

January 18

Scriptures: Read Genesis 31

Key Verse: “Then the Lord said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you’.”(Genesis 31:3)

Overview

Finally, after 20 years in Mesopotamia among the household of Laban, it was time to go home. Jacob hear from the Lord that he was to go back to the land of his fathers, and God identified Himself as the “the God of Bethel”, the same God who appeared to him in a dream and reaffirmed the covenant with him. In doing this, the Lord also reminded him of the vows he had made, and thus far God had done as Jacob had asked and even more, for he not only had food and clothes, but great wealth and a lard family. It was a good time for him to leave, since Laban and his sons showed animosity toward Jacob. When people put too much importance on gaining wealth, this becomes the root of covetousness, envy, and all evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

Jacob consulted his wives and they agreed to leave with him since their father had treated them unfairly as will (31:15). He took the first opportunity to secretly leave. When Laban returned and heard of their sudden departure, he gathered a group together and overtook Jacob in the hill country of Gilead. Laban was very angry, not only about their sneaking away, but also about the missing household idols. He could have caused them harm and taken away the livestock, but God spoke to him in a dream warning to “speak to Jacob neither good nor bad” (31:24).

The same God who interacted in increasing Jacob’s wealth was now protecting him and his possessions. We can see that Laban was not only greedy and a deceiver, but a hypocrite as will, “I might have sent you away with joy and songs...” (31:27).

The house hold idols that Rachel stole are called “teraphim” in Hebrew. It is not clear what their purpose was but it has been suggested that they were important family heirlooms involving the inheritance. Possibly Rachel felt that since she was leaving everything, she deserved some part of the inheritance from her father (cf. 31:14), and these would have been very valuable. Like her husband and father, she was a clever deceiver, so her father did not find the teraphim.

Jacob and Laban made a treaty, not out of friendship but out of fear for each other. They put up a pile of stones as a sign and a border, agreeing they would not cross it to harm each other.

Jacob had left Canaan empty-handed, but we have seen how God helped him to prosper in the foreign land, and blessed him with many children so that at the time of his departure he had eleven sons and a daughter along with many servants and livestock.

Jacob’s fear of Laban was unfounded, for after God Had given him the direction to leave, He promised that He would be with Jacob (31:3). God did indeed protect him from Laban, for He always keeps His promises. This was something Jacob had yet to learn. But now the real fear for Jacob was to face his brother Esau, who had wanted to hilt him. God can turn people to our favor when we follow Him and do as He commands. We need to trust fully in our loving God. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6, 7).

Prayer

O Great God, we humble ourselves before You and trust You for the fulfillment of Your promise to take care of us and lift us up