

The Lord Told Jacob to Return to Canaan

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that we can trust the Lord to work through whatever circumstances happen in our lives, including those who would deceive us, to accomplish His plan for our lives. In this topic, we will see that the Lord told Jacob it was time to return to the land of Canaan.

Genesis 31:1-3 says, “Now *Jacob* heard the words of Laban’s sons, saying, ‘Jacob has taken away all that was our father’s, and from what was our father’s he has acquired all this wealth.’ And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it *was not favorable* toward him as before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you.’” In these verses, we see that the thinking of the sons of Laban became controlled by their envy. They chose to forget that their father had very little at the time Jacob came to Haran. When Jacob first came, Rachel was able to take care of his flock 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.” Laban had recognized this blessing at the time Jacob had finished his fourteen years of work for Laban to obtain Rachel as his wife. In Genesis 30:27, we read, “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.’”

The sons of Laban did not remember how God had blessed their father for the sake of Jacob. They just saw that part of the wealth that had belonged to Laban had been gained by Jacob. They were angry to see that wealth go to Jacob because of their envy and greed. They wanted all of that wealth for themselves. The attitude of Laban toward Jacob had also changed as he saw that Jacob was now the one who was being blessed by the Lord. However, it was not the change in attitude by either the sons or by Laban that caused Jacob to decide to return to his own land. In fact, Jacob was very afraid to go back to his home because he feared his brother Esau. In Genesis 32:11, Jacob said, “Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children.” We see that it was because the Lord spoke to Jacob, and told him that it was time for him to return, that he was willing to return to the land the Lord had promised to Abraham and his descendants.

Genesis 31:4-9 says, “So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock, and said to them, ‘I see your father’s countenance, that it *is not favorable* toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my might I have served your father. Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me. If he said thus: “The speckled shall be your wages,” then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: “The streaked shall be your wages,” then all the flocks bore streaked. So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me.’” Here, we see that Jacob had Rachel and Leah come and meet him out where he was taking care of the flock. This way no one could overhear him in the tent and tell Laban about his plans. Jacob told his wives that their father was no longer favorable to him. Jacob then reminded his wives of the fact that God had been with him and had protected him from their father so that their father did

not hurt him.

Jacob said that he had served their father with all of his might for the previous twenty years. During the last six years, their father had changed the wages of Jacob ten times. Laban changed the wages of Jacob those ten times because he was trying to hold on to all of his wealth and did not want Jacob to gain anything from his wages. Jacob realized that it was God who had taken away the livestock of Laban and had given them to him. Then, we see that Jacob went on to explain how God had taken the wealth of Laban and had greatly blessed Jacob and given him large flocks. Genesis 31:10-13 says, ““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. 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. I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.”””

In this dream, God revealed to Jacob how He had worked to bless Jacob and give him an inheritance. God knew what genes the rams of the sheep had. As a result, God was working, even though Jacob did not understand what God was doing to give him the sheep until the Lord revealed it to him in this dream. God revealed that He caused the rams that got the female sheep pregnant to be the ones that had the colored markings of speckled, spotted or streaked to have those colors in their recessive genes. That meant that even though the rams did not show that they had those genes, they carried those genes as recessive genes. Since the genes carry the characteristics that any animal or person receives, those rams could pass on those genes to the animals that were born so that when they were born they were speckled or streaked.

Since Laban changed the wages of Jacob ten times during those six years, that meant that God showed that He knew exactly what day Laban was going to change the wages and caused the right rams to get the female sheep pregnant months before Laban even changed the wages. As a result, once Laban had changed the wages, the sheep started bearing young that had those colors. In this way, God had taken away the flocks from Laban and had given them to Jacob. In actual fact, Laban was reaping the consequences of his own sin. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Laban had deceived Jacob by giving him Leah when he had worked seven years for Rachel. He had deceived Jacob ten times by changing his wages. Laban had shown, by his deception of Jacob, that his focus was on the things of this world. As a result, God chose not to allow him to reap the wealth of his flocks.

In that dream, God had also reminded Jacob that He was the One who had spoken to Jacob at Bethel. God reminded Jacob that He had poured oil on the stone pillar as a reminder of the fact that he had made a vow to God. Now, it was God who had told him that it was time for him to get out of the land of Haran and return to the land where he had made this promise to the Lord. This is a reminder that any time we make a promise or a vow to the Lord, He will not forget that vow. In order to walk to please the Lord, we need to keep any promises that we make to Him. We also see the response of Leah and Rachel to the words of Jacob. Genesis 31:14-16 says,

“Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, ‘Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father’s house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are *really* ours and our children’s; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it.’” Here, we see that Laban had not treated Rachel and Leah with respect either.

Rachel and Leah did not feel like there was anything for them in the house of their father. He had not given them even a small portion or inheritance for the fourteen years of work that Jacob had given to their father. In fact, he had just treated them like aliens or slaves from another country. As a result, they had not been treated like daughters where the husband who received them had paid a dowry so that the father could give gifts to his daughters at the time of their marriage. They had been sold to Jacob like a stranger or alien and he had worked for them for a total of fourteen years. Meanwhile, Laban had become very wealthy during that time and had kept everything for himself. He had shown no fatherly love to his daughters or their children.

As a result, Rachel and Leah said that God was the One who had taken these riches from their father. God had blessed Laban throughout the time that Jacob had worked for his daughters. Jacob had earlier said to Laban, in Genesis 30:30, “‘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 fact, Laban had even said at that time, in Genesis 30:27, “‘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.’” That is why Rachel and Leah felt that God had taken part of those riches away from their father, especially when they saw that he changed the wages of Jacob ten times to try to keep everything for himself. They felt that God had chosen to take part of the wealth from their father because it really belonged to his daughters and their children and he should have shared it with them.

That is why Rachel and Leah said, “‘Whatever God has said to you, do it.’” Here, we see that both Rachel and Leah were in agreement about the fact that Jacob should be obedient to God. They realized that meant they would go with Jacob to the land from which he had come and would probably not see their family again. However, they were ready to follow Jacob to that land. Jacob had told his wives about the vow he had made at Bethel. Rachel and Leah were learning from Jacob how to follow God and they were ready to return with him to Bethel where the Lord had spoken to Jacob when he was on his way to Haran. They still had many lessons to learn, but we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the importance of learning to follow the Lord day-by-day as He leads us. Learning continues throughout our lives as we grow and mature in the Lord and learn to be led by His love. May the Lord richly bless you as you learn to explain these things to your physical and spiritual children.