

March 25, 2007 (LS)

**SPOILING THE ENEMY  
GENESIS 30.25-43**

Summary: Jacob will plunder Laban, taking his things just like you would an enemy you faced and defeated in battle. This is what is going on; i.e., a war. Jacob is the good guy. Laban is the bad guy. God will give Laban's stuff to Jacob.

In the bigger scheme of things the seed of the woman—Jacob—is defeating and plundering the seed of the serpent, Laban. That which the serpent has, rightfully belongs to the woman and her seed because it was initially stolen from them by deceit. Through his own crafty wisdom—being wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove—the seed will take it back.

**1. LABAN IS SET UP TO BE SPOILED BY JACOB (25-36)**

*The birth of the son and separation (25a):* Connection between birth of Joseph and this incident.

In Genesis, with the promise/birth of the “seed of the woman, there is a separation that takes place. Abel and Cain. Isaac/destruction of Sodom (Gen 18-19). Jacob and Esau separated from womb.

With the birth of the son from the barren womb—the son of the resurrection, Joseph—we are prepared for a separation.

*The desire for freedom from slavery (25b-26):* Wenham, “Since the LORD had fulfilled the other promises by protecting him and giving him children, Jacob now looks for the land promise to be redeemed.”

“Serve” (3x in v. 26) is probably best understood in terms of slavery. Jacob has accepted his reduced status; i.e., from kinsman to slave. He has been faithful in his position.

One more problem: Jacob vowed that he would give a tithe of all that he had when he returned to the land. At this point, Jacob does not have anything from which he may give a tithe. That will soon be resolved.

*The new deal (27-28):* Laban entreats Jacob like Jacob is the master. Jacob has fulfilled his obligations, so, whatever he does from this point on will be of his own free will. It will not be because he is obligated to serve Laban at this point.

“I have learned by experience” could mean, “I have learned by divination.” Word Joseph uses later about his cup of divination.

Laban knows that YHWH has blessed him because of Jacob's presence. It was because he was in the presence of the one who was promised to be blessed by God and promised to be a blessing to others.

*Jacob's desire to build his own house (29-30):* Jacob has been a shepherd since he helped Rachel at the well.

Note that Rachel is a “shepherdess” (29.9). Rachel along with Jacob echo the dominion mandate. The man and the woman as the image of God are to take dominion over the birds of the air and every living thing that moves on the earth.

Man's original mandate can be summed up from one perspective as the call to be a shepherd. Later in Scripture this plays out even further as shepherds are kings; i.e., the ones who take dominion by laying down their lives for their sheep.

Jacob will prove himself to be the true shepherd, the true man, by taking the flock back from Laban, the serpent. God will give the sheep into the hand of the good shepherd.

Up until this time, Jacob has been working to build Laban's house. Laban has become wealthy because of Jacob. [Note: some of this was supposed to be for his wives (i.e., their *mohar*).]

Jacob has earned essentially nothing monetarily. He has no money. Now he desires to build his own house.

Tells us what is happening: Jacob is plundering the house of Laban in order to build his own house.

Common practice: The serpent has taken from man what rightfully belongs to him. When the true man—the true image bearer of God—comes, then he will take it back to build the house as God intended. Plunder Egypt, build the Tabernacle. Destroy Jerusalem, build the church.

**Shepherding Laban's flock (31-33):** Laban asks, "What shall I give you?" Jacob responds, "You will not *give* me anything." Jacob will not accept this as a gift so as to be indebted to Laban in any way. Cp. 14.21-22

Jacob will certainly take feed and guard his flocks. He will become their true shepherd.

Jacob will take all of the anomalies of the flock; i.e., the speckled, spotted sheep, dark brown/black lambs, speckled and spotted goats. Sheep were usually white and the goats were usually brown.

Jacob's *righteousness* will be clear when payment for the wages come due. His trickery, subversion, or whatever you want to call it will not be sinful.

**Laban seeks to make blessing for Jacob impossible (34-36):** "Oh, that it were according to your word!" Ambiguous agreement. While agreeing to the offer, Laban seems to be leaving it where it may not be according to his word.

Laban removes all that would provide stock for Jacob's wages (v. 35) and gives them to his sons.

Laban is already trying to keep Jacob from becoming prosperous. He is trying to keep Jacob in slavery.

## 2. LABAN IS SPOILED BY JACOB (37-43)

**The rods of God (37-39):** Is this superstitious? Shepherding science? Possibly the latter. Plays on words give us another direction.

Jacob takes a rod of each of three trees: fresh poplar, almond, and plane (trans. "chestnut" in NKJ). He peels white strips in them and exposes the white which is in the rods. Places them in watering troughs and the flocks mate in their presence.

Notes: plays on words. The poplar tree is a play on the name "Laban." Also, the name "Laban" means "white."

Jacob peels these rods to expose the "white" beneath the bark. In doing so he is exposing Laban. Note Gen 31.10-12

God saw Laban ("white") and all that he had done to Jacob, and he acted on behalf of Jacob by causing all the sheep and the goats—even though they were white and brown respectively to Jacob's eyes—to be striped, speckled, and mottled (spotted).

It seems at least plausible to me that Jacob is in some sense using these as a type of "memorial rod" before God. That is, he is praying that God will see Laban's treachery and act on his behalf.

Also trees as places of God seeing/judging. They are places of judgment and life. Trees coupled with water: a new Garden.

God is meeting with Jacob at this Garden scene. At the trees and the water where life and death are given by God, God is giving Jacob life, or blessing, and he is taking giving a form of death to Laban.

The enemy is being spoiled through a form of prayer. God is blessing his son and decimating the enemy through the prayers that are being offered up to him—as strange as this may seem to us.

**Separating the flocks (40-42):** Jacob is not letting his flocks mingle with Laban's flocks. There will be no breeding with them. They have come out from among those flocks and now they are in a separate flock. The great shepherd has divided them.

**The blessing of Jacob (43):** He is *the man*.

Prosperity parallels Abraham: Gen 12.16. Jacob is spoiling the "Pharaoh."

(1) Understand that God turns the sinful plans of the wicked to their own hurt.

(2) God uses the most unlikely things to accomplish his purposes.

(3) There has been, is, and will be a division between the flocks by the Great Shepherd.