

REFLECTION GUIDE

GENESIS 30:25-31:55 | LEAN ON ME

KEY TERMS

Speckled/Spotted/Black - Speckled and spotted goats and black lambs were the opposite coloration of typical goats and lambs and were less desirable (Gen 30:32 & following).

Household gods - Although it's unclear exactly what these *household gods* are (Gen 31:19, 34, & 35), they are most likely figurines made with costly metal that were used for divination. It's possible that their possession designated the rightful owner of an estate and thus when Rachel steals them it's an act of defiance against her father not giving her any inheritance.

God of Nahor - The grammar of this verse is unclear as to whether Laban believes the *God of Abraham* and the *God of Nahor* to be the same god or different gods (Gen 31:53). Abraham and Nahor are family members (Nahor was Abraham's grandfather) so the same god would be expected but the mention of both might emphasize the divergence of Jacob's family and Laban's.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fear of Isaac is a name for God found only in this story (Gen 31:42), which emphasizes God's power and the warning given by God to Laban not to interfere with Jacob's plans (Gen 31:24).

BACKGROUND

After spending 20 years with Laban, Jacob asks Laban to allow him to leave and return to his *own home and country* (Gen 30:25). Laban agrees and asks Jacob what he should send him away with in exchange for the work Jacob has performed and Jacob asks Laban for his *speckled and spotted sheep and every black lamb* (vv. 26-33). Laban agrees to Jacob's terms, but then removes the speckled, spotted, and black animals from the flock so Jacob cannot take them. In response, Jacob takes sticks with white bark and peels streaks in them and places them in the water when the strongest animals are present. This results in a strong flock of speckled and spotted sheep and black goats, and a weak flock of typically colored animals (vv. 37-43). Placing striped sticks in the water obviously does not naturally lead to striped animals, and the story later indicates that this was a miraculous act of God (see Gen 31:4-16). Laban is understandably angry and God reveals to Jacob that it is time to leave (Gen 31:1-3). As they are preparing to leave, Rachel steals her father Laban's household gods and after three days of fleeing, Laban discovers that Jacob's family is gone and pursues them (vv. 17-24). When Laban overtakes Jacob's family he is angry that they fled secretly and he knows that someone stole his household gods, but Rachel conceals them from him (vv. 25-35). Jacob—presumably unaware that Rachel stole the household gods—responds angrily to Laban (vv. 36-42). Ultimately the two men are able to make a covenant and go their separate ways (vv. 43-55).

GOING DEEPER

Read Hebrews 11:1-16 and 2 Corinthians 5:7. In what ways was Jacob's decision to leave Laban a "leap of faith?" Was Jacob's decision a "blind" leap or did he have reason to trust that God was in control (see Gen 28:13-15)? What do you think it means to *walk by faith*? What situation(s) are you currently facing that require you to *walk by faith*?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Genesis 30:25-43. How is Laban's character the same in this contract negotiation as in his previous dealings with Jacob about his daughters' marriages? Do you think Jacob has learned anything or changed his approach? Why or why not?
2. Read Genesis 31:1-16. How many times is God mentioned in these verses? What does Jacob credit God with doing for him?
3. In verse 12, God tells Jacob, "I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you." If you were in Jacob's place, how would you have felt when you heard this announcement?
4. Review God's promises to Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15. What connections can you make between these promises from Jacob's dream at Bethel and Jacob's statements in Genesis 31:4-13?

LIVING THE WORD

5. Have you ever been deceived or hurt by someone, only to be deceived and hurt by them again? What did you learn through the process?
6. How do we move beyond the "Laban"-like trials in our lives to move forward in our journey with God's help?
7. How can God use difficulties to shape our character and yield good things in our lives? What is one way you have experienced this kind of growth personally?
8. What does James 1:2-4 say about trials? What would it look like for young to thank God for your Laban-like trials and the lessons you've learned about leaning on God?

Practice this week: Spend time each evening before bedtime reflecting on Philippians 1:6. How does the truth of this verse give you confidence in the ongoing work of God's relentless grace in your life? If you find this to be helpful, consider putting this verse to memory for ongoing reflection.

*I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you
will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

- Philippians 1:6