

# Jacob and Laban Make a Treaty

*Council of Relatives*

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# What We Will Learn

- Jacob and Laban made a treaty
- To settle a family dispute
- Witnessed by the Council of Relatives
- They shared food at the end
- Based on Genesis 31:19–55

# Laban Pursues Jacob

- Laban did not like Jacob's departure from Paddan Aram
- Jacob did not inform Laban about leaving
- Rachel took her father's household gods without his consent
- Laban with relatives pursued Jacob
- Genesis 31:19–23





## Genesis 31 (NIV)

19 When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods.

20 Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away.

21 So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River, he headed for the hill country of Gilead.


22 On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled.

23 Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.

# Laban Catches Up With Jacob

- Laban and his relatives caught up with Jacob in the hill country of Gilead
- God appeared to Laban in a dream and cautioned him against bothering Jacob
- The following day, Laban and Jacob gathered their relatives to discuss the case
  - Council of Relatives
- Genesis 31:23–25





## Genesis 31 (NIV)

23 Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead.


24 Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad."

25 Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too.

# Laban Presents His Case Before the Council of Relatives

- Jacob left secretly
- He carried off my daughters like captives
- He denied me opportunity to celebrate the end of his staying with me
- Genesis 31:26–30





## Genesis 31 (NIV)

26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You've deceived me, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war.

27 Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and harps?

28 You didn't even let me kiss my grandchildren and my daughters good-bye. You have done a foolish thing.

29 I have the power to harm you; but last night the God of your father said to me, 'Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.'

30 Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's house. But why did you steal my gods?"




# Laban's Case cont'd

- He denied me opportunity to say goodbye to my daughters and grandchildren
- I have the power to harm him but I will not
- God cautioned me against such action
- He stole my gods

# Jacob Responds to Laban Before the Council of Relatives

- I feared he might refuse to let his daughters go with me
- Let Laban search my household for his gods or anything that belongs to him [Laban searched but did not find any]
- Genesis 31:31-35






## Genesis 31 (NIV)

31 Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force.

32 But if you find anyone who has your gods, he shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent.





## Genesis 31 (NIV)


34 Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them inside her camel's saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched through everything in the tent but found nothing.

35 Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I'm having my period." So he searched but could not find the household gods.

## Jacob's Response cont'd

- Why does he hunt me down like a criminal?
- I served him faithfully for 20 years: 14 years for his daughters and six years for his flock
- He changed my wages ten times
- He would have sent me away with nothing if God had not been with me
- Genesis 31:36–42





## Genesis 31 (NIV)


**36** Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "What sin have I committed that you hunt me down?"

**37** Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us.

**38** "I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks.

**39** I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night.





## Genesis 31 (NIV)

40 This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes.


41 It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times.

42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you.”

# Laban's Proposal: Settlement by Treaty

- Laban answered Jacob
- Your wives are my daughters
- Your children are my grandchildren
- Your flocks are my flocks
- Let's make a covenant, to serve as witness between us
- Genesis 31:43–44





## Genesis 31 (NIV)


43 Laban answered Jacob, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne?"

44 Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us."



# The Treaty

- Jacob made a witness stone heap
- They prayed that God be their witness
- Jacob will not mistreat Rachel and Leah and will not take any wives beside them
- The stone heap will be their boundary
- The relatives were treated to a meal
- Genesis 31:45–55



## Genesis 31 (NIV)

45 So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar.

46 He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap.


47 Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed.

48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed.

49 It was also called Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other.

50 If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me."





## Genesis 31 (NIV)

51 Laban also said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me.

52 This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me.

53 May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.

54 He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there.

55 Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.



# The Settlement Summary

- Laban and Jacob realized their dispute could not be settled through fault finding
- They settled through a peace treaty
- The Council of Relatives witnessed the settlement
- They shared food at the end

# Council of Relatives

- Forum for regulation of inter-family interactions
- Convened when needed
- Consists of family representatives
  - Settles disputes
  - Performs marriages
  - Celebrates events of family significance



# Council of Relatives cont'd

- Sharing food
  - Part of Council of Relatives proceedings
  - Willing to accept less so others may get
  - Careful to preserve visual appeal of food
  - Every person provides food to others
  - Sharing food breeds goodwill
- Council of Relatives witnessed Laban-Jacob settlement



# Concluding Remarks

- Laban and Jacob illustrate an approach to settling family disputes
  - Do not insist on proving faults
  - Focus on finding ways to prevent future disputes
- The Council of Relatives plays a positive role in inter-family interactions