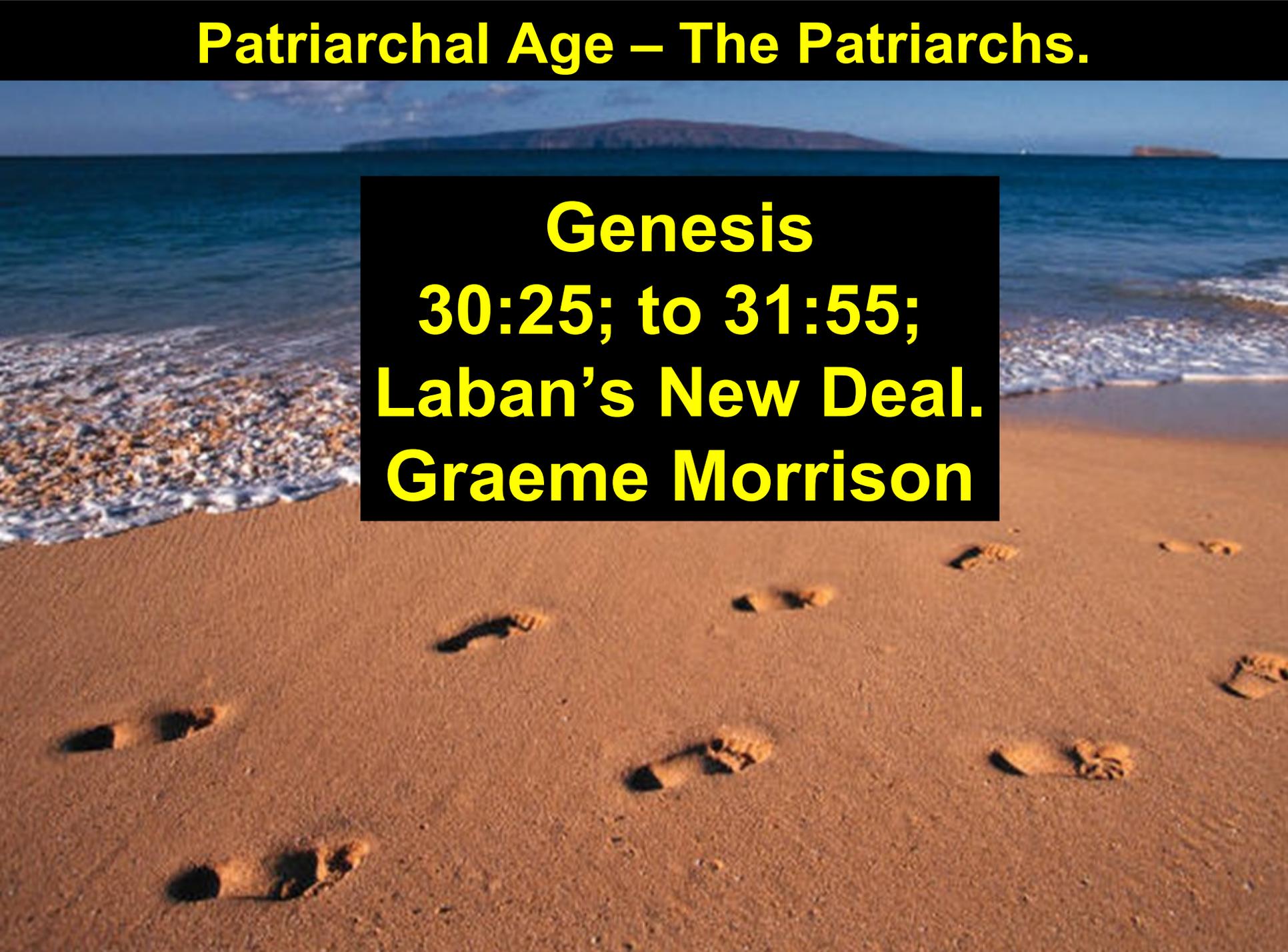
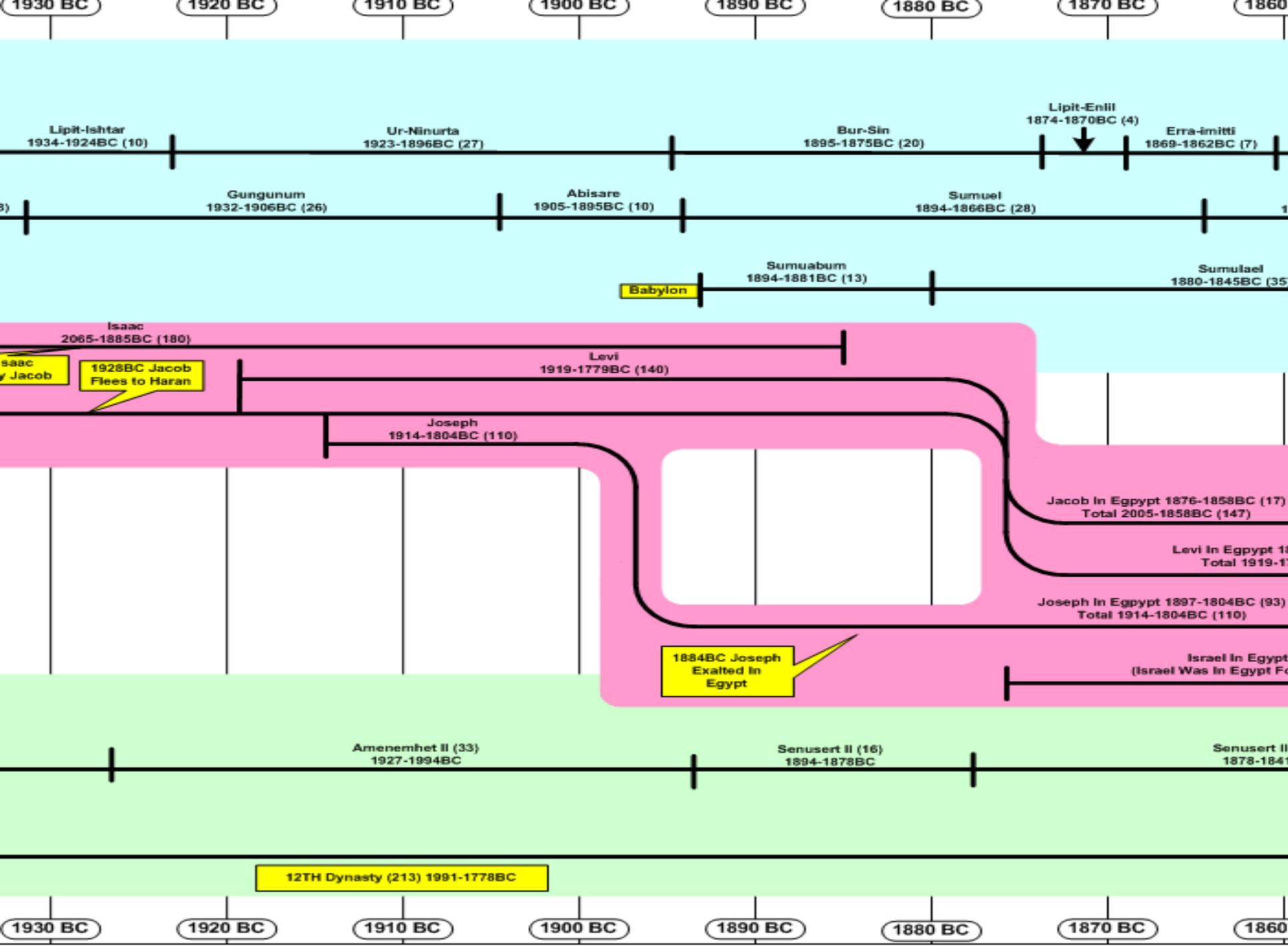
