

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.

Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth

Laban's sons blamed Jacob for their fathers declining wealth

But in actual fact, Laban had agreed to Joseph's conditions of employment

As we will see, it was also God's will that Jacob would prosper

And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not *friendly* toward him as *it had been* before.

How long after the new agreement did it take for Laban's attitude to change?

See chart 3105 6 more years

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	Ismael 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		Jacon & Esau reunite	97	1739
35	Jacob	Benjamin born	97	1739
35	Rachel	Dies giving birth	35	1739

Then the Lord said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.

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, so he had worked another 6 years for Laban

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

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.’”

Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times

The 10 times that Jacob makes reference to happened in the last 6 years

We know this because this was when they agreed to this new contract

Jacob wanted his wives to know how Laban had mistreated him

And that he was justified in asking them to leave all their relatives

So God has taken away your father's livestock and given *them* to me.

Laban had taken advantage of Jacob concerning Rachel and Leah and then tried to cheat Jacob 10 times concerning his wages

So God punished Laban for his greed and gave his wealth to Jacob

And it came about at the time when the flock was breeding that I raised my eyes and saw in a dream

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

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.”

It had been 20 years since Jacob made this vow to God

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

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.”

For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price

There are two parts to this statement:

1. He has sold us

The Bride price is a payment from the groom, or his family, to the bride's parents

Jacob paid this to Laban by working for him for 14 years

2. And he has devoured our money

When Laban cheated Jacob he was also cheating his two daughters

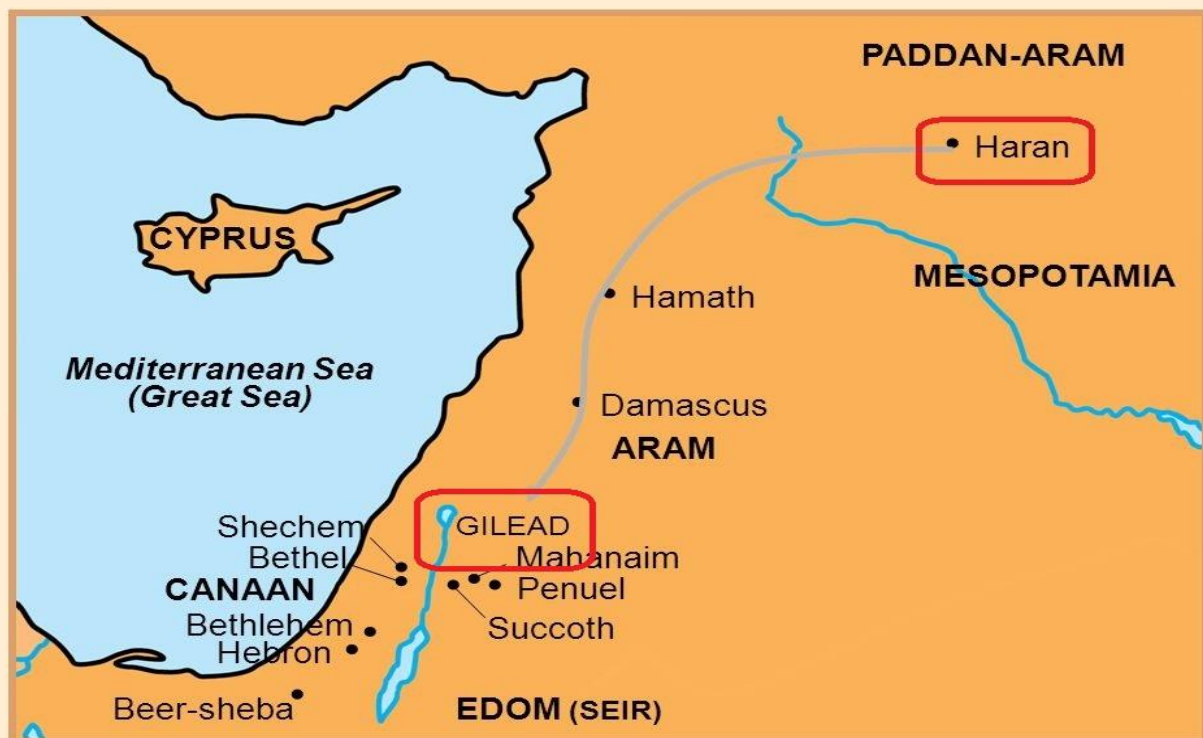
He was also cheating his grand kids out of their future inheritance

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.

To go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.

See Map 3110 Haran to Gilead



Jacob had 4 wives and at least 12 children

The children were from 6 to 13 years old

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

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

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

See pic 3115 Household Idols



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

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 3102 The Euphrates River



We don't know where he crossed but it can be assumed it was in a narrow part of the river that wasn't too deep

And set out for the hill country of Gilead.

Gilead is a mountainous region east of the Jordan River

See map 3125 Mount Gilead



Pic 3130

The Beauty of Mount Gilead



Verses 22-32

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."

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.

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.

When Jacob left for Haran from Beersheba the trip was about 500 miles

On this return trip he stopped in northern Israel, so the distance was about 350 miles

6 years earlier Laban had put a 3 day's journey between him and Jacob

So 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

So Jacob traveled 350 miles in 10 days 35 miles per day

That was quite a task considering he had 12 children and herds of animals

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.”

