

JACOB IN HARAN-THE COVENANT AT MIZPAH

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 29:1-20; 30:25-31; 31:1-24, 36-55

LESSON 24 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight" (Psalm 101:7).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 29:1-20

¹ Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east.

² And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone *was* upon the well's mouth.

³ And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

⁴ And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence *be* ye? And they said, Of Haran *are* we.

⁵ And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know *him*.

⁶ And he said unto them, *Is* he well? And they said, *He is* well: and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

⁷ And he said, Lo, *it is* yet high day, neither *is it* time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go *and feed them*.

⁸ And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and *till* they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

⁹ ¶ And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them.

¹⁰ And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Jacob's Journey to Haran

1. Jacob's arrival at Haran after leaving Bethel, Genesis 29:1-4;

Genesis 11:31.

³¹ And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.

2. Jacob's meeting with Rachel and Laban, his relatives, Genesis 29:5-14;

Genesis 24:29;

²⁹ ¶ And Rebekah had a brother, and his name *was* Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

Genesis 25:20.

²⁰ And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

3. The contract between Laban and Jacob, Genesis 29:15-20.

II God's Blessing Given to Jacob

1. God's blessing on Laban because of Jacob, Genesis 30:25-30,

Genesis 18:32.

³² And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

2. Jacob's proposal for an equitable distribution of the cattle,

Genesis 30:31-34.

³¹ And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed *and* keep thy flock:

³² I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and *of such* shall be my hire.

³³ So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

³⁴ And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

3. Laban's suspicious attitude toward Jacob, Genesis 31:1-3.

4. Laban's deception, and the resulting reaction upon the deceiver, Genesis 31:4-10.

III Jacob's Departure from Haran

1. God's command for Jacob's return to Canaan, Genesis 31:3, 11-13.

2. Jacob's family united in purpose, Genesis 31:14-16;

Genesis 2:24.

²⁴ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

3. The departure unknown to Laban, Genesis 31:17-21.

4. Laban's vengeful pursuit and God's warning to him, Genesis 31:22-24,

Genesis 31:29.

²⁹ It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

¹¹ And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.

¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's brother, and that he *was* Rebekah's son: and she ran and told her father.

¹³ And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things.

¹⁴ And Laban said to him, Surely thou *art* my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

¹⁵ ¶ And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou *art* my brother, shouldst thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what *shall* thy wages *be*?

¹⁶ And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

¹⁷ Leah *was* tender eyed; but Rachel *was* beautiful and well favoured.

¹⁸ And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.

¹⁹ And Laban said, *It is* better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me.

²⁰ And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him *but* a few days, for the love he had to her.

Genesis 30:25-31.

²⁵ ¶ And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

IV The Covenant at Mizpah

1. Jacob's defence of his years of faithful servitude, Genesis 31:35-42.
2. Laban's realisation of Jacob's position, Genesis 31:43.
3. Their enduring covenant: "The LORD watch between me and thee," Genesis 31:44-55.

NOTES:

After Jacob's soul-renovating experience at Bethel, where he was saved and received God's promise, he resumed his journey to Haran. It was about 450 miles, by air line, from the locality in Canaan where his father lived, to Haran, the place where his other relatives lived.

Abraham had sent his servant to Haran for Isaac's wife. It was northeast of Canaan, to which God had called Abraham, and northwest of the land of Ur, from which he originally came. On his way to the Promised Land, Abraham had stopped at Haran because of the illness and subsequent death of his father, but when he resumed his journey some of the family chose to stay. Jacob, in his time of trouble, was going to these relatives because they had a greater reverence for the God of Abraham than the people living in the land of Canaan, who were idolaters.

Jacob's meeting with Rachel and her father, Laban, is a very touching one indeed. Jacob loved Rachel and agreed to work a seven-year term that he might have her for his wife. God blessed him as he fulfilled his part of the contract, and through him also blessed Laban. This, in itself, was a fulfilment of God's original promise to Abraham. God said He would make a great nation out of Abraham's seed, but He also told Abraham that He would bless them who blessed Abraham and his seed, and would curse them who cursed him (**Genesis 12:3**; ³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed). The history of the children of Abraham, the Jews, who are the natural seed, and of the Christians, who are the spiritual seed, has shown many repetitions of the fulfilment of this promise. Nations have oppressed the Jews only to be defeated and thrown down.

The same is true of individuals today, also. We have often seen the hand of judgment extended towards those who have oppressed and cursed God's people. God takes note of those who bless His people and He reserves a blessing for them, even though they may not be Christians themselves.

In the Word of God, deceit is classed with the basest and vilest evils, and those who resort to it are told that the lake of fire will be their inheritance in eternity (**Revelation 21:8**; ⁸ But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death). Jacob and his mother used deceit to divert the parental blessing from Esau; and because of their sin, Jacob was forced to leave home and go to a strange land. He suffered much for his lying, and no doubt many times regretted his deed.

But Jacob's punishment for the use of deceit was not confined to his having to leave home. While in Haran he was made the object of another's deceit. It cost him many years of labour, privation, and physical suffering, to say nothing of the lonesomeness occasioned by all those years of separation from his family. He eloquently expressed his sufferings in a conversation with his father-in-law, Laban, when he said: "In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; . . . and thou hast changed my wages ten times" (Genesis 31:40, 41).

²⁶ Give *me* my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

²⁷ And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry: for* I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

²⁸ And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give *it*.