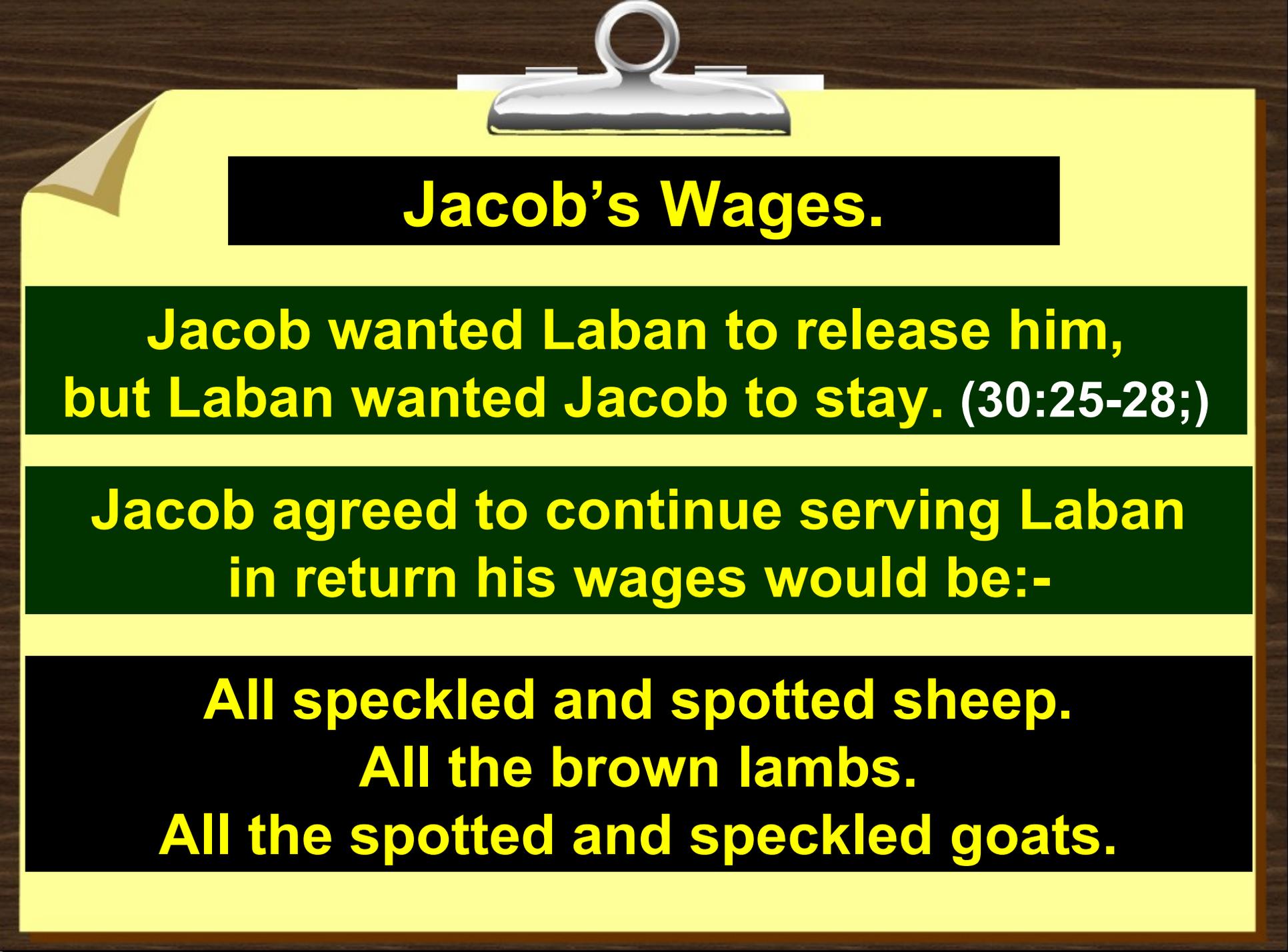


