

The Last Six Years of Jacob's Sojourn in Haran

Genesis 30:25-43

Genesis 30:25-43 - *"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. ²⁶ 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."*

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." ²⁸ Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give it."

²⁹ So Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me. 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?"

³¹ 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: ³² 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. ³³ 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."

³⁴ And Laban said, "Oh, that it were according to your word!" ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

³⁷ 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. ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ 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.

⁴¹ 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. ⁴² But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in; so the feeble were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. ⁴³ Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys."

Background Notes

Genesis 30:25-43 records the last six years of Jacob's twenty-year sojourn at Haran. During these six years Jacob became very prosperous. After his first 14 years in Haran, Jacob wanted to go home to Beersheba: *"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" (v25).*

Jacob had worked for Laban for fourteen years to earn the dowries for his wives, Leah and Rachel. He had served honorably, and God had blessed his efforts. As a result, Laban had prospered - and Laban knew it! So Laban said to him, *"I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake" (v27).* Some translations have a more literal translation: "I have divined" or "I have learned by divination" that the Lord has blessed me for your sake." Even though Laban recognized the one true God, it appears that he was not a believer. He still was involved with the idolatry and divination that Abraham had left years before.

After the fourteen years, Jacob wanted to leave with his wives and his children, return home and start working for himself and his own family. *"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?"(v30).*

But Laban wanted Jacob to stay, because it was quite obvious that he had become prosperous because of Jacob. Laban was able to twist Jacob's arm by saying, "I'll pay you -- and you can name your wages!" So Jacob said that he would stay on one condition. From that point on, Laban would give Jacob any striped, spotted or brown sheep and goats that were born, so Jacob could begin his own flocks and herds. "It's a deal!" said Laban.

To make sure that Jacob couldn't cheat on the deal, Laban moved the spotted, striped and dark-colored animals a 3-day journey away, and put them in the care of his sons. But Laban was not an expert in genetics! As Jacob began to breed the all-white sheep, and the all-black goats, their latent genes produced striped, spotted or brown offspring!

Jacob thought he was "upping his odds" by a combination of selective breeding and having the animals mate while looking at branches or poles with stripes of bark peeled off them. Guess what? It worked (or so it seemed!), because Jacob's striped and spotted flocks were increasing.

You might be wondering, "What on earth is the Bible teaching here?!" Well, the Bible is **not** teaching that Jacob's striped poles were the reason for his breeding success! The Bible is simply recounting Jacob's notion of how to breed striped and spotted flocks! His idea was similar to the "old wives' tale" (that's still common in many cultures) that what a pregnant woman looks at will affect the appearance of her child! In Jacob's thinking, the striped poles were doing the job.

Well, the Bible is definitely **not** teaching that Jacob's striped poles were the cause of the spotted and striped offspring! In chapter 31 God revealed to Jacob the real reason for his success: **God** was controlling the mating process! God blessed

Jacob, and he became very wealthy: *“Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys”* (v43).

Doctrinal Points

1. The Lord’s blessing on the believer’s life ripples out to unbelievers.

Even though Jacob had a lot of lessons to learn in the School of God, he was a believer, and the Lord blessed his life. Laban was an unbeliever, but he was experiencing some good fallout from the Lord’s blessing on Jacob’s life. So Laban said: *“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”* (v27). And verse 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?”*

The Lord’s blessing on the believer’s life ripples out to unbelievers. This divine principle operates as a testimony to the unbeliever, both then and now. This truth is also taught in the life of Joseph. Pharaoh and all the people of pagan Egypt were blessed because of Joseph, the believer.

Every year at Emmaus Bible College we get feedback about our students from the local merchants. They love to hire our students because our Christian students prove to be more honest, reliable and hardworking and are more pleasant with the customers than non-Christian young people. As a matter of fact, some of the local merchants have said that business is better since they hired our students! (And every year I tell my students “Don’t blow our reputation!”) This is just one example of many that could be given to illustrate this principle. The blessing of the Lord on the believer’s life ripples out to the unbeliever.

2. The Lord’s blessing on the believer’s life requires no “shenanigans” by the believer.

Shenanigans? You’ve heard that word before, right? It refers to questionable practices or conduct. In chapter 28, when Jacob had the dream at Bethel, God promised He would bless Jacob. In chapter 30, God was making good on that promise. Jacob didn’t have to try to help God out with the “shenanigans” of the peeled sticks or rods. Jacob didn’t have to try to favor his flocks over Laban’s in the mating process. God was going to bless Jacob - and no “shenanigans” were needed!

Remember how Abraham and Sarah tried to help God out with His promise, by wrongly using Hagar as a concubine? Abraham and Sarah’s “shenanigans” were not needed to help God to fulfill His promise. The Lord’s blessing requires no shenanigans on the part of the believer.

A Christian friend once approached me about going into a questionable money making scheme, with the idea that the money I would make could be used for the Lord. (Did you ever hear that one before?!) Well, my answer was “No” for two reasons: 1) the Lord doesn’t operate that way, and 2) I didn’t have any money to invest anyway! The blessing of the Lord on the believer’s life, whether it is material blessing or any other kind of blessing, requires no shenanigans from the believer.

Practical Application

Are you a boss like Laban?

Some of you are employers or supervisors – and this would also apply if you hire people to work around your house or yard. How do you treat them? Do you look out for their best interests? Or are you a selfish, penny-pinching boss like Laban?

Laban didn’t care about Jacob’s well-being, even though he was his son-in-law. All Laban cared about was his own advancement and his own accumulation of wealth. Flocks and herds, of course, were a sign of your wealth in those days. When Laban got Jacob to sign that contract, he really thought Jacob would be paid very little - just a token number of off-colored sheep and goats, particularly in view of the starting conditions.

Are you a boss like Laban? Christians who have people working under or for them should be concerned about the well-being of those workers - their pay, their benefits and their advancement. Christians need to be concerned about that. There are a lot of Labans out there in the working world, but the Christian employer or boss should set a much higher standard. How do your workers see you? Do they see Christ in you, or do they see Laban?

The kind of boss you are can be a great testimony to the Lord. Many people have come to Christ as a result of the living testimony of a Christian boss. If you have people working for you, remember this question as you face your workers this coming week: Do they see Christ in you, or - are you a boss like Laban?