²⁹ And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

³⁰ For *it was* little which thou hadst before I *came*, and it is *now* increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

³¹ And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed *and* keep thy flock:

Genesis 31:1-24.

¹ And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that *was* our father's; and of *that* which *was* our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

² And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it *was* not toward him as before.

³ And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee.

⁴ And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock,

⁵ And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it *is* not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me.

The book of Proverbs gives us some enlightening verses on this subject. "Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight" (Proverbs 12:22); "A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape" (Proverbs 19:5). These, with other clear and plain statements of Scripture, show us the punishment awaiting the person who forsakes truth, resorting to a lie for his own immediate benefit.

When God saw that Jacob had suffered enough for the sins he committed before meeting God at Bethel, He told him to return to the land of Canaan, promising to be with him on the journey (**Genesis 32:9**; ⁹ ¶ And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:). A promise of this kind was essentially necessary for the encouragement of Jacob at this time; and no doubt it was a powerful means of support to him throughout the entire journey, particular so when he heard that his brother Esau was coming to meet him with 400 men in his retinue (**Genesis 33:1**; ¹ And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and, behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two handmaids).

Because of the craftiness of Laban's dealings and the difficulties Jacob would have to face if Laban knew he was going, Jacob left without telling his father-in-law. To leave Haran, Jacob had the command of God as his authority, and the approval of his wives for his encouragement and inspiration. God ordained, in the beginning, that a couple should leave the homes of their parents when they were married and become a separate unit; and for this reason alone it was right for Jacob to leave Haran.

Laban followed this party, filled with vengeance, but was warned by God before he overtook them that he should do them no harm. Rachel had stolen her father's idols, probably because she felt they had a certain supernatural power and could reveal to Laban the whereabouts of the party, that he might overtake them quicker. Jacob, who charged his father-in-law with unjustly accusing them, did not know this theft. In boldness of innocence, Jacob allowed a search and affirmed that if any were found guilty they should die. Fortunately for both Rachel and Jacob the idols were not found; and consequently Rachel was not put to death. Perhaps Jacob never knew that the guilty one was his favourite wife; but in this whole incident we can see the hand of God. Jacob as a defence of his innocence had made the affirmation, and God honoured it; but guilt does not go unpunished, even though man does not know the guilty person. It is significant that Rachel died only a short time after this, and Jacob's vow was fulfilled, even though he probably did not know the reason for her death. "The eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (II Chronicles 16:9), and there is nothing that can escape His searching gaze.

The concluding part of the association of Laban and Jacob is a covenant made at Galeed. This is known as the covenant of Mizpah, since that was another name given to the locality. The text of this covenant is used many times when people are separated from those whom they love, as a token of the love and fellowship that binds their hearts together. "The LORD, watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Having reached an agreement between themselves, Laban and Jacob erected a monument of stones and made it their separating line. There could be no crossing of that line to do each other harm or injury for revenge of anything in the past. It was a token between them.

A thought worthy of mention in connection with this covenant at Mizpah is the difference between it and the several other contracts, or agreements, they had made in the previous 20 years. These other contracts were made as man to man; and, as contracts of today, were

⁶ And ye know that with all my power I have served your father.

⁷ And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.

⁸ If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.

⁹ Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given *them* to me.

¹⁰ And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle *were* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled.

¹¹ And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, *saying*, Jacob: And I said, Here *am* I.

¹² And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle *are* ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee.

¹³ I *am* the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, *and* where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

¹⁴ And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him, *Is there* yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?

¹⁵ Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money.

¹⁶ For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that *is* ours, and our children's: now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

broken almost as soon as they were made. But on this occasion they realised the seriousness of the agreement and called God to witness between them -- took God into account. Laban had come in contact with Jacob's God and knew He was a God of power, might, and justice. He gave God a place in his life -- at least in the making of this covenant, and perhaps in a greater degree also. This covenant, as far as we know, was never broken or set aside, which shows us again that plans made without the counsel and help of God are sure to be broken, but those made with His help and guidance are sure of success.

Questions

1. Why was Jacob fleeing to Haran?
2. How was Laban related to Jacob?
3. Does Jacob's life at this time show any changes that are due to his meeting with God at Bethel?
4. In what ways were God's blessings bestowed upon Jacob while he was in Haran?
5. At what other time, and by whom, was a journey made to Laban's home in Haran?
6. In what way can we say that Jacob's suffering in Haran was the result of his former conduct?
7. Upon what authority did Jacob leave Haran?
8. How did Jacob's wives react when he told them he was leaving their native land and country?
9. Did Laban agree at first to Jacob's leaving?
10. Quote the well known words that form the heart of the covenant at Mizpah.

¹⁷ ¶ Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels;

¹⁸ And he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

¹⁹ And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that *were* her father's.

²⁰ And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled.

²¹ So he fled with all that he had; and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face *toward* the mount Gilead.

²² And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled. ²³ And he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven days' journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

²⁴ And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Genesis 31:36-55.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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 labour of my hands, and rebuked *thee* yesternight.

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?

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

⁴⁵ And Jacob took a stone, and set it up *for* a pillar.

⁴⁶ And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones; and they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap.

⁴⁷ And Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed.

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

⁴⁹ And Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and

thee, when we are absent one from another.

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.

⁵¹ And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold *this* pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee;

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.

⁵³ The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.

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.

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.