Patriarchal Age – The Patriarchs.

A photograph of a beach with waves crashing onto the shore. The sand is golden-brown and has several footprints scattered across it. In the background, there is a large, dark landmass under a clear blue sky.

**Genesis
30:25; to 31:55;
Laban's New Deal.
Graeme Morrison**





Jacob's Wages.

**Jacob wanted Laban to release him,
but Laban wanted Jacob to stay. (30:25-28;)**

**Jacob agreed to continue serving Laban
in return his wages would be:-**

**All speckled and spotted sheep.
All the brown lambs.
All the spotted and speckled goats.**

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

The events of the next few studies of Scripture seem to depict two conmen, each trying to out con the other.

In the grace and providence of God it will be **Jacob** who comes out the winner, but for reasons completely different from those he expected.

Many of us, like Jacob, have a tendency to give God the credit for prospering our sinful efforts to get ahead. **It was in spite of Jacob's conniving that he left Laban as a wealthy man.**

It was neither his spirituality nor his shrewdness which got him ahead in life.

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

“Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, **“Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country.””**

“Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you.”

“But Laban said to him, **“If now it pleases you, stay with me; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account.””**

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

**“He continued,
“Name me your wages, and I will give it.”**

**“But he said to him,
“You yourself know how I have served you
and how your cattle have fared with me.”**

**“For you had little before I came,
and it has increased to a multitude;
and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned.”**

**“But now, when shall I provide
for my own household also?”**

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

“So he said, “What shall I give you?”

And Jacob said, “You shall not give me anything.

**If you will do this one thing for me,
I will again pasture and keep your flock:”**

“Let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there **every speckled and spotted sheep, and every black one among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats;** and such shall be my wages.

“So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages.”

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, **will be considered stolen.**" And Laban said, **"Good, let it be according to your word."**

"So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons."

"And he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks."

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

The fourteen years of service for Leah and Rachel were fulfilled shortly after the birth of Joseph.

Just as Jacob reminded Laban that it was time to take his wife, (29:21;) so he must seek his release so that he might return to his homeland and family.

Several factors would have contributed to Jacob's desire to leave. First, his feelings toward Laban might not have been positive at this point.

**He had been deceived,
and his return had already been delayed
seven years longer than he had expected.**

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

There certainly would have been a desire to return to his family. While we do not know if Rebekah was still alive, at least Isaac was.

Finally, God had revealed to him that he would someday return to the promised land where he would be blessed. (28:10-22;)

Having fulfilled his obligation to Laban, Jacob was free to go, but Laban was reluctant to see this happen.

Laban had come to realize that his prosperity was the result of Jacob's presence. (30:27;)

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

If Jacob were to stay, Laban reasoned, it would be on the basis of the profit motive.

All of Jacob's labour over those fourteen years had been in lieu of a dowry.

He had nothing to show for his labour except for his wives and family.

It was now time to re negotiate Jacob's contract, and Laban asked him to name his terms.

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

Jacob was in no hurry to do this. He first strengthened his position by underscoring in Laban's mind the value he would be to him, just as it had been evident in the past. (30:29-30;)

Jacob now had a family to provide for, and thus his wages must be adequate to meet their needs. Jacob must think of the future. Laban's offer, he suggests, will have to be a good one.

Now that Laban is prepared to accept a hard bargain, Jacob names his terms. Frankly, Laban must have breathed a sigh of relief, for the request was one that was easy to accept.

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

Normally goats in that land were **black or dark brown**, seldom white or spotted with white.

On the other hand, **the sheep were nearly always white**, infrequently black or spotted.

Jacob offered to continue working as a tender of the flocks **if he were to receive the rarer of the offspring.**

Jacob would examine the flocks that day, **removing** all those animals which would later be marked so as to be his property.

These animals would be **taken three days' distance and kept by Laban's sons.**

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

Only those newly born spotted or striped would become Jacob's property.

At some later time the herd would be examined, and the spotted or striped animals would go to Jacob, while the rest would be Laban's.

It was too good to be true, Laban must have thought. How could he possibly lose? However, it was an open ended agreement, which encouraged Jacob to attempt to manipulate the outcome and also left God free to overrule the normal course of nature in order to bless Jacob.

The agreement was solidified, and the flocks were divided, with Jacob tending the unspotted, un-speckled, and un-striped animals of Laban.

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

Jacob and Laban must both have departed while chuckling to themselves.

Both thought the agreement was one that they could manipulate to their own advantage and at the expense of the other.

Rather than conscientiously tending the flocks of Laban while looking to God for the increase.

Jacob decided that this was something he could handle best by resorting to his schemes and devices.

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

Jacob employed three techniques which appeared to result in great success:

“Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which was in the rods.”

“he set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink.”

“So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.”

Laban's New Deal. 30:25-36;

“Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.

“Moreover, it came about whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, that Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods.”

“But when the flock was feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.”

“So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.”

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

The first method Jacob used (30:37-39;) was peeled poles, which were supposed to have some kind of prenatal influence on the flocks.

Jacob supposed that if the flocks had a visual impression of stripes while they were mating and conceiving, the offspring would assume this same form.

So all about the trenches, which served as watering troughs, Jacob placed these peeled poles; and every appearance would incline him to believe that his scheme was working, for the resulting offspring were striped, speckled, or spotted. (30:39;)

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

The second phase of Jacob's plan to predispose the outcome was to segregate the flocks.

The striped, speckled, and spotted offspring (which belonged to Jacob) were put off by themselves. The rest of the flock was faced toward those animals which were either striped or all black. (30:40;)

While the peeled poles were artificial, the striped animals were the "real McCoy."

Surely by seeing these animals, the rest of the flock would get the idea.

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

The third phase was a stroke of genius. (30:41-42;)

It was a kind of selective breeding.

We are told that lambing took place twice during the year, once in the autumn and once in the spring.

Those born in the Autumn were thought to be hardier, since they must endure the harsh winter.

Jacob placed his peeled poles only in front of the hardier animals and not before the weaker.

In Jacob's mind the result was that the strong animals went to him, while the weaker went to Laban. (30:42;)

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

From everything that has been said,
we would naturally conclude that
the great prosperity of Jacob. (30:43;)

Was due to his shrewd techniques for manipulating
the outcome of the mating of the flocks.

So it would seem. So it seemed to Jacob.

