

Genesis 31

Verses 1-3

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." ² And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not *friendly* toward him as *it had been* before. ³ Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth."

Here we find out that Laban had some sons but Rachel was shepherding the sheep when Jacob first came to Haran. From this it is probably safe to assume that his sons were older than Rachael.

David was the youngest in his family and he had the same job.

See 1 Samuel 17:14-15

¹⁴ So David was the youngest. Now the three oldest followed Saul, ¹⁵ but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's flock at Bethlehem.

Laban's sons blamed Jacob for their fathers declining wealth but Laban had agreed to Joseph's conditions of employment. Also Jacob had earned his wages through hard work and God had advised and helped Jacob so he would become wealthy.

² And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not *friendly* toward him as *it had been* before. ³ Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.

We don't know exactly when Laban's attitude began to change but by the end of the sixth year Jacob needed to leave town.

There was good reason to leave but Jacob may have needed a push, so God tells him to leave. Jacob is 97 years old at this time

See chart 3105

Ch	Person	Event	Age	Year
25	Isaac	Esau and Jacob born	60	1836
25	Abraham	Abraham dies	175	1821
26	Esau	Marries two Hittites	40	1796
25	Ishmael	Ishmael dies	137	1773
27 - 28	Isaac	blessing	137	1759
27 - 28	Jacob	Trip to Haran	77	1759
29	Jacob	7 years for Rachel	77-84	1752
29 - 30	Jacob	7 years and 11 sons	84-91	1752 - 1745
30	Jacob	Joseph born	91	1745
31	Jacob	6 years for the flocks	91 to 97	1745 to 1739
32-33		Jacob & Esau reunite	97	1739
35	Jacob	Benjamin born	97	1739
35	Rachel	Dies giving birth	35	1739

Verses 4 - 13

⁴ So Jacob sent *word* and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, ⁵ and said to them, “I see your father’s attitude, that it is not *friendly* toward me as *it was* before, but the God of my father has been with me. ⁶ You know that I have served your father with all my strength. ⁷ Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to do me harm. ⁸ If he said this: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock delivered speckled; and if he said this: ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock delivered striped. ⁹ So God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me. ¹⁰ And it came about at the time when the flock was breeding that I raised my eyes and saw in a dream—and behold—the male goats that were mating *were* striped, speckled, or mottled. ¹¹ Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob’; and I said, ‘Here I am.’ ¹² He said, ‘Now raise your eyes and see *that* all the male goats that are mating are striped, speckled, or mottled; for I have seen everything that Laban has been doing to you. ¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a memorial stone, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’”

⁶ You know that I have served your father with all my strength. ⁷ Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to do me harm.

Jacob wanted his wives to know how he had done his job to the best of his ability but Laban had mistreated him by changing his wages 10 times. Because of this he was justified in asking them to leave all their relatives.

The 10 times that Jacob makes reference to here happened in the last 6 years. We know this because this was when they agreed to this new contract which included Jacob having his own flocks.

⁸ If he said this: ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock delivered speckled; and if he said this: ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock delivered striped. ⁹ So God has taken away your father’s livestock and given them to me.

Laban had taken advantage of Jacob concerning Rachel and Leah (the morning surprise) and then he tried to cheat Jacob out of his wages. So God punished Laban for his greed and gave his wealth to Jacob.

There is a well-known drug store that cut the wages of their managers and gave their CEO a huge raise and bonus. Does anyone think God that will just look the other way? It took a while, just like it did with Laban & Jacob, but the stock of that company fell from around \$60 per share to \$15 per share. Our God is a God of grace but He is also the God that judges nations and all of mankind.

¹⁰ And it came about at the time when the flock was breeding that I raised my eyes and saw in a dream—and behold—the male goats that were mating were striped, speckled, or mottled.

This was not some clever scheme devised by Jacob, but rather God showed him which animals would be the most productive.

¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a memorial stone, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.’”

God had kept his part of the vow and it would soon be Jacob's time to keep his part.

See Genesis 28:20-22

²⁰ Jacob also made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and give me food to eat and garments to wear, ²¹ and I return to my father’s house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. ²² And this stone, which I have set up as a memorial stone, will be God’s house, and of everything that You give me I will assuredly give a tenth to You.”

Verses 14 -16

¹⁴ Rachel and Leah said to him, “Do we still have any share or inheritance in our father’s house? ¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. ¹⁶ Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has told you.”

¹⁵ Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price.

Laban was due a “bride price” which is a payment from the groom, or his family, to the bride's parents and Jacob paid this to Laban by working for him for 7 years. However, Laban took advantage of Jacob by deceiving him and he also cheated both of his daughters because they had to share one husband.

Verses 17-21

¹⁷ Then Jacob stood up and put his children and his wives on camels; ¹⁸ and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had acquired, the livestock he possessed which he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. ¹⁹ Laban had gone to shear his flock, and Rachel stole the household idols that were her father’s. ²⁰ And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had; and he got up and crossed the *Euphrates* River, and set out for the hill country of Gilead.

