

Jacob Meets His Match

Genesis 29-31 Jacob Meets His Match 8/3/03

The battle of the schemers is only resolved when Jacob realizes that God's plans aren't accomplished through his schemes.

God intervenes and resolves to bless Jacob because He has chosen Him

God keeps His promise to bless Jacob.

JACOB AND LABAN AT PADDAN ARAM 29-31

Upon arrival at Paddan Aram, Jacob meets his match, his uncle Laban.

He spends the next 20 years with Laban.

God blesses him and he leaves a wealthy man in spite of Laban's tricks.

JACOB DISCOVERS RACHEL AT THE WELL 29:1-14

First indication of God's blessing comes as God directs his steps to meet Rachel at the well.

Jacob's initial contact with Laban's family comes when he meets Rachel.

After Jacob demonstrates his kindness to her, Rachel takes him home to meet her family.

Laban acknowledges that they are family.

A chip off the old block? –recognizes “R” chromosome?

These aren't young men!

It's been 97 years since Laban saw his sister Rebekah.

Jacob was already 77.

At end of the story Jacob had served him 20 years; he's now 97!

LABAN DECEIVES JACOB CONCERNING THE MARRIAGE 29:15-30

Agreement for Rachel 29:15-21

Rachel was beautiful; Jacob agrees to work seven years to marry her.

Substitution of Leah 29:22-26

Jacob's dream of marrying Rachel turned into a nightmare, because of Laban's deception.

Laban deceived him by switching Leah for Rachel.

Only then Jacob begins to experience fruit of the family heritage—their deceptive character.

In Laban Jacob met his match!

God used his uncle's deception as a means of developing his character—turning the fruits of his deception into blessing.

Just as Jacob, the younger, had deceived his father, pretending to be the firstborn, the turnabout comes, as Laban deceptively substitutes the firstborn, who pretends to be the younger.

God has brought about appropriate retribution.

Jacob learns the hard way how ugly the fruits of deception can be!

Just as Esau and his descendants would live forever with the consequences of Jacob's deception, so Jacob and his descendants would live forever with the consequences of Laban's deception.

This deception resulted in a conflict in the home with which Jacob had to struggle throughout his married life.

Second agreement for Rachel 29:27-30

Since he still wanted to marry Rachel, Jacob offered to work an additional seven years for her.

After a one week honeymoon with Leah, Jacob gave Rachel to Leah as his wife.

It was understood that he would have to work another seven years to pay for her.

Even though we experience God's blessing, in accordance with His gracious promise, God still allows us to suffer the consequences of sin.

We reap what we sow—even when God, by His grace, chooses to bless His people.

When we find ourselves suffering under the hand of crafty, arrogant, deceitful, contentious, or gossipy people, it may be that God is correcting us for some of those same traits..

[COMPETITION OVER CHILDREN 29:31-30:24]

COMPETITION FOR PROSPERITY 30:25-43

Agreement concerning distribution of profits 30:25-34

Both Jacob and Laban observed how God blessed Jacob in the past.

Until now this blessing was benefitting Laban.

Jacob wants to set out on his own; accumulate his own nest egg.

Laban schemes to keep the blessing for himself.

When we realize how much God has done for us in the past, we realize that we can trust Him to care for us tomorrow as well!

We can trust God to provide all we need.

Jacob's request to return home 25-26

Once Jacob served the agreed time for Rachel, he turned his eyes toward home.

Laban's appeal for Jacob to remain and work for him 27-28

When Jacob asked for permission to return home, Laban bargained for him to stay.

Laban was aware of the benefits he received from Jacob's presence.

Jacob's desire for personal prosperity 29-30

God was blessing Laban on account of Jacob's presence.

Jacob had nothing to show for it.

Laban's inquiry concerning what Jacob wants 31a

Jacob's plan for breeding and distributing the profits 31b-33

Laban's agreement with Jacob's plan 34

Agreement made to pay Jacob for his efforts and he agreed to stay.

Jacob's plan *appeared* to give him little profit.

He would receive the rarer, less prevalent variety of sheep, and give the rest to Laban.

Jacob's plan was *risky*! There's no way the common unicolored animals would produce the rare spotted animals he asked for—even with his breeding schemes.

Laban quickly agreed to the proposal, assuming the advantage would be his.

Competition for accumulating personal prosperity 30:35-43

Laban's deceptive attempt to gain personal advantage 35-36

He removed all the herd he promised to Jacob and gave them to his own sons.

He separated them by a 3-day journey, which would make it difficult for him to get them back.

Even though he entered a bargain to provide Jacob's wages, he made sure it would be hard for Jacob to succeed.