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

**There is only one problem:
it didn't work because it couldn't work.**

**From a physical point of view all
of Jacob's schemes were of no avail
because they operated on one assumption,
and that assumption was scientifically erroneous.**

**Each of the three techniques Jacob employed
was predicated on the belief that
visual impressions at the time of conception
affected the outcome at birth.**

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

**In the first and third techniques
it was the peeled poles which were thought
to produce striped offspring.**

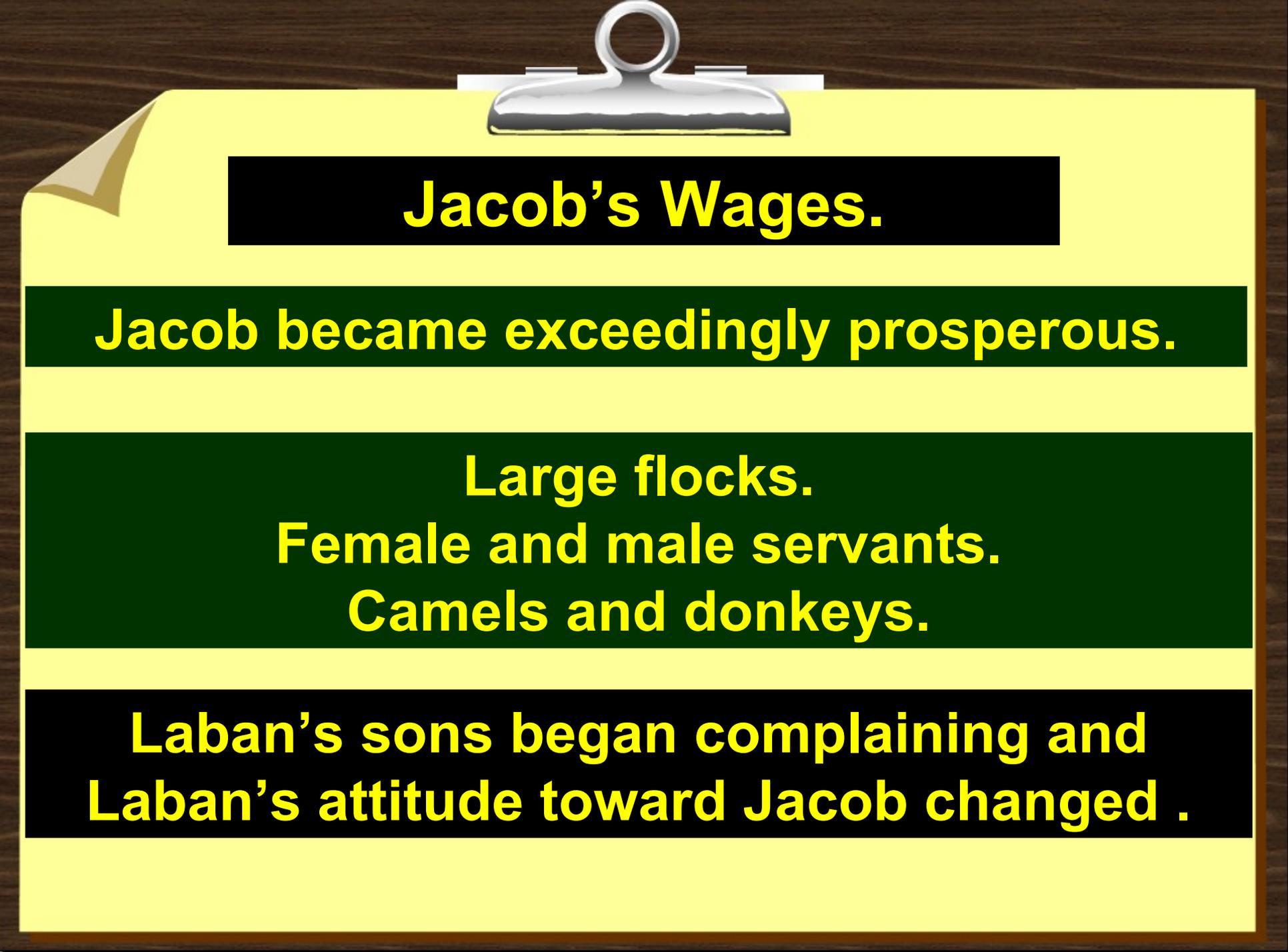
**No one believes that this is true today,
and no farmer uses this technique
to upgrade his cattle.**

**The second device of Jacob was based
on the same premise,
but it used the black and striped of the flock
to create the visual impressions.**

Jacob's Wheeling and Dealing. 30:37-43;

**Only later will we be told
the real reason for Jacob's prosperity.**

**But mark this well, Jacob did not prosper
because he pulled one over on Laban. Jacob's
Success was not the product of his schemes**



Jacob's Wages.

Jacob became exceedingly prosperous.

**Large flocks.
Female and male servants.
Camels and donkeys.**

**Laban's sons began complaining and
Laban's attitude toward Jacob changed .**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

Just as Jacob's deception of his father had adverse side effects, (27:30ff;) so Jacob's newly obtained prosperity produced its problems:

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth."

"And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward his as formerly."

(Genesis 31:1-2;)

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

Two significant changes have occurred since Jacob first arrived at Paddan-aram, and **these brought about a family crisis.**

First, Jacob, who arrived penniless, (32:10;) had now become prosperous, and this at the expense of Laban.

Secondly, when Jacob first arrived there was no mention of Laban having any sons, but now Laban has sons of his own.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

In addition to these hard facts **we must consider one more factor** which we have learned from archaeology.

A man who did not have sons of his own could adopt a near relative, who would then become his son.

At times this **“son”** would be **given a daughter** in marriage **by his new “father.”**

If the father later had sons of his own, **the inheritance** would have to **be divided** among these heirs in some fashion.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

The son who had the rights of the firstborn and, therefore, headship over the family, would in that culture, be given the household gods, which would signify his headship.

From these facts we can read somewhat between the lines of the story and surmise with some confidence the cause of the change in attitude toward Jacob and his family.

Initially Laban would have looked on Jacob as his son, his heir; but when sons of his own came, this was no longer needed.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

In fact, Jacob was now a competitor for the family inheritance.

When Jacob prospered at Laban's expense, it is easy to understand why Laban's sons looked on him with disfavour, for all their inheritance was fleeing before their very eyes.

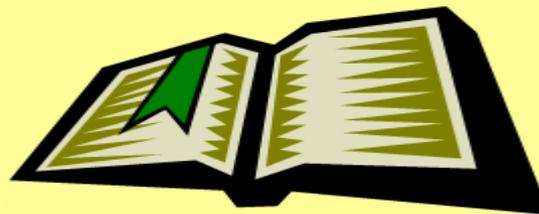
Thus, the change in attitude on the part of Laban and his sons brought about a change of plans for Jacob.

Not only did circumstances seem to dictate this change.



Genesis 31:2-3;

**Then the LORD said to Jacob,
“Return to the land
of your fathers
and to your family,
and I will be with you.”**



Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

The last recorded revelation that Jacob had received was twenty years previous while he was still in the land of promise. (28:10ff;)

Now God revealed to Jacob that it was time to return to his homeland.