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

Then Laban said to Jacob, “What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?”

So what complaints did Laban voice to 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?

And now, though you needed to leave, because you longed after your father's house, why have you stolen 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

Since there was a 3 day travel time between Jacob and Laban, when did Rachel have the opportunity to steal Laban’s gods?

Apparently, Rachel had visited her father before they took off

However, the 3 day trip would have taken 6 days just to get there and return

So it seems that Rachel really wanted the household idols

The one with whom you find your gods shall not live

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

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.

Let not my lord be angry that I cannot stand in your presence

The sin of stealing led to the sin of lying

Verses 36-42

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. 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."

Then Jacob became angry and argued with Laban

Jacob repeated the injustices he told his wives

But he gave some additional details in the presence of Laban

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 would expect

He took the loss out of his own wages

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

If the God of my father, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed

This shows the true character of Laban

He was greedy and unthankful to Joseph for his hard work and loyalty

Some companies treat good people bad and bad people good, and then wonder why the work force is no longer loyal

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?**

Everything that you see is mine

Laban was so self-centered, he don't live in reality

The daughters are my daughters

The children are my children

The flocks are my flocks

God sure didn't see it that way and had already made a judgment in Jacobs favor

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.

Let's make a covenant, you and I, and it shall be a witness between you and me.

May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.

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. 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.

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

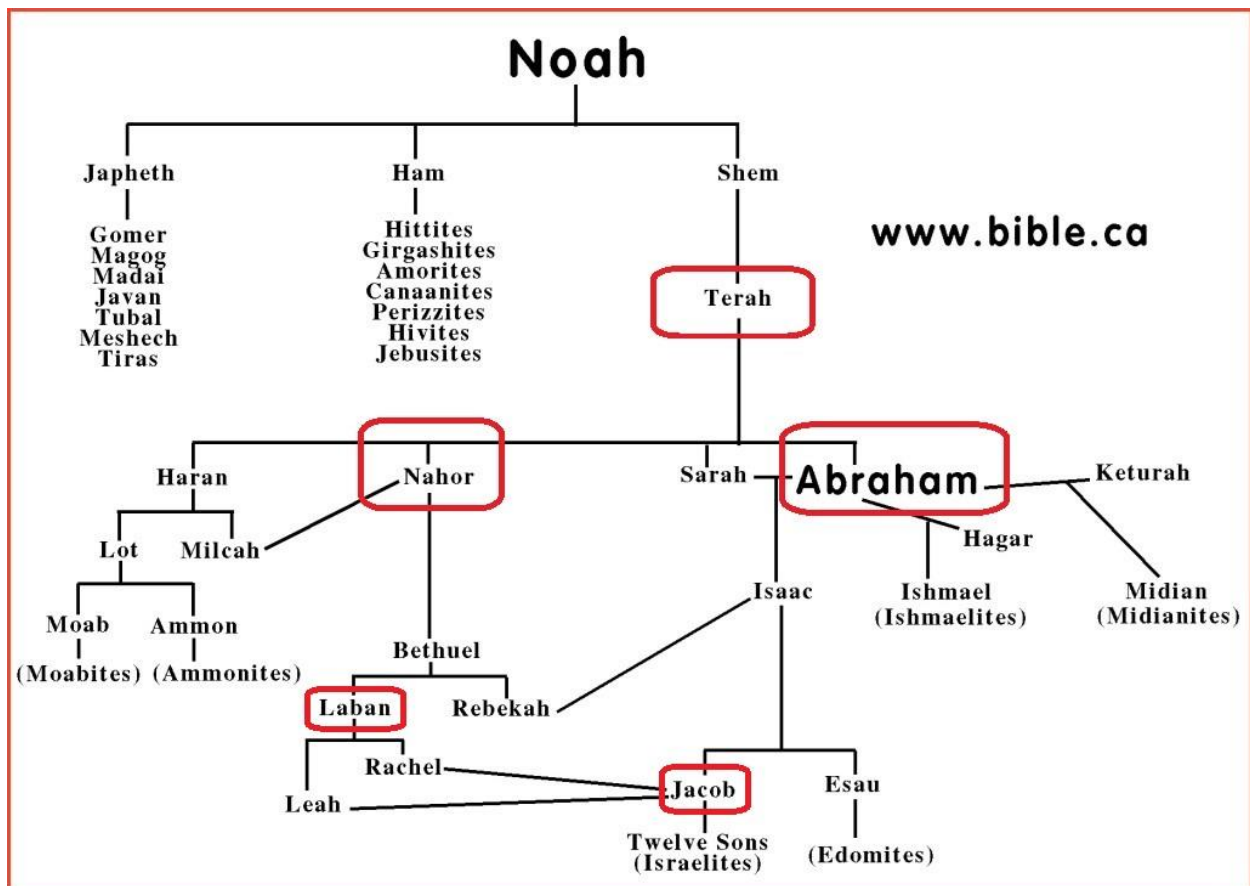
He was the one that had mistreated his daughters

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

The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.

Laban appeals to the God of their ancestors

See Pic 3108



Laban had already received a judgment from God

How did that work out for him?