

99-11-14b

We're ready now to resume our study of the life of Jacob in Genesis chapter 31. We have seen that during this 20 year sojourn outside the land of promise, away from his family and away from his mother, away from his brother and his father, Jacob has learned through experience things that he was apparently unable to pick up just through an understanding of God's will in his homeland. And there is nothing like experience to be a great teacher, and it's nothing like circumstances where if we are sensitive at all to God's ministry in our lives, we can find impressed on our souls the things that are pleasing in God's sight, things that reflect integrity and reflect the glory of God.

Jacob, who began by wheeling and dealing and manipulating and deceiving to obtain the flocks of his father Isaac, winds up without them. But sojourning with Laban through his own hard work, through his own observation and application of wisdom with the blessing of God, he has now honestly and fairly won great prosperity, great security for himself and his family. So he now has not only numerous flocks, but they are strong and healthy.

And he has female and male servants, camels and donkeys. And this also puts us in mind of the fact that these are things that came to him from God and not from Laban. It would have almost been a more difficult passage if Laban had been magnanimous and had simply given these things to Jacob.

Turn with me over to, keep your finger in Genesis 30 and 31, but turn over to Deuteronomy chapter 15. In many ways the relationship of Jacob to Laban is like that of a slave to his master because Jacob more or less indentures himself to obtain his wives and then to obtain his flocks and herds. But in Deuteronomy chapter 15 verse 12, this of course is later, this is in the time of Moses when God delivers the law that will guide the dealings between Israelites.

And in Deuteronomy 15 verse 12, this is what the law has to say concerning bond servants, at least one aspect. If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him away free from you, you shall not let him go away empty handed.

You shall supply him liberally from your flock, from your threshing floor, and from your winepress. From what the Lord has blessed you with, you shall give to him. You'll notice that this is not the attitude of Laban who has prospered greatly after 14 years of Jacob's service.

Laban basically says, well, what do I owe you? Aren't we fair and square? You've served your 14 years, you have my two daughters, or even Stephen. And Laban has no intention, as we will see in chapter 31, of giving Jacob anything, and Jacob knows it. So the attitude of generosity, the attitude of benevolence, and recognizing that everything

one has is from the Lord, if you're a believer, is absent in Laban's dealings with Jacob.

And everything that Jacob has is obviously a gift to him from the Lord, because God prospers him in his way. Deuteronomy 15, You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you. Therefore I command you this thing today.

This isn't just a convenient rule, or kind of a nice benevolent touch that God has included in the law. It has a purpose. And its purpose is to remind Israel, anytime somebody might balk, they say, well, the six years are up for this hired servant who is my brother Israelite, and it's really time for him to go, but am I going to have to take 5 or 10 or 15 percent of my goods here and give to this servant? And lest there be hesitation or reluctance to grant this gift, this parting gift, God says, you shall remember that you were a slave.

What did you have before the Lord came to you and delivered you out of bondage? What did God do when he brought you out of bondage? Remember the gold and jewelry and gifts that God showered on the Israelites from the Egyptians as they came out of bondage? God says, this is your chance to go thou and do likewise. You've been on the receiving end of mercy and compassion. Now be on the giving end.

And it's another opportunity. Remember that, of course, nobody thinks slavery is an ideal. Slavery is an abhorred institution.

And yet, interestingly, the Bible never outlaws slavery. In fact, in the law of Moses, slavery is, while not encouraged, it is provided for. It doesn't say if your brother, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you as a slave, free them immediately.

Thou shalt get thee hence anyone who has or keeps or buys or sells slaves. This was a part of life in Israel. We tend to recoil at the thought of slavery when, in actuality, the Bible does not.

Paul's favorite term for himself is a bond slave of Jesus Christ. And we all know slavery is not a happy circumstance. Nobody, when someone says, well, what do you want to be when you grow up? Oh, I want to be a bond slave.

I want to labor at hard toil under someone else's mastery. But it is a necessary part of life in ancient times. And there are things that, while not called slavery, are very similar even in our modern day.

There are people who have no choice but to keep the job that they have, which may be hard toil and difficult. And yet, there is very little option. We're reading currently to the girls the story of Laura Ingalls' daughter, Rose, who is old enough now to be out on her own.

