

# Mesopotamia Hills 90210

## Genesis 31:1-55

### *Genesis 31:1-16*

- 1 “Jacob has taken all that was our father’s”- partially true, but Jacob did it in a fair, shrewd way  
3 “Return to the land of your fathers.”- Why did Jacob leave?  
5 “The God of my father has been with me”- as was promised in Gen 28:13-15  
7 “your father has cheated me”- Let’s review the history of trickery in this family.  
11 “Then the angel of God said... ‘I am the God of Bethel’”- a reference to the pre-incarnate Christ  
14-15 Leah and Rachel complain of their father’s mistreatment, very serious given 12 children!!  
16 “the wealth God has taken away”- again it is God who has blessed Jacob’s flocks  
“Whatever God has said to you, do.”- the only thing the sisters agree on is leaving Laban’s home

### *Genesis 31:17-21*

- 19 “Rachel stole her father’s household gods”- in 30:27 Laban practices divination, he also has these small family gods. This reminds us that while Abraham was called out of idolatry, his family in Haran was not. Rachel may be stealing them out of anger or out of faith in these gods’ protection.  
20 “And Jacob tricked Laban”- we can add this to our list of trickery in the family  
21 “crossed the Euphrates”- The river marks the northern boundary of the land promised to Abraham in 15:18  
“hill country of Gilead”- the east side of the Jordan River, good for hiding from your father-in-law

### *Genesis 31:22-32*

- 24 “be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad”- idiom dealing with accusations (v29)  
*Luther: In your heart you have thought up a huge mass of accusations and charges to vomit out against him. But I order you not only to keep your hands off him but not to offend him even by a word.*  
26 “like captives of the sword”- in v15 his daughters state their feelings, he does not see it that way!  
27 Given the years of deceit and mistreatment, Jacob had no reason to expect tambourines.  
28 “my sons”- a reference to his eleven grandsons  
30 “longed greatly for your father’s house”- Laban’s assumption, why did Jacob want to leave?  
“why did you steal my gods?”- Laban had either seen his small gods missing or had been told  
31-32 Jacob’s answer is two-fold, 1) why he fled in a hurry, 2) innocence regarding the stolen gods.  
32 “Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them”- had he known he wouldn’t have made this oath

### *Genesis 31:33-35*

- 33 What’s with all the tents? This is a typical set up of ancient Near Eastern polygamous families  
34 “put them in the camel’s saddle and sat on them”- gods the size of action figures  
35 “the way of women is upon me”- likely another lie in the family drama!

### *Genesis 31:36-42*

- 36-37 Jacob’s indignation is somewhat deserved, although he did sneak off with no warning  
38 “These twenty years”- He worked 14 years as bride prices, then 6 more as children grew older  
“your ewes and female goats...”- Jacob was an honest laborer and produced good results  
39 “I bore the loss myself”- some ancient Near Eastern laws said that wild beast attacks were not the shepherd’s fault and he would not have to pay. Jacob was more than honorable in this regard  
42 “the Fear of Isaac”- a somewhat ambiguous phrase with several possible meanings

*Genesis 31:43-50*

- 43 Laban's response seems to be to the question in verse 37. It seems very heartfelt too  
44 "Let us cut a covenant"- a peace treaty including marital faithfulness  
45 Jacob sets up another pillar- as a sign of the testament/covenant like in 28:18  
46 "and they ate there by the heap"- a communal meal with a covenant... remind you of anything?  
47 "Yegar-sahadutha"- Aramaic for "the heap of witness," remember Laban is an Aramean  
"Galeed"- Hebrew for "the heap of witness"  
49 "Mizpah"- Hebrew for "Watchpost" hence, "YHWH watch between you and me"  
50 The content of the peace treaty between Laban and Jacob is firstly about family

*Genesis 31:51-55*

- 51-52 Now, secondarily the covenant has to do with geographic boundaries  
53 "God of Abraham"- Abraham was the first in his family to be called out by YHWH  
"God of Nahor"- Laban's grandfather and Abraham's brother and was an idolater (Jsh 24:2)  
"God of their father"- Terah, also an idolater

Laban is NOT a monotheist! The Hebrew is better translated, "The gods of Abraham and the gods of Nahor, the gods of their father, (may they) judge (3<sup>rd</sup> plural) between us." This does not make it true, and Jacob does not confess by this polytheistic covenant, but Laban does believe this way. Laban is calling on his missing/stolen action figure gods that Rachel is sitting on! So how does Jacob respond?

"Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac"- Jacob binds himself by the true religion of Isaac, the promises of YHWH.

- 54 "Jacob offered a sacrifice... they ate bread"- NOT a religious ceremony, the nature of ancient Near Eastern covenants was to slaughter an animal "CUT a Covenant" and share a meal.

This raises the question of religious pluralism and syncretism.

We also want to look at this dysfunctional family and what it has to do with Christ. Jn 5:39, 2 Cor 3:14-15

Psalm 112

**All: <sup>1</sup>Praise YHWH! Blessed is the man who fears YHWH, who greatly delights in his commandments!**

N: <sup>2</sup>His offspring will be mighty in the land;

S: the generation of the upright will be blessed.

N: <sup>3</sup>Wealth and riches are in his house,

S: and his righteousness endures forever.

N: <sup>4</sup>Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;

S: he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

N: <sup>5</sup>It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;

S: who conducts his affairs with justice.

N: <sup>6</sup>For the righteous will never be moved;

S: he will be remembered forever.

N: <sup>7</sup>He is not afraid of bad news;

S: his heart is firm, trusting in YHWH.

N: <sup>8</sup>His heart is steady; he will not be afraid,

S: until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

N: <sup>9</sup>He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;

S: his righteousness endures forever;

N: his horn is exalted in honor.

S: <sup>10</sup>The wicked man sees it and is angry;

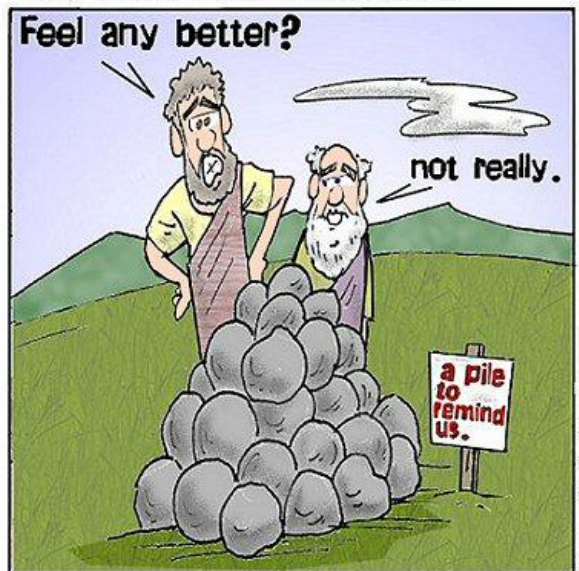
N: he gnashes his teeth and melts away;

S: the desire of the wicked will perish!

**ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit**

**As it was in the beginning is now and will be forever Amen.**

THE BACK PEW - JEFF LARSON



So Jacob and Laban made a big pile of rocks as a reminder of their treaty.

**Genesis 31:44**