

Sent: 3/13/2019 6:12:51 PM Eastern Standard Time  
Subject: Lasts Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 30:25-31:55

"...The Lord watch between you and me when we are out of one another's sight!" (Genesis 31:49)

It was time for Jacob to make his "exodus" from Mesopotamia! (We can see many comparisons with the Children of Israel's exodus from Egypt many years later!) His 14 years of "service" to Laban had been completed! Remember that night "under the stars" (in Bethel), "on the run" from Esau, when God had appeared to him in a dream (Genesis 28:15) and promised that He, "would be with him, and keep him," wherever he would go and "bring him back" to the land of Canaan! John MacArthur writes that, "14 years of absence hadn't dulled Jacob's acute awareness of belonging to the land of Canaan, the land God had given to him."

And so, in Genesis 30:25, we see Jacob asking Laban to "send him away" so that he might return to "his country"! But Laban, realizing that God had blessed him because of Jacob, asked "what he could give him to stay"! And you know the story--how Jacob proposed the "one thing" that would keep him there! That he would be given all the "speckled and spotted sheep and goats, and every black sheep" among Laban's flocks--the seemingly less desirable ones--so that he could "provide for his own household"!

Sounded like a great deal for Laban! How could he lose? But somehow or other--through his "selective breeding" technique (or whatever!), over the next six years--Jacob was able to greatly multiply his flocks, compared with what Laban and his sons were able to do! Must have been "something in the water," an observer might concluded! But no, it was clearly a "God thing"! Something both Jacob and Laban would eventually come to realize!

Genesis 30:43 says: "So the man (Jacob) became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys!" And Laban's sons complained that Jacob "had taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged our father he has made all his wealth!"

Well, after six more years, Jacob had clearly outgrown his welcome! And it just so happened that God would again appear to him and tell him to "return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives" (that would include Esau!) and that He would "be with him"!

Jacob's first response was to call Rachel and Leah and explain the whole affair to them, including how God had seen, "all that Laban had been doing to him," and how He was responsible for, "taking away their father's livestock and giving them to him," and how the "God of Bethel" had appeared to him again and told him to "leave this land, and return to the land of his birth"! Interestingly, both Rachel and Leah expressed total agreement with Jacob's account and encouraged him to, "do whatever God had said to him"! (Genesis 31:4-16)

And so Jacob & Co. made all the preparation for going back to the land of Canaan! And "when Laban was gone to shear his flock," Rachel, for some reason, "stole the household idols which were her father's"! What was she thinking? Did it have something to do with gaining a, "family inheritance"? Did she think it would increase her fertility to have another son, which she desperately wanted (see Genesis 30:24)? Did she think it would ensure "good fortune" for their trip to Canaan (as Arnold suggests)? We'll never know! Nor would Jacob apparently!

And so Jacob (and his whole entourage) slipped away and crossed the Euphrates River and "set his face toward the hill country of Gilead" (the northern part of what would eventually be part of the Promised Land). It was there that Laban and his band of men finally caught up with them (after a seven-day journey), and accused Jacob of deceiving him by "fleeing secretly," and "carrying away his daughters like captives of the sword" and, perhaps more importantly to him, "stealing his gods"! Jacob vehemently denied this latter accusation and even foolishly promised that, "The one with whom you find your gods shall not live"! Whew! If Jacob only knew!

Well, after a thorough search, the "gods" were never found, after which Jacob vented his built-up anger to Laban about all his years of service and how, "if the God of his father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac (speaking of his reverence for God), had not been for him, surely now he would have been sent away empty-handed!" (Genesis 31:42)

What must have been clear to both Jacob and Laban at this point was that the God of Abraham, the only true God, was overseeing all the affairs, and was "with Jacob"! God had even appeared to Laban and "warned him to be careful" how he spoke with Jacob! And so it was Laban who, somewhat surprisingly, offered a truce! Genesis 31:46-49 says "Jacob and his kinsmen" then gathered stones and made a "pillar" (recalling the pillar Jacob had made 20 years before at Bethel), calling it "Mizpah" (or "watchtower"), "for he (Laban) said, "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other!"

Interestingly, the pillar was apparently built in the "hill country of Gilead" and would serve as a kind of "balm of healing" between Jacob and Laban, a "non-aggression pact" in which they made a "covenant" not to harm one another in the future! Jeremiah 8:22 and 46:11 speak of a "balm of Gilead" as a needed healing to the brokenness of God's people! (We're reminded of the old African-American spiritual: "There is a balm of Gilead that heals the sin-sick soul..."! And Jesus Christ, of course, would ultimately become that true "balm"!)

Well, whether any real healing took place between Jacob and Laban on that day is debatable, but one thing is certain: both of them recognized that it was God who had directed the events of their lives and they parted in peace, each one "returning to his place"! And it represented an important close to that part of the story! "Shepherd's Notes" notes that: "While in Haran, Jacob acquired great wealth, a large family, and a new appreciation of the work of God in his life! Having met his match in Laban, he was now ready to meet Esau--and God--face to face!" (In next week's lesson!)

And so, we end this lesson seeing Jacob becoming more the man God called him to be! And, more importantly, God's plan for the children of Jacob (Israel)--and His "plan of redemption"--was still intact!

It's all about God! Isaiah 55:8-9, speaking about God, says: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares the Lord! For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts!"

Go with God this week, men, and know that He's "watching" over us!

Lowell