She has left home, and she's finding that it's much more difficult than she imagined to make her own way in the world. This is right around the turn of the century, 1904, 1905. Women's suffrage is just then becoming an issue, and women in the workplace are not very acceptable.

And she's working to be a telegraph operator. But one of the things that she discovers is that once she does manage to get a job, she is not paid the same as the men who do the same sort of job. She has difficulty finding opportunities, and she really hates the job that she has and the environment in which she works.

She's not happy with the place that she lives and the place where she has to take her meals as a boarder. But she has no options. It is very similar to the situation that a slave might find himself in, where you really have no option to change and do something different.

So God says that this can be worked together for good. Here's an opportunity. He says, I don't want you to forget about slavery.

I want you to remember it. I want you to remember what it was like to be in hard bondage. And that will be a part of your compassion and your mercy toward others is remembering your own experience.

And one of the ways in which we develop our love for one another and our love for God is in adversity, in remembering the experiences that God has brought us through. So this is another one of the benefits and another one of the reasons that God leaves us here as strangers and sojourners in this life. Let's turn back now to Genesis chapter 31.

And we continue in chapter 31 because now that Jacob has become prosperous, what Laban foresaw and what Laban tried to prevent has taken place anyway. God has blessed Jacob. Now he has the wherewithal to be independent.

He is no longer in need of remaining outside the land. Plus, there is a divine word that is spoken to Jacob that tells him it's time to leave. So let's find out what that's about here in chapter 31.

Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons. Last time we saw these sons, they had taken all of the sheep and goats that were supposed to be Jacob's and taken them away a three-day's journey. They are speaking, saying, Jacob has taken away all that was our father's.

Well, here's the pot calling the kettle black. They took away everything that by agreement belonged to Jacob and hauled it off a three-day's journey and were laughing up their sleeves, so to speak, at how they had outfoxed Jacob. Now they're saying, well, Jacob has taken away everything that belongs to our father.

And from what was our father's, he has acquired all this wealth. Well, we ask ourselves

the question, are they concerned about their father or are they concerned about themselves? Because obviously they are the ones to stand to inherit what belongs to their father's house. So Jacob saw the countenance of Laban and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before.

Laban is getting to where he likes this deal less and less. But then in verse 3, the Lord said to Jacob, return to the land of your father's and to your family and I will be with you. This is the closing parentheses to the promise of God that we saw back in chapter 29.

Actually chapter 28. When God said to Jacob in verse 13 of chapter 28, I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

Your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth. You shall spread abroad to the west and east, to the north and south. There's our four points of the compass again.

And in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold I am with you and I will keep you wherever you go. And I will bring you back to this land.

For I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you. So now God speaks. That was sort of the opening parentheses of this sojourning time.

And now God speaks again. And he says, return to the land of your father's and to your family and I will be with you. So Jacob called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock.

Notice he doesn't have this little family convention in the camp. He has it out in the field away from the camp. Because in the camp are Laban, Laban's servants, Laban's sons, Laban's whole little retinue and intelligence network.

So he's out in the field. And he says to them, I see your father's countenance that it is not favorable toward me as before, but the God of my father has been with me. And you know that with all my might I have served your father.

Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times. But God did not allow him to hurt me. Ten times is a stock phrase that means many times.

It's not so much literally ten times, but we could go to other passages in Scripture. But to do something ten times just means a lot. He says in verse 8, If he said thus, the speckled shall be your wages, then all the flocks bore speckled.

And if he said thus, the streaked shall be your wages, then all the flocks bore streaked. And this fills us in on a little bit of the history of this six year period that we've spanned and going from verse 42 and 43 down to chapter 31. Because in this next six years, Laban sees that somehow all of the offspring of the flocks are turning out to be streaked and speckled and spotted.

So he says, you know, I don't think you remember our agreement quite right. I said you could have all the spotted ones. I didn't say you could have the streaked.

So you just keep the spotted ones. These streaked ones here, I'm going to take them and those belong to me. You only get the spotted.

So they went that way. Well, now the next big crop of offspring are all spotted. And Laban says, you remember that agreement we made? I don't think you understood that quite right.

I said all the streaked are mine and all the spotted are mine and the streaked are yours. So all these spotted belong to me. You just keep the streaked.