The impression is given that **Jacob had received no other revelation** during those twenty years.

Jacob's actions would seem to confirm this conclusion, for **little was said of God and His will until this time.**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

What **circumstances** suggested Jacob do, **God instructed Jacob** to do. **He was to return to his homeland and to his relatives.**

Jacob did not worry about convincing his father in law, (31:17ff;) but **he did find it necessary to have the support of his wives.**

They must now choose between their father and their husband.
In order to have a private conversation, **Jacob called his wives to him in the field.**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

A Dirty Deal.

Jacob's first line of defence was to the effect that **their father had given him a dirty deal.** (31:4-9;)

4. Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to the field where he was watching the flocks,

5. so he could talk things over with them. "Your father has turned against me and is not treating me like he used to" he told them. "But the God of my father has been with me."

6. "You know how hard I have worked for your father,
7. but he has tricked me, breaking his wage agreement with me again and again. But God has not allowed him to do me any harm. 8. For if he said the speckled animals were mine, the whole flock began to produce speckled lambs.

And when he changed his mind and said I could have the streaked ones, then all the lambs were born streaked."

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

9. "In this way, God has made me wealthy at your father's expense."

Things were not as they used to be. For some unknown reason **Laban's attitude had strangely changed** toward Jacob.

While not favoured by Laban, God has been on Jacob's side.
The **inference** is that this could be seen by **Jacob's prosperity**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

A Divine Directive.

Besides this, God had spoken to Jacob confirming His blessing and directing him to return to the land of promise. (31:10-13;)

10. "During the mating season, I had a dream and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled, and spotted. 11. Then in my dream, the angel of God said to me, 'Jacob!' And I replied, Yes, I'm listening!"

12. "The angel said, 'Look, and you will see that only the streaked, speckled, and spotted males are mating with the females. I have seen what Laban has done to you.'"

13. "I am the God you met at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made a vow to serve me. Now leave this country and return to the land you came from."

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

All that **Jacob saw** in this dream was a **divine directive to return home.**

The vision of the striped, speckled, and mottled goats **seemed to justify** all that he had done to **manipulate the mating** and offspring of the flocks.

This same God, Who gave him the upper hand over Laban, had also **revealed Himself at Bethel** (31:13;) and was **instructing Jacob to return.**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

At least Jacob was able to convince his wives that it was right to leave Laban.

They recognized that they no longer were in their father's favour. Laban favoured his sons and considered Jacob and his wives only a liability.

Laban sold these daughters to Jacob and then spent the proceeds on himself.

There was no love lost between these women and their father.

They would not find it hard to leave Laban.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

**While what Jacob understood was true in part,
he did not see nearly enough in this vision.**

**God had not commended him
for his attempts to manipulate matters
against Laban to his own advantage.**

**In fact, the prosperity which he experienced
had nothing to do with his fervent efforts.**

**All of his poles and peeling and segregating
were of no profit whatever.**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

A careful look at the words describing the dream will make this clear.

Notice how God drew Jacob's attention to the fact that the males that were mating were striped, speckled, and mottled. (31:10, 12;)

Earlier we said that all of Jacob's efforts were based upon a faulty premise – that a visual impression during conception would influence the animal born.

In the vision which Jacob had from God there were no peeled poles, no segregated flocks, but only male goats mating that were striped, speckled, and mottled.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

Now what lesson was God getting across to Jacob, or at least to us?

What determined the offspring of the flocks was **not the circumstances (visual impressions)** at conception but **the characteristics of the males** that mated with the female goats.

Jacob's attention was drawn to the fact that **all the male goats** which were mating were **striped, speckled, and mottled.**

To put it another way, **only the striped, speckled, and mottled males were mating, none of the rest.**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

Now this we know to be a very **significant factor** in **determining the characteristics** of the offspring.
“Like father, like son,” we say.

While **Jacob** operated upon an entirely false premise, **God was working on a premise that is scientifically proven.**

How was it that only the striped, speckled, and mottled males were mating? **Simple.**
God organised it to be so in order that Laban's wealth would be passed on to Jacob.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

Think of it. All of Jacob's efforts were of no benefit. All that time peeling poles and separating flocks and striving to outdo Laban was all for nothing.

What seemed at the moment to be the work of Jacob's hands and the outcome of his schemes was nothing of the sort.

It was the hand of God in spite of Jacob's scheming, not because of it.

It is interesting also that we have described here genetic engineering that we are very familiar with today.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

Conclusion.

The parallels between Jacob's sojourn in Paddan aram and Israel's bondage in Egypt must have been evident to the nation as they first read this account from the pen of Moses.

Jacob's sin necessitated this departure just as Joseph's journey was the result of many sins.

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

**Jacob went to Paddan aram a poor man,
but he left with a large family and great wealth.**

**Joseph was sent to Egypt a virtual slave;
but when the nation emerged at the exodus,
they were many, and they had considerable wealth**

**Just as Laban was judged of God
by his wealth being given to Jacob,
so Egypt was judged by the wealth
that was taken out at the exodus.**

Laban's Hard Feelings. 31:1-16;

While these similarities are rather striking, there remains yet **one further parallel which would be very instructive to the nation Israel.**

Jacob's wealth did not come through his scheming but in spite of it. Jacob was not blessed of God because of his godliness but due to God's grace.

So also, **the Israelites** were to understand that **their blessings were a gift from God,** apart from the sin stained works of their own hands.

Here in the Old Testament
we see the grace of God demonstrated clearly.

Difference Between Legality and Morality. 31:17-55;

**Someone once said:-
“Ethics is the difference
between morality and legality.**

**Ethics is the difference between
what I ought to do
and what the law demands I must do.”
This is an description of an explanation of ethics.**

**Jacob totally lacked any ethical system
at this point in his life.
For Jacob, legality was equated with morality.**

**That is, anything which was not contrary to the law
was no problem for his conscience.**

Difference Between Legality and Morality. 31:17-55;

The purchase of the birthright from Esau was meticulously legal (Genesis 25:31-33;) but unethical.

The deception of Isaac in order to obtain the blessing was legal.

