

Lesson: Family Drama and the Promise Pt 2 (Gen 31:1-55)

Jacob, the trickster, ended up being deceived by Laban. Having been deceived about his wives and his labor, he heeded God’s call and is now ready to leave and return home to the land of Canaan. The drama he experienced with Laban would only heighten with Laban chasing after him with the intent of bringing him and his family back. But because of God’s protection of Jacob, Jacob would be able to return home with some helpful bumps along the road.

Biblical Takeaways

1. *Jacob tries to escape Laban (Gen 31:1-21)*

- a. Jacob’s blessedness got him in trouble with Laban and his sons. Laban’s sons in their jealousy claimed Jacob was getting rich off of their father, essentially saying what Jacob had belonged to them (v. 1). Laban began to despise Jacob for his increase. The source of Laban’s blessing became a cause for jealousy.
- b. Jacob sensed Laban’s change of heart and the Lord spoke to him to let him know it was time for him to leave. (vv. 2-3). God promised, if he would return home, he would be with him.
- c. Jacob explained to his wives and family why he needed to go. Laban had changed his wages 10 times. But God protected Jacob by giving to him whatever Laban was trying to take away. Jacob even had another dream (foreshadowing Joseph) which confirmed God’s protection of him against the wiles of Laban (vv. 10-13). Rachel and Leah were ready to leave as they saw a disconnect with their father and wanted to follow what God had told their husband. They all began to journey to the land of Canaan without telling Laban. Rachel stole her household gods while leaving (v. 19).

2. *Laban confronts Jacob (Gen 31:22-42)*

- a. Laban chased after Jacob but the Lord confronted him along the way and warned him not to say anything good or bad to Jacob. This is idiomatic in that Laban was not to try anything harmful against Jacob (v. 24).
- b. Laban was mad about Jacob’s deception (vv. 26-27). He called Jacob’s children “his sons and daughters.” He was possessive in harmful ways. But he knew he could only go so far because God would get him (v. 29). He also wanted his gods back not knowing Rachel took them. Rachel lied about taking them and claimed to be on her cycle to not have to get up and reveal she had them (vv. 34-35).
- c. Jacob admitted it was because of God’s help that he was able to have anything. God always protects his people from those who would take advantage of them.

3. *Jacob and Laban’s covenant (Gen 31:43-55)*

- a. Despite Laban’s possessiveness (v. 42), he realized he needed to make a covenant with Jacob. Jacob took a stone and the family gathered stones and made a heap of them. Laban’s name is Aramaic and Jacob’s name for the place is Hebrew.
- b. They called the place Mizpah (watchtower in Hebrew). This means watching out for aggression. The watching God would do was for violations of agreed terms. This landmark served a marker where God would witness between them that there would be no harm done from one to the other or Laban’s daughters (vv. 52-53). Jacob and Laban left on prickly terms but they had an understanding.