And so Laban is doing his best to stay on top of the situation. But the blessing of God and the good agricultural business sense that Jacob has are not to be stopped. And especially with the blessing of God, the presence of God with him, he prospers in spite of every attempt to slow him down.

So Jacob is sort of lamenting and crying the blues to his wives here. You know how your father has treated me over these last years. In verse 9, God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.

And it happened at the time when the flocks conceived that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. The angel of God spoke to me in a dream saying, Jacob. And I said, here I am.

He said, lift your eyes now and see. All the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. For I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.

I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family. So God has appeared to Jacob in a vision.

Specifically, he has had a vision of the flocks and herds out there. And now all of the he goats and all of the rams, the strong members of the flock, are all Jacob's. All the angel does is point this out.

He doesn't make an application of it or interpret it for him. He just says, look, lift your eyes now and see. You remember before, one of the first times we saw this was when Abraham was taking Isaac to Mount Moriah.

And when they were still a great way off, it said Abraham lifted his eyes and looked and saw. And there was the mountain in the distance. And we noted at that time, and we went to some different passages, that whenever you see someone lifting their eyes and

looking and seeing, that this is the little red flag to tell you this is an important crux coming up.

What's about to be seen, this is emphasis. This is like boldface or underlining. Well, you will notice here when Jacob describes this dream in verse 10, he says, I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold.

So this threefold reference to seeing, I lifted my eyes, I saw, and behold. Here's what I saw. This is a momentous occasion.

This is a decision point in Jacob's life. He sees the rams leaping on the flocks, streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted. The angel of God spoke and says, Jacob, here I am.

He says, lift your eyes and see. All the rams which leap on the flocks are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. God says, I am the one that has brought about this streaked and speckled and spotted.

And of course, to whatever extent Jacob understood and applied selective breeding, it is still God who made these rules. It's still God who made those animals fertile and determined the balance that would take place in the flocks. He goes on to say, I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to me.

That was the stone on which he had laid his head. Remember, he set it up on its end and poured oil over it and made a monument out of it. You might recall our Scripture reading this morning in 1 Peter, where God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is the rock of salvation, and he is either the rock of strength or he is the stone of stumbling and the rock of offense.

You have the stone, which in Hebrew is Eben, E-b-e-n. We'll be up on Christmas soon and get the Christmas carol again with Ebenezer Scrooge. And Ebenezer is from the Hebrew Eben-etzer.

Etzer means help and Eben means stone, stone of help. And God is either the stone of help and the cleft in the rock is the place to hide, or he is the rock that crushes. He is the stone of discipline and creates a point of stumbling rather than of strength.

So Jacob points this out, or actually recalls this in his vision, where God points out, I am the God of Bethel where you anointed the pillar and where you made a vow to me. What was Jacob's vow? You go once again back to chapter 28. Jacob said, if you will be with me and keep me in this way that I am going and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, this is 28, 20 through 22, then the Lord shall be my God and this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house and of all that you give me I will surely give a tenth to you.

And we can't help but think of Peter's words that we are the spiritual stones being built

up into a house that is designed to reflect the glory of God. So God reminds Jacob of his vow some 20 years earlier and says, Arise, get out of this land and return to the land of your family. God says, I have fulfilled my portion, you now have food, you now have clothing, you have the wives and the family that you came to obtain, it's time to go back.

So God works and isn't it interesting that there is this vision but there are also circumstances. Jacob sees that the atmosphere has taken a severe turn for the worse and a decision point is coming up on him and then God clenches that with a vision but it's not just the vision and it's not just the circumstances, it's a combination of the two. And when we think about the subject of divine guidance, how do we know when and where and how we are to make decisions and determine a direction in life, we find often that the scriptures illustrate the point that it is a combination.

We use the wisdom that God has given us in analyzing circumstances and realizing that a change is needed and we will find confirmation and support and guidance from God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the word of God that's in our souls. And it can be as simple as being a part of an organization. I've had the experience in my near periphery of being associated with a business that began to engage in blatantly dishonest practice and using stolen goods in what they were doing.

Well, while there had been hints and shadows in the past, this was a very concrete, blatant episode that made it clear that it was time to separate from this particular place of employment. And if you have the word of God in your soul and you know that there comes a time when you have to separate regardless of the consequences, it's a great aid. There are things that we see but there's also guidance from within in the form of the word and the spirit.

