

JACOB IN HARAN-THE COVENANT AT MIZPAH

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 29:1-20; 30:25-34; 31:1-24, 36-55

LESSON 24 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9).

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

NOTES:

Jacob's Arrival in Haran

After meeting with God at Bethel, Jacob proceeded on his journey. He walked over desert country for many miles, probably hardly meeting anyone; but one day he noticed a well, around which were three flocks of sheep. He knew by this that he was coming to a settlement where he would meet people.

Wells were very important in the dry, eastern country. Neither men nor animals can live without water; nor will crops grow, no matter how fertile the soil may be. It was very difficult to dig the wells through the rock in early times; and as they had to go deep to find water, the wells were of great value. They were often used as landmarks (**Genesis 25:11**; ¹¹ ¶ And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi. **Joshua 18:15**; ¹⁵ And the south quarter *was* from the end of Kirjath-jearim, and the border went out on the west, and went out to the well of waters of Nephtoah:), and it was considered a special blessing when the Children of Israel were given possession of wells they had not dug when they came into the Promised Land (**Deuteronomy 6:11**; ¹¹ And houses full of all good *things*, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;). Sometimes there were serious quarrels over the ownership of wells.

In later life Jacob dug a well, too, which bore his name. It was on the rim of that well that Jesus sat when He talked with the woman of Samaria, many years later. It is still in existence, and we are told it is about nine feet across and 105 feet deep.

Jacob's Meeting with Rachel

When Jacob came to the well he inquired of the shepherds waiting there if anyone knew his Uncle Laban. He was told they did, and that Laban's daughter, Rachel, was coming to the well with her father's sheep. When she came Jacob helped her by rolling away the stone, which covered the mouth of the well to keep out the dirt and to keep men and animals from accidental falling in. When he had watered the sheep, he told her who he was; and she ran to tell her father that her cousin had come from a far country to visit them. It is very probable that Laban had never seen his sister Rebekah since the day she rode away with Abraham's servant to become Isaac's wife, and he was very happy to see her son and learn of her welfare.

Loving Service

After Jacob had lived with Laban for a month and had worked for him, he was offered wages for what he was doing. Jacob wanted Rachel for his wife; so he told Laban he would work seven years for her. The Scripture says that the seven years "seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her."

It is not hard for us to do things for the people we love. How much greater should be our love for God, and how earnestly we should try to do His work! We often see people who say they love the Lord with all their hearts, but they are always making excuses when asked to do something for Him. Jesus said to some people who claimed to love Him, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). We can prove our love for Jesus by a wholehearted devotion to His service; and we can find in the Word of God what that

the sheep of Laban his mother's 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, shouldest 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 30:25-34;

25 ¶ And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me

service is: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:40).

Jacob's Tribulations

Although Jacob's stay in Haran had a good beginning, all did not remain pleasant. Laban did not keep his promises, and he deceived Jacob often, changing his wages ten times. Jacob worked hard trying to please his father-in-law, tending his flocks and herds in the wilderness. He was hot and thirsty in the daytime, and often was cold at night and could not sleep. If wild animals came in the night and killed a sheep or goat, Jacob took the loss himself.

Laban would make a bargain with Jacob about which cattle he could have (which was always the smaller share); then God would bless Jacob, and his share would turn out to be the greater. Then Laban would reverse his bargain in order to win for himself the most; and God would again bless Jacob so he would be the winner.

Through twenty years Jacob served Laban--first for his two wives, then for his cattle. Because of God's care over him, he had eleven sons and great herds and flocks that he could call his own, and he decided to return to his homeland. Laban didn't want to let him go, because Laban knew that God had also blessed him because of Jacob, and he had gained much wealth through Jacob's service.

God's Watchful Eye

Jacob suffered because of Laban's deceit, and thus learned how Esau must have felt when he lost the birthright and blessing through Jacob's scheming. God must have considered that Jacob had now suffered enough, so He appeared to him again in a dream and told him to return to his kindred. God said He had been watching all the time, and had seen the things Laban had done. Sometimes we may go through trials when it seems the Lord has forsaken us, but He has promised He will never leave nor forsake His own. He watches over His children; and when He sees we have been tried enough, He makes a way out and rewards us for standing true.

The Lord said to Jacob, "I am the God of Bethel." That was important, because it was at Bethel that God had promised to bring Jacob again to his father's house. Jacob had vowed a vow there, and had kept his vow through the years, and now God was ready to help him return home.

Jacob told his wives what the Lord had said, and they agreed that he had well earned all that he claimed; and if God wanted them to leave Haran, they were ready to go.

Laban had refused even to consider Jacob's departure; but one day while he was away shearing sheep, Jacob took all that belonged to him and started on the long journey home. When Laban was told about it three days later, he was very angry, and with some of his men started in hot pursuit. They rode for seven days before they overtook Jacob's party, and he was planning how he could get even with Jacob. But God was taking care of His child. He warned Laban in a dream to be very careful what he said to Jacob. Laban had enough respect for God to listen and to heed the warning. By the time he caught up with his son-in-law he was able to control himself and speak reasonably.

Laban's Covenant with Jacob

Jacob was displeased that he had followed him as though he were a thief. He explained that he had worked hard for all the things he claimed, and had gotten them honestly according to Laban's terms. Laban finally consented to relinquish what he thought were his rights, and he made a covenant with Jacob to which he asked God to witness. This was the first time Laban had ever taken God into consideration in his bargaining with Jacob, and this was the first covenant that stood. If we ask God's counsel in our affairs, and follow His guidance, we can expect to prosper. Too many times when we pray we are not so much asking God's will as His approval of our desires. "Keep therefore the

away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

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:

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.

Genesis 31:1-24.

¹ And he heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that *was* our

words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do" (Deuteronomy 29:9).

From this occasion we get the beautiful invocation often used when dear friends part: "The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." It is called "Mispah," the name of the place where the covenant was made.

It was the custom in those days to seal an agreement by having a feast. Jacob offered a sacrifice and called all his brethren together to eat. The next morning Laban said good-bye to his children and returned home.

QUESTIONS

1. What relation was Jacob to Laban?
2. How long did Jacob serve Laban?
3. Was the blessing of the Lord still following Jacob?
4. How many times did Laban change Jacob's wages?
5. In Genesis 31:13 the Lord remembers Jacob's vow. Do you think the Lord takes note of our vows?

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.

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.

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 sware 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.