In fact, it even brought about what God had promised would happen, but in a way that was displeasing to God. (Genesis 27;)

Jacob's proposal to work seven years for Rachel, the younger daughter, was legal, but it was not really acceptable to Laban. (Genesis 29:18-19, 26;)

Difference Between Legality and Morality. 31:17-55;

Finally, **Jacob's contract with Laban** and his **manipulation of the flocks** in order to prosper at Laban's expense **was hardly ethical, but it was strictly legal**

So much so, in fact, that he could later **challenge Laban** to accuse him of any infractions of their agreement. (31:36-42;)

It was **Jacob's lack of any ethical framework** to guide and govern his conduct which **resulted in a very painful parting** when it came time to leave Paddan aram and return to the land of promise.

Difference Between Legality and Morality. 31:17-55;

The consequences of questionable ethics are clearly seen in this final encounter between Jacob and his uncle Laban.

We shall find, that things have changed little from the life and times of Jacob, for ethics are few and far between in our day as well.

We shall consider the basis for ethical conduct and the consequences of their absence as we study the events in the life of Jacob as he makes his exodus from Paddan aram.

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

Jacob Flees Laban.

**Jacob takes his whole family and departs.
(31:17-21;)**

Laban was away when they left

**When Laban returned,
he went out in pursuit of Jacob.**

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

**“Then Jacob arose and put his children
and his wives upon camels;
and he drove away all his live-stock
and all his property which he had gathered,”**

**“his acquired livestock which he had gathered In Paddan
aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.”**

**“When Laban had gone to shear his flock,
then Rachel stole the household idols
that were her father's.”**

**“And Jacob deceived Laban the Syrian, by not telling him
that he was fleeing. So he fled with all that he had;
and he arose and crossed the Euphrates River,
and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead”**

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

Circumstances strongly suggested that it was **time for Jacob to return to the land of promise**, (31:1-2;) and by divine revelation God commanded Jacob to do just that. (31:3;)

Also having received the assurance that his wives were in support of this move. (31:14-16;)

Jacob hastily packed up all of their goods and left for home. It does not appear to be accidental that he departed at a time when Laban was busily occupied in shearing his flock.

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

Leaving without any warning, Jacob reasoned, was the way to depart without any resistance from Laban, **who might have refused to release Jacob's wives or his flocks.**

What Jacob did not know was that Rachel had stolen Laban's gods just before they departed.

Many speculations are made concerning Rachel's motives, but the reason best supported by the text and by archaeology is that **Rachel stole the household gods in order to establish a future claim on Laban's family inheritance.**

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

The **household gods** were a token of **rightful claim to the possessions** and **the headship of the family.**

Rachel must have felt justified in stealing these gods and in expecting to share in the family inheritance. After all, this is what she and Leah had just affirmed to Jacob:

“Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price.”

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

“Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you.” (Genesis 31:14b-16;)

In Rachel's mind getting Laban's wealth was God's will. If that were so with the matter of the flocks which Jacob had been tending, **why should it not be true of the estate at Laban's death?**

It seems Rachel felt entirely justified in stealing the family gods for this reason. It is interesting, however, that she did not tell Jacob of her theft.

Jacob's Escape. 31:17-21;

Two wrongs are thus committed in the departure of Jacob and his family from Paddan aram.

First, Jacob has left without telling Laban about it and at a time when it would have been inconvenient for him to prevent it.

Second, Rachel had stolen Laban's family gods, which were the token of the right to claim a portion of Laban's inheritance and the headship of the family.

Jacob was doing the will of God in returning to the land of promise, but he was not doing so in God's way.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

“When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, then he took his kinsmen with him, and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.”

“God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream of the night, and said to him, “Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad.”

If you were Laban you would have come to the same conclusion. His gods were gone, and so was Jacob, hastily and secretly.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Laban caught up with Jacob.

“Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead.”

Then Laban said to Jacob,

“What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?”

“Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre; and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters?”

Jacob's Return (Haran to Mount Gilead)

CANAAN IN THE DAYS OF THE PATRIARCHS

Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40

The Great Sea



The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are thought to be located beneath the shallow waters at the south end of the Dead Sea. This area was called the Vale of Siddim.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Now you have done foolishly.

**“It is in my power to do you harm,
but the God of your father spoke to me last night,
saying, ‘Be careful not to speak
either good or bad to Jacob.’”**

**“now you have indeed gone away because
you longed greatly for your father's house;
but **why did you steal my gods?**”**

(Genesis 31:22-30;)

**While Laban attempts to throw a smoke screen
by playing the part of the offended father
and grandfather, (31:26-28;) **his real interest
was in regaining possession of his gods. (31:30;)****

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Catching up with Jacob was no easy matter, for **he had gained three days' lead time.**

By the time **Laban had rushed home, discovered the loss of his gods,** and gathered the relatives (who, we would gather, were armed for battle), **a fourth day must have been lost.**

After seven days Laban caught up with Jacob, but his intentions were certainly altered by **the divine warning** contained in **the dream** he had **the night before the two men met face to face.**

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

The message Laban received was a simple one:

“Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad.” (verse 24;)

From a similar expression in 24:50; we must understand God to be warning Laban not to attempt to change Jacob's course of action, let alone to bring harm to him in any way.

When Laban confronted Jacob the following day, God's warning did not prevent him from rebuking him for his hasty departure, which deprived him from any kind of farewell.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

It was **not the departure** that Laban protested, for Jacob's desire to return home was understandable. (31:30;)

What troubled Laban was the way in which Jacob left. **Jacob had "stolen away" (literally "stolen the heart of Laban,"** 31:20; also 31:26-27;)

while at the same time **Rachel had stolen his gods.**

Laban works very hard at playing the part of the offended father and grandfather whose deep affection for his daughters and grandchildren caused him much agony when he found they had secretly left without any good bye's.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Most of his protest is voiced on this note,
but there seems to be a considerable
lack of sincerity here.

Rachel and Leah had indicated that **he showed little concern for them** any longer? (31:14-16;)

The real bone of contention was the stolen gods:
“... but why did you steal my gods?” (31:30;)

This was the bottom line.

This was the reason for the hot pursuit
accompanied by other relatives
who were probably prepared to fight.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

This explains why God warned Laban not to do anything harmful to Jacob.

If Jacob got away with his gods, he could someday return and make a claim to his estate. This could not be tolerated.

Jacob's response was not made from a position of strength.

