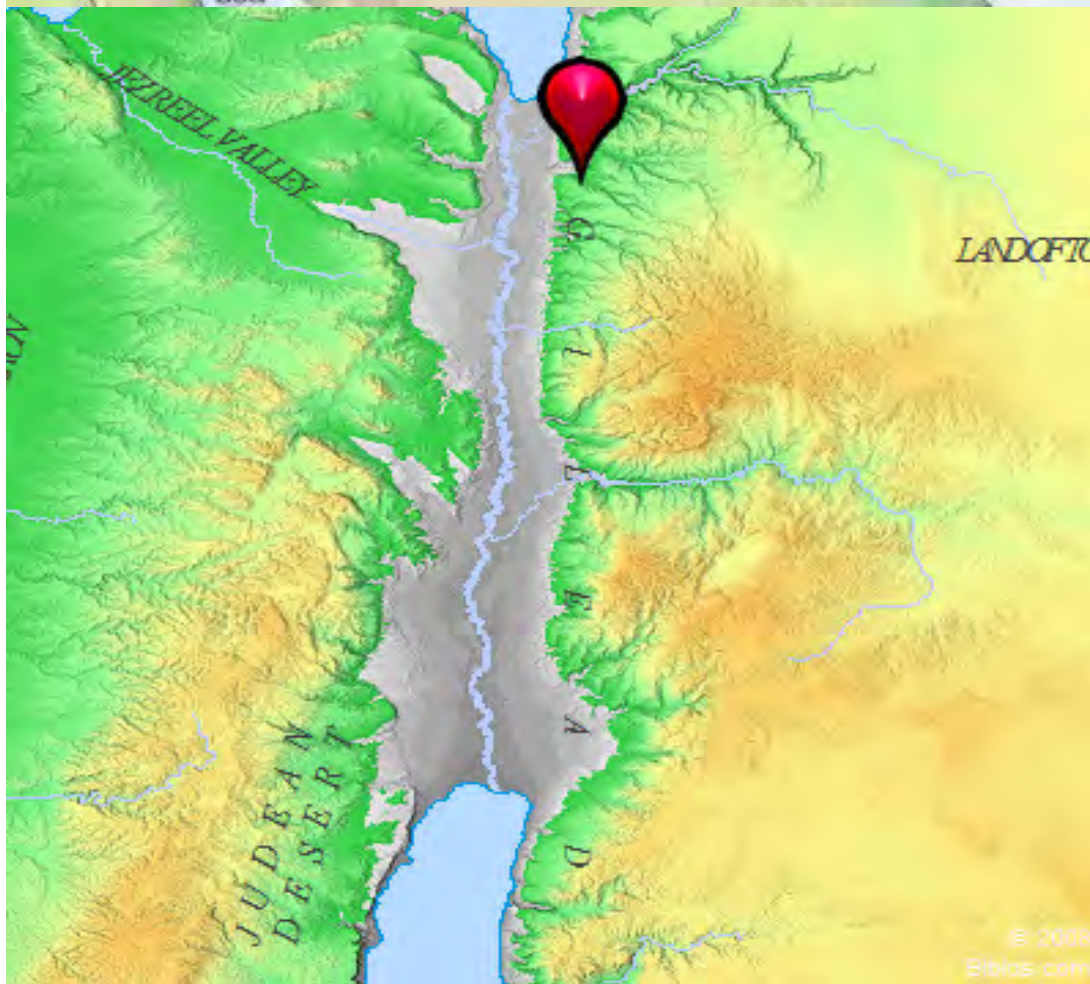
LABAN CONFRONTS JACOB

Genesis 31: 22-30

22And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. 23And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the mountain of Gilead. 24And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said unto him, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 25And Laban came up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain: and Laban with his brethren encamped in the mountain of Gilead. 26And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword? 27Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp; 28and didst not suffer me to kiss my sons and my daughters? now hast thou done foolishly. 29It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. 30And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods? (ASV 1901)

Laban was told about Jacob and all his entourage leaving Paddan-Aram three days after they had gone. Interestingly, it was the same time/distance that Laban had separated the promised sheep from the flock that Jacob was breeding (Genesis 30: 36). So Laban had almost the same distance from Jacob as he had placed his sheep away from him. Jacob however had to travel much slower than Laban due to the size of his family and possessions. Laban accompanied by his clan took seven days to catch Jacob since Jacob had a three-day head start. Laban finally overtook Jacob in the mountains of Gilead, which is south east of the Sea of Galilee on the east side of the Jordan River east of Shechem. Laban must have been quite angry to initiate a pursuit as quickly as he did after finding out that Jacob had left. Laban had three reasons for pursuing Jacob. He wanted to continue the indentured servitude and more importantly he wanted his *gods* back. He found value in these idols. From the text it appears that Laban was going to wreak vengeance on Jacob when he found him. Something happened to Laban the night before he caught up with Jacob to temper his anger towards Jacob.