It was going to be hard for Jacob to get a large herd for himself.

Jacob employs questionable breeding strategies to gain personal advantage over Laban 37-42

Peeled branches supposed to make animals more productive.

A vivid sight during conception or pregnancy was supposed to leave its mark on the embryo.

He used selective breeding to get stronger animals for himself.

The story is clear: his prosperity isn't the result of his scheme!

Jacob becomes increasingly prosperous 43

Working for Laban, Jacob became wealthy as God blessed him.

God intervened to bless Jacob in an unusual way.

Two evident ways that Jacob prospers:

Children—God blesses family with many sons.

Accumulation of wealth

Jacob could claim to be the “self-made man”—he was successful at everything he did.

Laban's deceptive strategies motivated Jacob to respond in kind, with deceptive schemes of his own.

Jacob should've known he could trust *God* to do right.

God intervenes, in spite of Jacob's self-centered schemes.

God blesses and prospers him.

Clever Jacob appears to outwit his clever opponent.

He appears to be successful because of his clever use of breeding devices to give him an advantage.

His scheming appears to pay off.

It's not Jacob's cleverness that produces his prosperity; it's God's gracious blessing—even though he may not have been aware of what God was doing. 31:9

It may have looked like Jacob was successful, but it wasn't his skill and craftiness that earned him great success and prosperity! That was God's work!

When God places US among people like Laban, we won't triumph by our scheming. We can trust GOD to bless us, if we remain faithful.

There's an inherent contradiction in acknowledging that God is the source of our success, and then resorting to our schemes.

How we compete is important.

God hasn't placed us in the world to "fight fire with fire!"

If we acknowledge that God is the source of our success, then we will fight the battle in a way that is consistent with that belief!

When God provides material prosperity, do we acknowledge that God is the source of our success? Or do we take the credit for our own cleverness?

SEPARATION FROM LABAN 31:1-55

Jacob's secret escape 31:1-21

After several years passed, jealousy developed between Jacob and Laban's sons. 1

Laban's attitude toward him began to change. 2

God used circumstances, along with His word, to prepare him to return home. 3

God calls Jacob to forsake his secure surroundings and growing prosperity, and get on with God's plan for his life.

God often uses difficult circumstances to make us willing to leave our comfort zone and follow Him.

God assures us that He will be with us! We can trust Him!

But Jacob has to let go of the security he's been clinging to!

After consulting his family, they prepared to flee.

Jacob attests to God's faithfulness in blessing him. 5, 7, 9

God hasn't permitted Laban to harm him.

Rachel and Leah also acknowledge how God has blessed them 16

Rachel adds to the risk of the journey by pulling her own deceptive scheme.

She stole her father's household gods.

Pursuit by Laban 31:22-42

The God who calls us to follow Him, protects us from people who would hurt us along the way.

We can trust Him when we face opposition!

When Laban discovered their departure, and the missing idols which Rachel had stolen from his house, he pursued them.

A week later he caught up with them and accused Jacob of sneaking away and of stealing his gods.

Laban was unable to find the stolen gods.

In addition, God intervened and warned Laban not to harm Jacob.

Actually he warned him not to bless or harm him.

Jacob responds to Laban's accusations with an attack of his own.

In spite of Laban's deceptive actions against him, Jacob returned no harm.

God blessed Jacob and prospered him. He gives God the credit.

Agreement with Laban 31:43-55

They made a covenant of peace between them—that God would watch over them and protect them from each other! 43-54

31:49 sounds like nice benediction: *"The Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from another."*

Actually it's calling on God to be the referee and see to it that they play fair!

They've been competing with each other from the beginning.

Now they call on God to oversee conflict!

The stipulations were that Jacob would not harm Laban's daughters.

They would stay away from each other, and leave each other alone.

They indicate their deep lack of trust for each other!

Though neither of them trusts the other, both acknowledge that they can trust God to protect them from the wiles of the other!

Next morning they separated. 55

In spite of apparent confusion/contradictions, in spite of Laban's deceit, God's plan to bless Jacob was being fulfilled.

Jacob's scheming couldn't make it happen.

But God's intention to bless Jacob—because of His grace—did.

Jacob eventually realized that all of his scheming could never produce the blessing Jacob desired.

God watched over him and gave him more than he could imagine.

God blesses us with more than we ask or think! (Cp. Eph. 3:20—that's true in spiritual realms, but also relates to physical blessing.)

*When we experience God's blessing and obediently follow God's call,
we can trust Him to watch over us
and protect us from those who would cause us harm.*

We can trust Him to abundantly provide ALL we need!

We don't have to rely on our own schemes!

We can trust HIM!