His first words are a rather weak defence of his stealthy escape, while his remaining words are in response to the matter of the stolen gods, of which he had no personal knowledge.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Then Jacob answered and said to Laban,
“Because I was afraid, for I said, ‘Lest you
would take your daughters from me by force.’”

“The one with whom you find your gods
shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen
point out what is yours among my belongings
and take it for yourself.” For Jacob did not know
that Rachel had stolen them.” (Genesis 31:31-32;)

Jacob's conduct was the result of fear
just as the deception of his father Isaac, (26:7-9;)
and his grandfather Abraham, (12:11-13; 20:11;)
had been.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Jacob did not have sufficient faith that **God would deliver him** from the hand of his own father in law.

In his fear he had to question the truthfulness of the words which God had spoken to him at Bethel:

“And behold, I am with you, and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” (Genesis 28:15;)

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Jacob had not yet come to the place where he could trust God to accomplish His word without some back up system which included Jacob's manipulation or deception.

Having gotten the upper hand over Laban in the last six years, Jacob was not certain that Laban would let him go without a fight. Perhaps he would not let his daughters go either.

This was not a discussion that Jacob was eager to prolong, for he had very little reasoning that could justify his recent actions.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Feeling certain that he was innocent of the charge of stealing Laban's gods, Jacob turned the conversation to this issue.

Laban was urged to make a diligent search of Jacob's goods to try and find his gods. Whoever was caught with them would die.

Jacob obviously had no idea that his favorite, his beloved Rachel, was the culprit.

That Laban was most interested in his gods, not in good bye's, is seen by his subsequent actions:

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

“So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them.”

“Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them.”

“Laban felt through all the tent, but did not find them. She said to her father, “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me.”

“So he searched, but did not find the household idols.” Gen 31:33-35;

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Obviously **Laban did not suspect Rachel** either.

He first searched Jacob's tent.

Who would be more likely to have stolen his gods than Jacob?

Was he not the one who had come to Paddan aram because of his desire to inherit the headship of Isaac's family and to have the rights of the first born?

The theft of the family gods would give **Jacob pre-eminence over Laban's household** just as his deception had gained it over Isaac's household.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Having searched carefully in **Jacob's** tent,
Laban went on to **Leah's** tent
and then to **the two maids.**

Only last did he come to the tent of Rachel.

**She was the least suspect of all,
and yet she was the guilty party.**

She successfully concealed her theft
by a clever distraction. **She sat on
the very saddle which hid the gods of Laban.**

When he had searched every other part of the tent,
she explained that she must remain seated because
of her monthly infirmity, common to women.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

**Laban did not wish to press that matter any further,
and so Rachel's theft was not discovered.**

**We do not know when nor if Rachel told
Jacob of her theft, but we can well imagine
what his response must have been.**

**Had Rachel's deed been discovered, a very
different sequence of events would have followed.**

**As it was, Jacob's sheepishness
over his secret escape was overshadowed
by his righteous indignation.**

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

Jacob revelled in his innocence in addition to the assurance he gained from Laban's report that **God had spoken to him in the night,** preventing harm to Jacob.

In the light of these events **Jacob now seemed to have the upper hand;** he held the winning cards, and he planned to use them to greatest advantage.

The **years of friction** between these two men now **boiled over** as **Jacob scalded Laban** with "holy" anger.

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

“Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban,

“What is my transgression?

What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me?”

“Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods?

Set it here before my kinsmen,

that they may decide between us two.”

“These twenty years I have been with you, your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks.”

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

“That which was torn of beasts I did not bring to you; **I bore the loss of it myself.** You required it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night.”

“Thus I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes.”

“These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times.”

“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now **you would have sent me away empty handed.**”

Laban's Pursuit. 31:22-35;

“God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so he rendered judgment last night.”
(Genesis 31:36-42;)

Jacob recognized **Laban's “hurt feelings”** as a mere facade. The real reason for his hot pursuit was **the thought of being wronged by Jacob.**

Laban had concluded that Jacob had finally stepped over the line. Up till this point he had always managed to stay one step within the law.

With the disappearance of the family gods from his household, **Laban thought Jacob had finally gone one step too far in his greed.**

The Tables Turn. 31:36-42;

**But now Laban was caught empty handed.
His charges could not be justified.**

**Not only was there no evidence found in his search,
but Laban had been consistently wrong
in many other areas.**

**These Jacob was eager to elaborate upon.
Never had Laban's herds suffered
from Jacob's neglect, nor had he even eaten
at Laban's expense.**

The Tables Turn. 31:36-42;

**The animals that were lost to natural causes
Jacob replaced, even though
he was not responsible.**

**Laban had insisted upon this,
and Jacob did so without protest until now.**

**Jacob worked hard,
suffering the hardships of a shepherd's life,
and all this while Laban continued
to change his wages repeatedly.**

The Tables Turn. 31:36-42;

Having gotten his years of frustration off his chest,
Jacob used his trump card,
Triumphantly capping off his defence
by asserting that **God was on his side. (31:42;)**

Had God not been looking out for him, **Laban**
might have gotten away with his double dealing.

All his prosperity, Jacob maintained,
was **God's blessing on his life.**
God had seen his affliction,
it was true. (31:12;)

The Tables Turn. 31:36-42;

**but Jacob went too far when he added
“and the toil of my hands.” (31:42;)**

Nowhere had God ever indicated to Jacob that His blessing was in any way related to Jacob’s works.

In fact, God had revealed to Jacob that just the opposite was the case. (31:10-13;)

The warning which God had issued to Laban on the previous night was proof to Jacob that **God was on his side. God had rendered judgment, and **Jacob maintained that he had been proven innocent.****

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**Laban asked Jacob
to enter into an agreement of peace.**

**They placed rocks in a pile
and ate together.**

**Jacob named the place “Galeed.”
(Heap of Testimony.)**

**Laban bid his daughters farewell
and left.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**We come away from Jacob's defence
with the uneasy feeling
that he has grossly overstated his case.**

**God did see all that Laban had done to Jacob.
Jacob's prosperity was from God's hand,
but it had little or nothing to do
with Jacob's piety or productive genius.**

**God had been blessing him
on the basis of grace,
but Jacob had used God's intervention
as the basis for his self defence.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

Jacob maintained that he had prevailed and that God had intervened because he was spiritual, while Laban was carnal.