Jacob, of course, not having a Bible he can carry around, gets this in very graphic fashion in the vision. So Rachel and Leah, the big question is, Jacob has to run this by the daughters. Where do they stand in this? They are, after all, their father's daughters.

They've lived here all their lives. And he wants to have this conference and see where they stand on this away from the camp of their fathers. So they meet out in the area of the flocks and so forth.

And in verse 14, Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? They're daughters, aren't they? They're going to be like Dinah. Dinah didn't get her own tribe in the house of Israel, did she? The house of Dinah doesn't get a portion of land in the land of Israel. Why? Because the daughters married and were incorporated into their husband's household.

Well, what does Jacob have except what he has earned? They have received nothing by way of inheritance or apportionment from Laban. So both Rachel and Leah point this out. They're basically saying there is no portion or inheritance for us in our father's house.

Are we not considered strangers by him? He's giving all of his stuff to his sons. He has sold us and has also completely consumed our money. He sold us.

He gave his daughters in exchange for the 14 years of service. And now the 14 years of service have been expended. So he sold them and spent the money.

There's no way to redeem them back. They say, We don't have any stake in remaining here. All these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's.

Now then, whatever God has said to you, do it. So Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels. And apparently this was immediate.

This didn't take a period of days or anything else. Jacob has already timed this out. He may have anticipated that his wives would be in favor of it.

But he's already got the stuff out there. And so within just a day or two, apparently, they saddle up in the park. Apparently Leah and Rachel go back home and gather their gear and a few other things.

And Jacob rose and set his sons and wives on camels. By the way, you remember the story of Abraham sending his servant up to find Rebekah, to find a wife for Isaac. What was the great mark of prosperity that impressed everyone and impressed Laban? It was camels.

The servant brought 10 camels and they were watered. And Rebekah drew the water and watered all of those camels. Those camels can drink a lot.

They've been traveling for several days without a break. And she watered them all. So Laban, there's another sort of brackets here where his whole experience with this branch of the family started with camels showing up from Abraham.

And it's going to end with camels disappearing over the horizon with his daughters and the whole retinue of flocks and herds. And it's also a mark of Jacob's great prosperity. Camels were a sign of wealth.

Only the wealthy could afford them. Only the wealthy could keep them and make use of them. And Jacob has really prospered that he has these camels.

So they're going to drive over the hill in Cadillacs. So he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Paddan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. You could make a note of the fact that this term Paddan Aram hasn't been used since Jacob first left to go up here.

It's another little bracket. This area was called Paddan Aram in the beginning, but then later it's called Haran and the house of Laban and so forth. And now it's called Paddan

Aram again.

So we're starting to see the closing halves of several brackets or parentheses here that remind us of the Hebrew pleasure in chiasm and in symmetry. So he's gained all these things and he's going back to his father in the land of Canaan. Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.

It's so funny, our culture and our sense of literature is different than Hebrew. These are two very important details and they're just sort of added as an afterthought here. How can they get away and they're going to get actually three days journey down the road before Laban knows that they're gone.

Jacob is a big corporation by this time and to gather all this stuff and get everything moving in the same direction and leave this huge wide trail down the road is going to take some time, but he's able to do it and get well away. Why? Well the critical detail is Laban's not there. It is the time of sheep shearing and Laban is out with his sons shearing the sheep.

And in sort of a tongue-in-cheek way he is about to be sheared so to speak because a lot of what he thinks belongs to him is going to be separated away. Another interesting detail here is you think about all of the flocks and things that Jacob has. If this is sheep shearing time, Jacob is not shearing his sheep.

They're going to travel with all their wool on. Why shear it off and have to bundle it up and carry it? Just let the little four-legged creatures carry it themselves. But these heavy laden sheep and goats are going to travel more slowly because they're going to be more tend to overheat.

They're going to require more water and so forth. So it's going to be an effort to get all of this stuff headed south. But he's shearing the sheep.

Rachel had stolen the household vitals that were her father's. This is just thrown in as an afterthought, but it's very essential to what takes place in the latter part of the chapter. What are these household items? The Hebrew word here is teraphim, t-e-r-a-p-h-i-m.