¹⁷ Then Jacob stood up and put his children and his wives on camels; ¹⁸ and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had acquired, the livestock he possessed which he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

Jacob had 4 wives, 11 sons and a number of daughters. The only daughter we know something about is Dinah. The male children were 6 to 13 years old.

See Genesis 37:35

³⁴ So Jacob tore his clothes, and put on a sackcloth *undergarment* over his waist, and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ Then all his sons and all his daughters got up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, “Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.” So his father wept for him.

Plus Jacob had herds of goats, sheep and cattle to deal with.

¹⁹ Laban had gone to shear his flock, and Rachel stole the household idols that were her father’s.

There was a 3 day’s journey between Laban and Jacob so when Rachel heard that they would be leaving she must have traveled to her father’s house, taken the idols, and then returned home. Even if she only stayed a short time at her father’s house this trip would have taken a week.

These were small idols that could fit in the palm of your hand

See pic 3110 Household Idols



²⁰ And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing.

Jacob and his wives had been treated poorly but this was not the right thing to do. Laban had the right to say goodbye to his daughters and grandkids.

²¹ So he fled with all that he had; and he got up and crossed the Euphrates River, and set out for the hill country of Gilead.

See Pic 3115 The Euphrates River



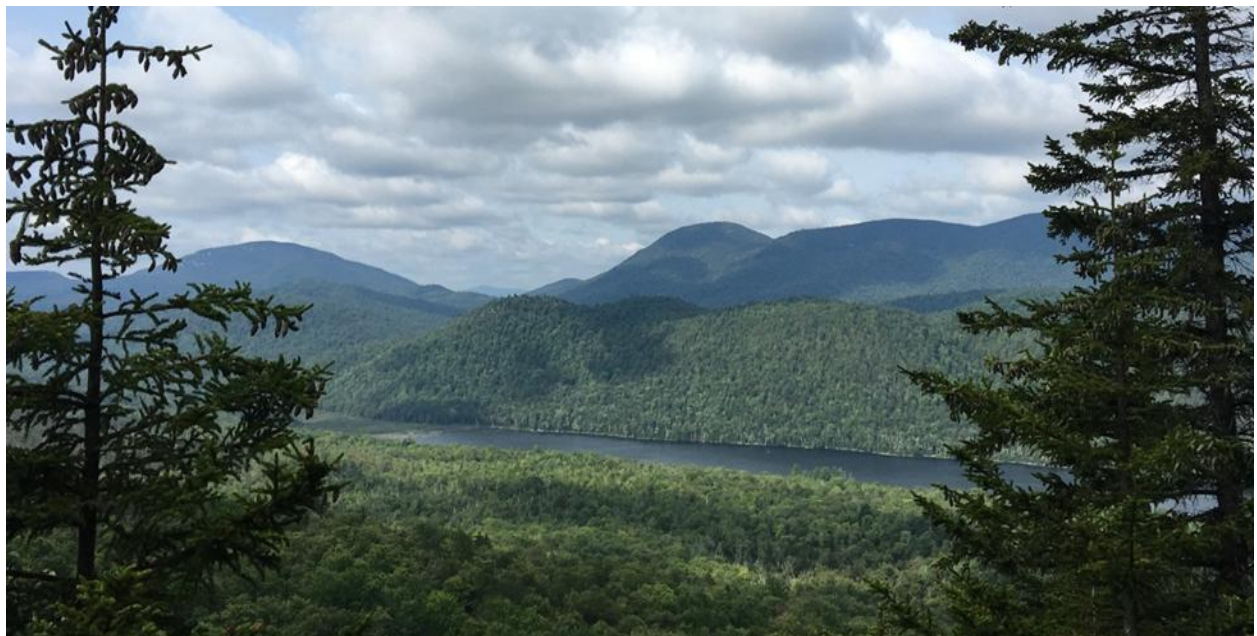
This is the Euphrates River of our time, not 1739 BC, but it gives us a general idea of the terrain that they had to traverse.

They were headed for the land of Gilead a mountainous region east of the Jordan River.

See Map 3120 Mount Gilead



See pic 3125 The Beauty of Mount Gilead



Verses 22 - 24

²² When Laban was informed on the third day that Jacob had fled, ²³ he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁴ However, God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night and said to him, "Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad."

When Jacob left, it took someone 3 days to get back to Laban and let him know. Since Laban caught up in 7 days, Jacob had been traveling for 10 days. Jacob and his clan traveled about 350 miles in 10 days so they averaged about 35 miles per day. That was quite a task considering he had 12 children and herds of animals.

Laban had the means to hurt Jacob but God told him not to let things get out of hand.