Just as Laban the Syrian drew near to Jacob the Lord God appeared to him in a dream and said, *“Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.”*



Maps of Jacob's Travel and Laban's Pursuit (Gilead)

The text makes a clear the distinction between the Israelite Jacob and the pagan Laban. In doing so the Genesis writer identifies Laban as a Syrian. God told Laban to stay neutral when confronting Jacob (“*Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad*”). Apparently he was just ready to confront Jacob with his anger and hurt him until God warned him not to do that. When he confronted Jacob he started the diatribe against him with his secret flight away from him. He said, “*What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives of the sword?*” Then he let him know that he wanted to have a feast at his departing. Laban asked, “*Wherefore didst thou flee secretly, and steal away from me, and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth and with songs, with tabret and with harp.*” Finally, in this first verbal attack Laban cites the third reason to pursue Jacob, that his feelings were supposedly wounded. He said he did not get to kiss his children. He said, “*and didst not suffer me to kiss my sons and my daughters?*” Now Laban concluded his verbal attack on Jacob by saying, “*now hast thou done foolishly.*” Interestingly, as Laban initially characterizes the situation as a theft he quick moves it from the legal to the personal by claiming to be hurt. Now Laban reveals his true intent toward Jacob, to hurt him if God had not intervened. Laban recognized that Jehovah was the God of Jacob but not his god. But nevertheless he acquiesced and did as God had said He must do. He told Jacob the nature of the command. He said, “*but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take heed to thyself that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.*” Laban knew that Jehovah God had told him to stay neutral with Jacob and this included trying to get him back to Paddan-Aram. He realizes that Jacob needed to go back to his family in Israel. However, he concludes this segment of his attack with a question that even if the secret departure can be explained, the theft of his gods cannot.

JACOB RESPONDS TO LABAN

Genesis 31: 31-2

³¹And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Lest thou shouldest take thy daughters from me by force. ³²With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, he shall 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 (ASV 1901).

Jacob responds with a very concise statement. He frankly admitted that he sneaked away perhaps mistakenly, but he did not believe that Laban would ever let him go and if so he would probably try and hold Rachel and Leah in Paddan-Aram by force. This would have made it impossible for him to leave because he was not going to abandon his family. This certainly implies that Laban would have used the daughters as leverage to keep Jacob thereby having his servitude continue. Both Leah and Rachel knew his temperament and affirmed that with Jacob just before they left Paddan-Aram (Genesis 31: 14-16). Even though Laban stated the he realized that Jacob had to go to his father’s home and he didn’t want to prevent him from doing so the text reveals that his actual plan, (which was stopped by God), was to do just the opposite of what he was saying. Then Jacob says the flight was justified, because he feared that Laban might have

robbed him of his wives by force. He implies that this was a more realistic prospect than the joyous send-off Laban was bemoaning being deprived of. Laban, it should be noted, used the Hebrew verb *ganav* גָּנַב “to steal,” three times. Jacob’s answer uses the much harsher *gazel*, גָּזַל, “to remove by force, or to kidnap.” Laban was threatened that some day with the *teraphim* Jacob could come back to Paddan-Aram and claim Laban’s property. This was the chief reason he pursued Jacob. He wanted the *teraphim* back. He really didn’t care about anything else in his selfishness and worldly attitude. This is pure covetousness on Laban’s part. It drives people to do harmful things to others. Later under the Mosaic Law (Cir. 1443 B.C.) it would be codified as a general safeguard against many other sins, particularly commandments six through nine (murder, adultery, stealing, and false testimony). Israelites were not to long for, desire earnestly, or lust after what legitimately belonged to others. Even though Christians are not under the Mosaic Law we are nevertheless prohibited from these activities in the New Testament within Christ’s Law for us as Christians. So Jacob openly in front of witnesses, in his ignorance of Rachel’s theft allows Laban to examine his camp for what he believes was stolen from him. Jacob issues a death penalty on the perpetrator of the theft. The death penalty was actually issued on Rachel. Now she lived for a while longer but she died young. Perhaps to only thirty-nine years of age. The Orthodox Jews say that she died as a result of this death penalty that Jacob issued (Bereshit Rabbah 84: 9).