You can tell by the i-m ending that this is a plural, actually a dual used for a plural. But in the same way that mayim means waters, elohim with a small e means gods. And when used of the Lord God, it's the plural of majesty, the plural of magnitude.

This is teraphim. Well, what are these? It's difficult to know. There's been a lot of speculation.

Some have said, well, possessing these ensured gaining the inheritance. There's some ancient documents from Nuzi and Mari and some of the ancient Mesopotamian settlements that somehow possessing these teraphim was kind of like having a ring or

having a signet or a proof of ownership of things. But this doesn't make sense in Rachel's case because she's just got through saying with her sister, we don't have anything out of our father's house.

So I don't find an application of that idea. These were also thought to be small images of ancestors, sort of like you go into most houses and you have family pictures on the wall or sitting on the piano or the hearth or something. And these were little likenesses of the forebears and that they were not only remembrances, but also used when looking for guidance and were used in divination to try to foresee the future or try to make decisions.

And this seems much more likely that it's not clear the extent to which these were actually worshipped, but they were valued and apparently they were valued because in some way, shape or form, they helped Laban figure out what to do. So why does Rachel take them? Does Rachel want to worship them? We wouldn't think so when she says, God has given us these things that came from our father's house. What God has said to you, go ahead and do it.

They seem to be believers in God and not in teraphim. Why would Rachel take them? It's not really clear, but two things we know. We know that Laban valued them very highly.

And we know that generally speaking, in this culture, in this time, they were used as a means of divination or of making decisions, of trying to tell the future or decide what to do. So this suggests two possibilities. Either Rachel thinks that this will in some way confuse her father as to what to do, or perhaps she is unhappy about the idea that they're leaving without a confrontation.

By taking these, she knows her father will follow and a confrontation will be inevitable. And I favor the latter idea. I think Rachel knew that if she takes these, not because she has any particular interest in them, but she knows her father has interest in them, that he will follow and it will force a confrontation.

Jacob is wanting to sky out without facing Laban. He waits for him to be gone with the sheep and there's no confrontation. There's no final resolution of all of these issues.

And Rachel says, well, I don't know if old father is going to want to follow us or not. I'll hook the teraphim and I know he'll follow. He will come after us to get these back.

For whatever reason, either because they're worshipped or because they're going to be the proof that his sons are going to inherit, or whatever interpretation you put on the teraphim, one thing's for sure, Laban is going to want to get them back very badly. And obviously that's the case. So in verse 22, Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.

It's another one of these three day intervals, the third day. There's so many things and

we did a study not long ago on three days. And there's a fascinating series of three days in the Gospel of John.

It says on the first day, on the next day, and on the day after that. It gives us a sequence of events. But three days is half of six.

Six is the number of man. Adding the seventh is perfection. God can take the sixth and make it perfect.

Six days for the heavens and earth. But in that six days of creation, you have two sets of three. So when you have let there be light on the first day, then on the fourth day that corresponds to it, you have the greater light by day and the lesser light by night.

On the second day when you have separating the waters from the waters, then on the fifth day that corresponds to it, you have the populating of the waters with all the sea creatures and fish and so forth. And then when you have God on the third day causing the dry land to appear, then on the sixth day you have him populating it with the animals and plants and so forth. So three is a significant number.

There is often a period of three days. Three days Jonah in the belly of the fish. Three days the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth and so forth.

One thing this tells us though is that the three days journey away that Laban and his sons took the flocks, they maintained that distance for all that six years. And that's how far away it is before they can even get a runner up there to Laban to tell him that Jacob has departed. So Jacob gets a three day head start.

Those flocks were three days journey away. And so he hears about it. And so if you start from the home base of Laban, you have Jacob departing and you have runners heading the opposite direction, presumably north.

And three days later Jacob and his group are three days journey to the south. The runner reaches Laban and says Jacob has gone and left with all this stuff. So then you begin a game of catch up.

Laban immediately saddles up and he's going to go with his sons to try to catch them. So how long is it going to take? Well it's going to take at least six days for Laban to arrive where Jacob is at the point that he gets the word. And it's going to take another four days for him to finally catch up with Jacob.

So the total interval says Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled. So he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days journey and overtook him in the mountains of Gilead. If you look on a Bible map, you'll remember the topography of Palestine, the geography of it.

