

Appreciating the Drama

- v. 19 – Rachel stole the household gods of Laban
- v. 20 – Jacob tricked Laban by not telling him he intended to flee
- v. 23 – After Jacob has a three-day head start, Laban “pursued” Jacob. This word indicates a hostile pursuit.
- v. 24 – God tells Laban not to say anything to Jacob.
- v. 25 – Laban finally catches Jacob after ten days. Jacob and his people are resting in their tents for the night.
- vv. 26-30 – Laban gives a totally irrational speech in front of *everybody*. With ten days preparation, you think he could have come up with something better.

“What have you done, that you have tricked me?” – But Laban was the one deceiving Jacob for the past 20 years.

“... that you have tricked me and driven away my daughters like captives of the sword?” – But these are Jacob’s wives. He worked hard for them for 14 years, and on top of that, they went of their own volition. By Laban’s unfair dealing with Jacob over the past 20 years, and at least for the past 13 since he has been married to Rachel and Leah, he shows he cares nothing for his daughters’ welfare, only for his own gain at Jacob’s loss. Hypocrite!

“why did you not tell me that I might have sent you away with mirth and songs?” – Laban has done everything possible to retain Jacob’s service and to not allow him to leave. Is he promising a party for them, if they would just return temporarily, as some sort of ploy to get them back? Is this a guilt trip? Maybe this is just to save face in front of this large delegation of people...

“Now you have done foolishly. It is in my power to do you harm.” – Laban issues a threat!

“But the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.’ – Laban condemns himself. He refuses to heed God’s voice even after a special visit. Now he will get what he deserves.

“... but why did you steal my gods?” – This is the only accusation of Laban’s that has any teeth behind it. Everything else is an effort to save face and manipulate Jacob, and it has all failed. But the question of Laban’s idols remains...

- v. 32 – Jacob is so assured of his innocence that he pronounces the death penalty on anyone who is found to have stolen Laban’s gods.
- v. 33 – The drama ratchets up. Laban looks in all the wrong places, then comes into Rachel’s room. She is going to be caught red handed!
- v. 34 – Laban reaches throughout the tent. Presumably it is dark, and he cannot see. This is just as, long ago, Jacob reached out in the dark to find Rachel but instead found Leah. Now the roles are reversed.
- v. 35 – Rachel is saved because it is “that time of the month” for her. The false gods are put in the most unclean place in the entire caravan. Most importantly, Laban is publicly humiliated.
- v. 36-42 – Righteous indignation pours out from Jacob against Laban, and everyone sees Jacob to be right.
- v. 43-55 – Jacob is no longer a mere son-in-law, he is now Laban’s equal. Laban gives up in resignation of losing Jacob, his best servant, and his daughters. He blesses them, and Laban is never seen again.

The Superiority of God

Why did Rachel take Laban’s idols?

“You have tried to stand in the way of the work of the infinite God of the universe. And I am going to take your silly little gods and I’m going to stick them in a box on top of the camel, and my camel will carry your foolish gods away from your home, and where will you turn then?” – Sinclair Ferguson

This shows the powerful confidence we have in God’s strength over any other power.

The Sovereign Protection of God

Why did Laban let Jacob go?

The Safety of Being in God’s Will

Why would Jacob risk everything to leave? (I hope by now it seems obvious)

The Fear of Isaac – a unique name for God

This means that THE LORD is God above all other so-called gods. He alone is to be feared.

This means THE LORD is a great protector. He is your staunchest ally and a fearsome threat to your enemies.

This means that THE LORD’s will is the safest place for you. We should fear not doing what he wants.

Questions for Personal Study

1. Is your life characterized by having fear of God above all else?
2. Why do you think God reveals himself through drama like this?
3. Why will every other god fail you, but God alone give you an eternal inheritance?
4. Is the fear of God the same thing as being afraid of God? Spend time thinking about the nuances of what this means and does not mean.