RACHEL HIDES THE TERAPHIM

Genesis 31: 33-35

³³And Laban went into Jacob’s tent, and into Leah’s tent, and into the tent of the two maid-servants; but he found them not. And he went out of Leah’s tent, and entered into Rachel’s tent. ³⁴Now Rachel had taken the teraphim, and put them in the camel’s saddle, and sat upon them. And Laban felt about all the tent, but found them not. ³⁵And she said to her father, Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise up before thee; for the manner of women is upon me. And he searched, but found not the teraphim (ASV 1901).

Laban begins his search and starts with Jacob’s tent. He then moves to Leah’s and Bilhah and Zilpah’s tents. He finally goes to Rachel’s tent. She had previously put the *teraphim* in a compartment of her saddle called a *palanquin*. She was sitting on this in the tent when Laban arrive for an inspection. As Laban is feeling around the tent and not finding the *teraphim* Rachel asks to be excused in that she is menstruating and cannot rise to appropriately greet him, calling him her lord. The ancient Israelites viewed the menstruating woman as unclean and men would avoid them until her period was concluded with a *mikveh* or ritual bath for purity (Leviticus 15: 19-24). Until then any person coming in contact with her and even the common household objects would be considered unclean. They also believed that the uncleanness which was communicably transmitted to others. So Laban wanting to avoid the perceived contaminating effect of Rachel’s menses leaves her alone. Her saddle (palanquin) was therefore untouched by Laban and he did not find the *teraphim*.

JACOB ANGER TOWARD LABAN

Genesis 31: 36-42

³⁶And 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 hotly pursued after me? ³⁷Whereas thou hast felt about 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 two. ³⁸These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flocks have I not eaten. ³⁹That 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. ⁴⁰Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep fled from mine eyes. ⁴¹These twenty years have I been in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy flock: and thou hast changed my wages ten times. ⁴²Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now hadst thou sent me away empty. God hath seen mine affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight (ASV 1901).

As a result of Laban failing to find any evidence of a theft of his *teraphim* Jacob got real angry with him. He asked him, “where was his evidence of a theft?” Now Jacob was going to strongly let Laban know exactly how bad a father in law he was. Jacob goes from being the accused to the accuser toward Laban. Jacob cites five positive individual characteristics of his service to Laban for twenty years.

1. None of any of Laban’s ewes and she-goats ever miscarried
2. Jacob never ate any of the flocks when he was hungry
3. Jacob bore the loss of any of the flock destroyed by wild animals. In the ancient shepherders code of conduct an overseer could claim *force-majeur* by providing evidence of the loss and thereby avoid personal responsibility. Jacob absorbed the loss himself and not Laban.
4. Jacob had to make good for stolen property himself.
5. He suffered many sleepless nights over his responsibility to guard the flock.

Jacob could have had an even greater gain had he not sacrificed his personal gain for Laban. He could have claimed his rights under the prevailing laws such as those found in the ancient Code of Hammurabi.

Now still on the attack he begins to recount the cheating that Laban had exercised upon him for many years. He starts with the forced fourteen-year servitude for Rachel instead of the agreed upon seven. Laban changed Jacob’s wages ten times over the twenty years. In all aspects of the agreements between the two men it was Laban who proved untrustworthy not Jacob. Jacob concluded this with his reliance on Jehovah’s intervention to correct Laban’s nefarious stratagems. Laban would never have given Jacob the traditionally required severance payment without which he would have

remained poor and unable to provide for his family without Laban's assistance. Laban's plan was to keep Jacob in servitude. Laban now realized that Jacob had come full circle from a dependent poor stranger to a wealthy man who did not need or would not be intimidated by Laban. Laban could do nothing to Jacob except end the relationship on some superficially amicable terms. Laban was beaten and realized it. God is in control of all things and he used Laban to correct Jacob but not to irreparably harm him. Jacob grew mightily during his time with Laban and God's Abrahamic Covenant is evident as Jacob is the beneficiary.

NEXT WEEK: LABAN & JACOB MAKE A COVENANT

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

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ARE YOU WASHED IN THE BLOOD?

1. Have you been to Je - sus for the cleans - ing pow'r? Are you washed in the
 2. Are you walk - ing dai - ly by the Sav - ior's side? Are you washed in the
 3. When the Bride-groom com - eth will your robes be white, pure and white in the
 4. Lay a - side the gar - ments that are stained with sin, And be washed in the

blood of the Lamb? Are you ful - ly trust - ing in His grace this hour? Are you
 blood of the Lamb? Do you rest each mo - ment in the Cru - ci - fied? Are you
 blood of the Lamb? Will your soul be read - y for the man - sions bright, And be
 blood of the Lamb; There's a foun - tain flow - ing for the soul un - clean, O be

Chorus

washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are you washed in the blood,
 Are you washed in the blood,

In the soul-cleans-ing blood of the Lamb? Are your gar - ments spot - less?
 of the Lamb?

Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?