

Genesis 31-32

Worldview: Events are Directed by God, not Man

The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps. (Pro 16:9)

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. (Pro 21:1)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (Eph 1:11)

Part 1: Time to Go (31:1-21)

1. Jacob hears that Laban's sons think Jacob is prospering to Laban's detriment.
2. Laban does not regard Jacob with favor as before.
3. God tells Jacob to return to Canaan.
4. Jacob tells Rachel and Leah of his plan.
5. Not only are they in agreement with the plan to flee, Rachel steals Laban's "household gods".

Questions:

1. **How does Jacob's prospering come about?**
2. **What are Rachel's and Leah's feelings toward their father? Why?**
3. **What are some possible explanations for Rachel stealing Laban's household gods?**

Part 2: Confrontation and Covenant (31:22-55)

1. After 3 days, Laban discovers that Jacob has fled.
2. He and his kinsmen caught up with them after 7 days of pursuit.
3. God warns Laban in a dream not to say anything good or bad to Jacob.
4. Laban confronts Jacob and asks why he didn't allow him a chance to say goodbye to his family, and asks why Jacob stole his gods.
5. Jacob is unaware that Rachel stole the gods, and Rachel uses deceit to keep Laban from discovering them.
6. Jacob confronts Laban concerning his last 20 years of mistreatment at Laban's hand.
7. The two men agree to a covenant to not pursue one another past that point.

Questions:

1. **What does Laban say to Jacob in the first part of verse 29? Is he right? Why or why not?**
2. **How does Rachel deceive her father concerning the household gods? What does that say about the efficacy of those gods?**
3. **What do Laban and Jacob call the site of the covenant (see verses 47-49)? What is the meaning?**

Part 3: Appeasing Esau (32:1-21)

1. As Jacob continues on, the angels of God meet him – Jacob names the place Mahanaim, meaning two hosts or armies.
2. Jacob sends messengers to Esau telling of his possessions and his desire to find favor with him.
3. The reply is that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men.
4. Jacob divides his camp in half so that at least some will escape if Esau attacks.
5. Jacob prays for deliverance from Esau and reminds God of His promise to Jacob.
6. Jacob prepares a large gift of animals for Esau and sends his servants ahead with the gift.

Question:

1. **What are the clues in this passage that it is God, not Jacob, who will bring about Jacob's deliverance from his brother's hatred?**

Part 4: Israel (32:22-32)

1. Jacob wrestles with "a man" all night "until the breaking of the day."
2. The "man" touches Jacob's hip socket and puts it out of joint.
3. In spite of this, Jacob will not let him go unless "the man" blesses him.
4. The man asks Jacob's name and declares:

Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Gen 32:28)

5. Jacob asks the "man's" name, but he is not told. He is blessed by "the man" though.
6. Jacob names the place Peniel saying "For I have seen God face to face and yet my life has been delivered".

Questions:

1. **Is the "man" a normal man? What is the "man" called in Hosea 12:4? What conclusion does Jacob draw concerning the "man"?**
2. **Who determines the outcome of Jacob's wrestling? Why does the struggle continue as long as it does?**
3. **Does Jacob's struggle in any way reflect the struggles of the Christian life? Why or why not?**