We find ourselves unconvinced by Jacob's best efforts. Laban does not appear to be overly impressed either.

While Laban has not been able to prove Jacob's dishonesty, he still is convinced of it. Thus, he initiates the covenant that is made:

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob,

**“The daughters are my daughters,
and the children are my children, and the flocks
are my flocks, and **all that you see is mine.**”**

**“But what can I do this day to these my daughters
or to their children whom they have borne?”**

**“So now come, **let us make a covenant,
you and I,** and let it be a witness
between you and me.”**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

“Then **Jacob took a stone** and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, “**Gather stones.**””

“So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. Now **Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha**, but **Jacob called it Galeed.**”

“And Laban said, “**This heap is a witness between you and me this day.**”

“Therefore it was **named Galeed; and Mizpah**, for he said, “**May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.**”

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

“If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see, **God is witness between you and me.”**

And Laban said to Jacob, “Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. **This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.”**

“The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.”

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

“So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. Then **Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain,** and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.”

“And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.” (Gen 31:43-55;)

All that Jacob took with him was really Laban's, he insisted - his wives, his children, and his herds.
(31:43;)

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

“What could he do to resist? If he could not retrieve his household gods, the least Laban can do is to make a covenant with Jacob which would guarantee that he will never make use of those gods to further encroach upon Laban’s possessions in the future.

Notice that the treaty is initiated by Laban and that its terms are spelled out by him.

Since Laban has not succeeded in holding Jacob in check, Laban now calls upon Jacob’s God to do so.

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**A stone was set up as a pillar, (31:45;)
and a pile of stones
was erected as a monument. (31:46;)**

**Also, a covenant meal was shared by Jacob
and Laban and the other relatives. (31:54;)**

**Laban managed to get Jacob
to swear before his God
to several particular things.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

First, Jacob promised never to mistreat Laban's daughters and never to take any other wives in addition to them. (31:50;)

Second, each covenanted that they would not pass that point to harm the other. (31:52;)

Having agreed to these matters, **Laban said a last farewell to his daughters and their children.** Blessing them, he returned to his home. (31:55;)

The long and often stormy relationship between Laban and Jacob had come to an end.

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

Jacob seems to have come away from this encounter with Laban as **the unchallenged winner**, but did he really?

While **Jacob** may have convinced himself and his wives of his innocence, **he has not convinced us, nor has he changed the mind of Laban.**

Laban was still certain that Jacob was a crook, but being warned by God, he could do little to stop him.

The treaty which he initiated was his only hope. And that treaty was no tribute to Jacob's character.

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

Now stop and think about it for a moment. Laban had lived in close association with Jacob for twenty years, and he was convinced of his lack of integrity.

He believed that Jacob stole his gods. He believed that Jacob had underhandedly gotten possession of his flocks.

He felt compelled to get Jacob to swear a holy oath that he would not mistreat his wives or someday return to Laban with hostile intent.

Does this sound like a man who was Convinced that Jacob was a godly man?

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**Just as the covenants between
Abimelech and Abraham, (21:22-24;)
and later Abimelech and Isaac, (26:26-31;)**

**Were evidence of the carnal state
of these patriarchs, so this treaty with Laban
reveals the character flaws of Jacob.**

**He was a man who could not be trusted.
He would, at least, keep the letter of the law,
and thus Laban spelled out assurances
which he felt were needed.**

**What a poor testimony
to the character of Jacob.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

Yet Jacob seems to be convinced of his integrity.

**He is certain that God is on his side
because of his uprightness.**

How could Jacob have been so mistaken?

**Perhaps the answer is to be found
in the fact that Jacob was a legalist.**

**Jacob prided himself on being a man who kept the
letter of the law. Never, to his knowledge at least,
had he ever broken his word.**

**He had made a deal with Laban,
and he had always lived up to it.**

**Oh, he had peeled those poles all right,
but that was not a breach of their agreement.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

Jacob, equated morality with legality.

**Whatever was within the law
was morally right so far as he was concerned.**

**Thus, he could stand before Laban
with justified righteous indignation and demand
evidence of wrongdoing on his part be put forth.**

**He could claim with great assurance
that God was on his side.**

**How could this NOT be true when
Jacob had always lived within the law?**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**Here is the heart of the error of legalism,
for legalism equates morality with legality.**

**It believes that righteousness
and the keeping of the law
are one and the same thing.**

**A man may have no system of ethics whatever,
but so long as he does not break the law
he feels morally pure.**

**He feels confident of the
approval and blessing of God.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

With this mentality Jacob was hardly different from the Jews of Jesus' day.

They felt that being a descendant of Abraham assured them of God's favour. (John 8:39;)

They were confident that a meticulous keeping of the law made them acceptable to God.

This puts the Sermon on the Mount in an entirely different light. Jesus spoke these words to Jews who were legalists.

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**They felt that a mere living within the law
was sufficient to merit them
a righteousness acceptable to God.**

**Jesus went on to show them that
a much greater righteousness was necessary.
(Matthew 5:20;)**

A genuine faith was more than a matter of form.

**Those who were genuinely members of the kingdom
were those whose hearts were pure before God.**

**Thus Jesus dealt more with motives
than with methods.**

He dealt more with function than mere forms.

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**Jacob may have felt self righteous,
but Laban was totally unconvinced.**

**He resorted to legalism (that is, a legal covenant)
because that was all he could trust Jacob to do,
keep a few rules.**

**Many Christians today are no different than Jacob.
They (we?), too, are legalists.**

**We think that we are pious and holy
because we do not smoke or drink or swear.**

**But ask those who have to work for us
or those who have to employ us, and they will do
just as Laban did - get it all down in writing.**

The Covenant of Peace. 31:43-55;

**You see, even with all our pious talk
the world knows better,
for they have to live with us too.**

**While we may keep a certain list of do's and don'ts,
we may undermine and manipulate;
we may deceive and destroy;
we may seek our success at the expense of others**

**True righteousness, involves much more
Than keeping a few rules to the letter.
It is a matter of the heart also.**

Genesis
30:25; to 31:55;
Laban's New Deal.
Graeme Morrison

Prepared by
Graeme Morrison

graemestudy@gmail.com

<https://www.graemebibleresources.com>

Next in the series:-
Genesis 32:01; 33:20;

Jacob Wrestles an Angel and returns to Canaan.