



Lesson 23

JACOB RETURNS TO CANAAN

Story Elements

- **TEXT:** Gen. 31:1-55
- **Setting:** circa 2000 B.C. in Haran and Gilead
- **Main Characters:** God, Jacob, Rachel, Leah, and Laban
- **Plot:** Laban is angered at Jacob's unannounced departure to Canaan.
- **Key word(s):** " _____ " (vv 3, 13)
- **Climax:** *Genesis 31:43 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..."*

Disgruntled Family and Divine Visions

- 1) (vv 1-2) After several more years of working for Laban, Jacob became more prosperous than his uncle. As a result, Laban's sons murmured that Jacob had unlawfully swindled their father out of his wealth. Jacob heard their backbiting and saw Laban's face and "behold, it was not toward him as _____."
- 2) (v 3) As Jacob began to sense the need to part ways from Laban, God confirmed Jacob's impression by telling him in a dream, "Return unto the land of thy _____; and I will be with thee."
- 3) (vv 5-13) Jacob gathered his two wives and related the situation to them.
 - a) (vv 8-9) He reminded them that Laban had changed his wages _____ times. But God intervened, and whenever Laban chose one sort of cattle and left Jacob the others, it was always Jacob's sort that would be blessed.
 - b) (vv 11-13) Jacob told his wives that God had visited him in a dream:
 - i) God recounted the covenant he had made with Jacob by announcing himself as the God of _____ – where 20 years before God had promised to bless Jacob and bring him safely back into the Promised Land.
 - ii) God had given him a vision of the multicolored livestock proliferating and told Jacob that they did so of divine _____.
 - c) (vv 14-16) Rachel and Leah shared Jacob's feelings and were keenly aware that their father had unjustly treated their family. They too were ready to _____.

Angry Relations and Abducted Idols

- 4) (vv 17-19) While Laban was away at the _____, Jacob packed up all his family and possessions into a large caravan and set out for Canaan.
- 5) (v 19) Unbeknownst to Jacob, Rachel had stolen Laban's idols. These idols, called *teraphim*, were _____ statues that represented pagan deities.

- a) We are not certain why Rachel stole the idols - perhaps to _____ her father.
- b) Though Abraham's extended family acknowledged God, it seems that a persistent _____ influence crept in to their lives.
- 6) (vv 22-23) Laban formed a posse with his near relations and pursued after Jacob's caravan, overtaking them in _____ days.
- 7) (v 24) One night in dream, God warned Laban against speaking to Jacob " _____ or bad." This was a proverbial expression that meant Laban was forbidden from doing anything to "alter the existing situation and bring Jacob back."¹

Harsh Words and Heaping Stones

- 8) (vv 25-30) When they did meet again, Laban gave Jacob an earful:
- a) He accused Jacob of stealing his daughters and grandchildren like a _____ and robbing Laban of the opportunity to say goodbye.
- b) He also insinuated that he would've done _____ to Jacob had God not intervened.
- c) Lastly, he rebuked Jacob for stealing his _____.
- 9) (vv 31-35) Jacob defended his actions and denied knowing anything about stolen idols. Meanwhile, Rachel hid them under the camel's _____ while Laban searched the camp.
- 10) (vv 36-42) Angered by Laban's accusations, Jacob erupted into a lengthy tirade which can be summed with his words: "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the ___ of Isaac, had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty."
- 11) (vv 43-54) Laban, true to his character, claimed everything that Jacob owned was his. But he remembered the warning of God and instead of trying to change Jacob's course, he suggested a covenant be made between them – an agreement that they would never _____ to do harm to each other. They built a stone heap as a monument to their covenant, and Jacob called the place *Galeed*, which means "the heap of witness."

Application

- 12) Laban's unjust treatment of his family made his daughters willing to forsake their lifelong surroundings and journey to Canaan. In the same way, when Christians are ill-treated by the world, we are made to long for our true home in heaven, and we trust in the God of _____ who has promised to safely bring us there. "*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" (John 14:3)

Answer Key

Key word(s): return | 1) before | 2) kindred | 3) a) ten; b) i) Bethel ii) intervention; c) leave | 4) sheep-shearing | 5) small; a) spite; b) pagan | 6) seven | 7) good | 8) a) bandit; b) harm; c) idols | 9) saddle | 10) fear | 11) see each other again | 12) Bethel

¹ MacArthur, John, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005) 58.