Verses 25-32

²⁵ And Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead. ²⁶ Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword? ²⁷ Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with tambourine and with lyre; ²⁸ and did not allow me to kiss my grandchildren and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly. ²⁹ It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.' ³⁰ Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; *but* why did you steal my gods?" ³¹ Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. ³² The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our relatives point out what is yours among my belongings and take *it* for yourself." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

²⁶ Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword? ²⁷ Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with tambourine and with lyre; ²⁸ and did not allow me to kiss my grandchildren and my daughters? Now you have done foolishly.

Laban had 3 complaints against Jacob.

1. Why did you carry away my daughters like captives of the sword?
2. Why did you flee secretly and deceive me?
3. Why did you not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughter's goodbye?

³⁰ Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house; but why did you steal my gods?

Laban was willing to overlook the issues he had just mentioned but he was still upset that someone had stolen his household gods.

The fact that Rachel made the 6 day trip to steal Laban's gods at a time when Jacob was pressed to leave quickly suggests that she really wanted these gods.

³² The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our relatives point out what is yours among my belongings and take *it* for yourself." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

Jacob recognized that Laban had a fair complaint and gave him permission to search through their possessions. His statement that the guilty one should be put to death was a bit hasty and he would have been bound to keep his word if Rachel had not deceived her father.

Verses 33-35

³³ So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two slave women, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddlebag, and she sat on them. So Laban searched through all the tent, but did not find *them*. ³⁵ And she said to her father, "May my lord not be angry that I cannot stand in your presence, because the way of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols.

The sin of stealing led to the sin of lying.

Verses 36 - 37

³⁶ Then Jacob became angry and argued with Laban; and Jacob said to Laban, “What is my offense? What is my sin that you have hotly pursued me? ³⁷ Though you have searched through all my property, what have you found of all your household property? Set *it* here in front of my relatives and your relatives, so that they may decide between the two of us.

Jacob knew he was innocent of Laban's accusations so he told him to put up or shut up. When Laban could not produce any evidence of wrongdoing on Jacob's part, Jacob turned the spot light on Laban.

Verses 38 - 42

³⁸ For these twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. ³⁹ I did not even bring to you that which was torn *by wild animals*; I took the loss myself. You demanded it of my hand *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night. ⁴⁰ *This is how* I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. ⁴¹ For these twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, 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 for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night.”

³⁹ I did not even bring to you that which was torn *by wild animals*; I took the loss myself.

Jacob went beyond what any employer should expect by taking the loss out of his wages so Laban would not suffer any loss.

⁴⁰ *This is how* I was: by day the heat consumed me and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.

Jacob worked long hours under difficult conditions.

⁴² If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night.”

Laban was greedy and unthankful to Joseph for his hard work and loyalty but when God judged Laban he was told not to hurt Jacob in any way and all that God had given back to Jacob was his to keep.

There is a well-known restaurant that was taken over by a billionaire and one of the first things he did was dissolve the restaurant manager's pension plan and made a onetime payment of \$50 for each year that they had worked for the company. So a manager that had been with them for 20 years received a check for 1,000 dollars instead of a retirement payment plan that was potentially worth 200,000. God is watching each and every one of us.

Verse 43

⁴³ Then Laban replied to Jacob, “The daughters are **my daughters, the children are **my** grandchildren, the flocks are **my** flocks, and everything that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these daughters of mine or to their children to whom they have given birth?**

Laban was so self-centered that he wasn't able to see the obvious.

1. His daughters were no longer his.

See Genesis 2:24

²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

2. The children of Jacob & Rachel were their children not Laban's.

3. Laban had made an agreement with Jacob about the flocks and Jacob only took what was his.

4. Laban was right about one thing, he could do nothing about his daughters and their children because God had already decided in favor of Jacob.

Verses 44-49

⁴⁴ So now come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and it shall be a witness between you and me.” ⁴⁵ Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a memorial stone. ⁴⁶ Jacob said to his relatives, “Gather stones.” So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷ Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ⁴⁸ Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me this day.” Therefore it was named Galeed, ⁴⁹ and Mizpah, for he said, “May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.

⁴⁴ So now come, let's make a covenant, you and I, and it shall be a witness between you and me.”

Seeing that the two tribes lived 350 miles away from each other, it seems rather odd that a treaty was necessary. However, this may have been more of a face-saving ploy, on the part of Laban, than a covenant to keep the peace.

Verses 50-55

⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, *although* no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.” ⁵¹ Laban also said to Jacob, “Behold this heap and behold the memorial stone which I have set between you and me. ⁵² This heap is a witness, and the memorial stone is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this memorial stone to me, for harm. ⁵³ The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his relatives to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.

⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, *although* no one is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.

This sounds like projection on the part of Laban because he was the one that had mistreated his daughters.

And what was the likelihood that Jacob would take more wives at the age of 97?

⁵⁵ Then early in the morning Laban got up, and kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

Jacob had two major problems to face when he left for home.

1. He had to flee Laban
2. He would have to meet his brother Esau.

Talk about being between a rock and a hard place this was it.

The first problem required an intervention from God. Jacob must have wondered if his meeting with Esau would require the same.

