

### Laban Offered to Start Paying Jacob Wages

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the fact that people who come out of a background of the worship of idols will need help in their spiritual growth once they come to Christ in repentance and faith. In this topic, we will see that Laban offered to pay Jacob wages for his work but was still trying to take advantage of Jacob for his own benefit.

Genesis 30:25-30 says, “And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you.’ And Laban said to him, ‘Please *stay*, if I have found favor in your eyes, *for* I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake.’ Then he said, ‘Name me your wages, and I will give *it*.’ So *Jacob* said to him, ‘You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. For what you had before I *came* was little, and it has increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming. And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?’” In these verses, we see that Laban wanted Jacob to continue working for him.

In contrast, we see that Jacob wanted to take his wives and children and return to the land of his father. The reason that Laban wanted Jacob to continue to work for him was due to the fact that Laban realized that the Lord had blessed him while Jacob was working to receive Rachel as his wife. Jacob had now worked a total of fourteen years for Rachel because of the fact that Laban had deceived him and given him Leah even though he had worked for Rachel. As a result, Laban told Jacob, name your wages and I will pay it. Here, we see that Laban makes it sound like he was an honorable man who would pay whatever Jacob requested. In actual fact, Laban was still the deceiver that he had been ever since Jacob came to his country. Genesis 31:41 says, “...Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times...” His deception included changing the wages of Jacob ten times.

Jacob reminded Laban what his flock had been like at the time Jacob had started working for him twenty years earlier. Jacob said that Laban had very little before Jacob came. In fact, when Jacob came, we see that Rachel was able to take care of the flock all by herself. Genesis 29:9 says, “Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.” During the fourteen years that Jacob had worked for Rachel, the flocks of Laban had increased to a very large amount. Jacob had seen how the flocks and possessions of Laban had increased during those years. Now, Jacob felt that it was time for him to begin providing for his own family. At that point, the family of Jacob had very little.

Genesis 30:31-36 says, “So he said, ‘What shall I give you?’ And Jacob said, ‘You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all

the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *these* shall be my wages. So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me.’ And Laban said, ‘Oh, that it were according to your word!’ So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons. Then he put three days’ journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban’s flocks.” Jacob said that Laban did not need to give a single thing to him that he already had.

Jacob then said that he would go through all of the flocks of Laban and remove any of the animals that were spotted and speckled, all the lambs that were brown and all of the goats that were spotted and speckled. This meant that all of the remaining sheep and goats would be white because all of the sheep or goats that were mixed in color would be removed from the flocks. Then, Jacob said that only those sheep and goats born to the white sheep and goats that were spotted, speckled or brown would belong to him. Jacob said that any white sheep or goats that would be placed in his flock would then be considered stolen by Jacob. Laban thought that would be great for him because all of the animals that were already in existence would be removed before Jacob started collecting his wages. Usually, more sheep and goats that are speckled, spotted or brown are born to sheep or goats that are themselves speckled, spotted or brown.

That day, Laban and Jacob went through the flocks. Any sheep or goats that already had any color on them were removed from the rest of the flock. By the time they were done that day all of the sheep and goats that were already speckled, spotted or brown had been removed from the flocks. However, Laban acted like he still did not trust Jacob. He had his own sons take the sheep and goats that were spotted, speckled or brown and remove them three days’ journey from the flocks for which Jacob would be providing the care for Laban. In that day, the sheep and goats that were speckled, spotted or brown were not considered as valuable as those that were white. There was no actual difference in the value of the animals that were speckled, spotted or brown because that was just their outward appearance. At first, Laban thought he would continue to be blessed, because he thought that very few animals would be born that would belong to Jacob.

We see that Jacob had to trust God to work in the flocks and bring blessing to Jacob and his family. Genesis 30:37-43 says, “Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which *was* in the rods. And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink. So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban’s flock. And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban’s and the stronger Jacob’s. Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks,

female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.”

Jacob had herded the flocks of sheep and goats for fourteen years for Laban. He had learned that there were certain things to do to stimulate the sheep to breed. He had found that if rods were taken from poplar, almond or chestnut trees and then had their bark removed, it would stimulate the flocks to breed more frequently. Jacob would place these peeled rods in the watering troughs and the sheep and goats would be stimulated to breed while they were in the area of the watering troughs. The word translated “conceive” means *to be hot* and those who work with animals speak of the fact that animals are in heat when it is possible for them to conceive. This word is also used by David, in Psalm 51:5, where we read, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” In this context, the word is also used two more key times which help us to understand what happened as Jacob cared for the sheep of Laban.

Genesis 30:41 says, “And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.” Then, Genesis 31:9-10 adds, “...So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me. And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted...” Jacob was making it possible for the stronger sheep to conceive more frequently in Genesis 30:41. However, in Genesis 31:9-10, Jacob makes it clear that the Lord was the One who was in control of what happened as he talked with Rachel and Leah out in the field. Jacob could not determine which male sheep were causing the sheep to become pregnant until God showed him in a dream.

In the dream, God made it clear that when Laban said that Jacob should have the spotted, speckled and grey-spotted sheep, it was in preparations for those times that the Lord caused the rams (male sheep and goats) to cause the females to become pregnant because Genesis 31:11-12 says, “...Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, “Jacob.” And I said, “Here I am.” And He said, “Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you...”” In fact, Laban changed the wages of Jacob a total of ten times. Jacob said in Genesis 31:7, “...Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me...”

Jacob caused the stronger sheep and goats to conceive, but the Lord knew exactly when Laban was going to change the wages and so it was the Lord who caused the particular rams to prepare for those changes in wages at the right time. The result was that Jacob became exceedingly prosperous as he worked for Laban. Laban could deceive Jacob and change his wages but the Lord was the One who was in control. As a result, the Lord provided for Jacob even though Laban had deceived him and changed his wages ten times. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain the fact that we can trust the Lord to do what is right even though people may try to deceive us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.