You have the Sea of Galilee, Jordan River, Dead Sea. Right in the center of the land you have the Mediterranean Sea and the coastline. Well, Gilead is east of the Sea of Galilee and somewhat south.

It's really mostly the land that is to the east of the Jordan River, not the part between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, but the other side. And there's a little finger of Gilead that goes all the way up right next to the Sea of Galilee. But if you look on one of these larger maps and see where Haran is, this is at least 300 miles.

And what this tells me is, you figure with all these flocks and herds and heavy laden sheep and goats, for Jacob to cover 300 miles in roughly 10 days, 30 miles a day, this is moving day and night. This is really pushing. He is moving at high speed.

But Laban overtakes him. Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead. So they finally have this confrontation.

Laban catches up in verse 26. He says, What have you done that you have stolen away unknown to me and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? This is somewhat ironic. You remember the wedding day, the first wedding day of Jacob.

He wakes up in the morning and finds out that, Behold Leah, it's just the two words in Hebrew, Behold Leah. He runs over to the tent of Laban and what does he say? What is this you have done? Now the shoe is on the other foot and it's Laban saying to Jacob, What have you done that you have stolen away my daughters? Well, Jacob says, What have you done that you have stolen away Rachel and given me Leah? Why did you flee secretly and steal away from me and not tell me? For I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp. And this has to make you chuckle because you know good and well that he would have done no such thing.

On several previous occasions he has prevented Jacob from leaving. You did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing.

It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your fathers spoke to me last night saying, Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad. Remember we saw that same phrase used with Abimelech and Abraham. He says that he has to do to him neither good nor bad.

He says we can't speak to you neither good nor bad. When the servant came up to get Rebekah from the household of Laban and all of the signs were fulfilled that the servant spoke about. The first one that I say, Please water the animals also and she does so, she'll be the one.

What is the answer that the household of Laban gives back? When he says let me take her back to Isaac. He says well we can speak to you neither good nor bad. You'll have to ask her.

So you have to remain neutral. And so God appears to Laban of all people and tells him, Be careful what you say when you talk to Jacob. Now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods, my Elohim? So you can see a mixture of emotions and a mixture of reactions with Laban.

He's offended, he's hurt, he's outraged, all mixed together, but he's kind of struggling with himself because God appeared to him and said, You be careful, don't go after Jacob hammer and tongs. So Jacob answered and said because I was afraid, I said perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force. Well, Rachel apparently took the teraphim because that's not good enough for her.

She doesn't want him fleeing out of fear. She wants them to face each other and resolve it. Many families have come to this where within a marriage there are tensions with in-laws or outlaws or relatives or whatever, and to leave it unresolved and to leave it simmering is a hurtful thing.

And so I think the reason Rachel takes these teraphim is she knows her father will follow and Jacob can't just flee out of there and run. He's got to face him and they've got to resolve this one way or another. And they're meeting on neutral ground.

They're in Gilead, which is not Laban's territory nor is it Jacob's. And so they meet and now they're going to have this confrontation. This is where we're going to have to stop for this morning.

But in closing, you will notice that God has fulfilled his promise to Jacob. He's been with him for these 20 years. He has preserved him and prospered him and blessed him.

The time that he has spent outside the land as a sojourner has benefited him because he has learned to operate with integrity. He has learned to rely upon God for his prosperity instead of his underhanded ways. He can apply his wisdom and be very professional and diligent and use the wisdom that he's learned to good advantage, but he's not being deceitful and underhanded and crafty.

This stealing away seems to be a little bit like fleeing with his tail between his legs, but I think Rachel has seen to it that he's not going to get away with that and he's going to have to face Laban and very soon he's going to have to face his brother Esau. And we're going to have another parenthesis, another closing bracket. That unfinished business with Esau is going to be resolved here in the upcoming chapter.

But this is where we have to stop for this morning. Let's close in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you for the many ways that you communicate to us, not only through teaching passages in epistles and didactic sections, but also through narrative and through poetry and through illustrations and symbols. We thank you that it captures our interest, it

sticks in our minds, and it is there for the Holy Spirit to use to transform us and to renew us. We pray that the things that we've seen this morning will become a part of the resources in our souls and that as a result we will live and think in a way that's pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray these things in his name. Amen.