

Jacob-Laban Interactions *on Labor and Wages*


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What We Will Learn

- Jacob and Laban business agreement
- Agreement was incomplete
- Implementation led to problems
- Threatened Jacob-Laban relationships
- Jacob consulted with Leah and Rachel about leaving Paddan Aram
- Based on Genesis 30:25–43; and 31:1–21

Prelude to the Agreement

- Jacob informed Laban he wanted to return to his homeland with his family
- Laban pleaded with Jacob to stay
 - The Lord has blessed me because of you
 - Name your wages and I will pay
- Jacob described his productivity to Laban
- He added it's time to build his own wealth
- Genesis 30:25–30



Genesis 30 (NIV)

25 After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland.

26 Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you."

27 But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you."


28 He added, "Name your wages, and I will pay them."

29 Jacob said to him, "You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care.

30 The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?"

The Agreement

- Jacob proposed that a selection of Laban's flock be assigned to him as wages
- Laban accepted Jacob's proposal and selection criteria
- The first selection was successful
- Jacob separated his flock from Laban's and sent them away with his sons
- Genesis 30:31–36




Genesis 30 (NIV)

31 "What shall I give you?" he asked. "Don't give me anything," Jacob replied. "But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them:

32 Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages.

33 And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen."



Genesis 30 (NIV)


34 "Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said."

35 That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons.

36 Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks.

Subsequent Implementation

- Jacob devised a scheme to bias selection
- Laban changed criteria several times
- Jacob's flock and wealth increased greatly
- Laban and Laban's children became unhappy with Jacob as his wealth increased
- Genesis 30: 37–43 and 31:5–8




Genesis 30 (NIV)

37 Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches.

38 Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink,

39 they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted.

40 Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals




Genesis 30 (NIV)

41 Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches,

42 but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and the strong ones to Jacob.

43 In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.



Genesis 31 (NIV)

5 He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.

6 You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength,

7 yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me.


8 If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young.

Sources of Problem in the Agreement

- Not enough detail to ensure fair selection
- Jacob's scheme was within the rules but biased the selection in his favor
- Laban could change the criteria several times to influence the selection in his favor
- Problem occurred because agreement was incomplete

Jacob Considers Return to Homeland

- Laban's children were unhappy that Jacob had become so wealthy through their father
- Laban had become unfriendly to Jacob
- The Lord told Jacob to return to his cradle
- Genesis 31:1–3



Genesis 31 (NIV)


1 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."

2 And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.

3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

Jacob Makes A Case for Leaving (to Rachel and Leah)

- Laban is no longer friendly to him
- Laban cheated him by changing his wages ten times
- God has been with him despite Laban's mistreatment
- Genesis 31:4–7



Genesis 31 (NIV)

4 So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were.

5 He said to them, "I see that your father's attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me.

6 You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength,

7 yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me.

Jacob Makes A Case for Leaving (to Rachel and Leah) cont'd

- The flocks produce offspring that favor him through the selection process
- God has through this given him ownership of livestock that used to be Laban's
- God has told him to leave Paddan Aram and return to his cradle
- Genesis 31:8–13

Genesis 31 (NIV)

8 If he said, 'The speckled ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks gave birth to speckled young; and if he said, 'The streaked ones will be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked young.


9 So God has taken away your father's livestock and has given them to me. 10 "In breeding season I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats mating with the flock were streaked, speckled or spotted.

11 The angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob.' I answered, 'Here I am.' 12 And he said, 'Look up and see that all the male goats mating with the flock are streaked, speckled or spotted, for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

13 I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land.' "

Rachel and Leah Respond to Jacob

- They can no longer expect any inheritance from their father's estate
- Whatever God had given to their husband belongs to them and their children
- Their husband should obey God
- They agree it is time to leave Paddan Aram
- Genesis 31:14–16



Genesis 31 (NIV)


14 Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate?"

15 Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us.

16 Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."

Jacob Leaves Paddan Aram

- Jacob packed and left Paddan Aram with his family
- They headed for the hill country of Gilead on their way to Canaan
- He did not inform Laban that he was leaving
- Genesis 31:17–21



Genesis 31 (NIV)

17 Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels,

18 and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

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.

Jacob's Consultation: What We Learn

- Jacob recognized his wives are “stakeholder” in all his actions
- He did not invoke his authority as husband
- He did not simply say to them that God has commanded, so they must follow
- Rachel and Leah recognized they are one with Jacob, their husband

Concluding Remarks

- Seek stake-holders understanding
- Even if acting under God's command
- Even if in position of authority over the stake holders
- Marriage creates a new family unit
- Distinct and separate from all other relationships

Concluding Remarks

- For business relationships
- Think ahead about rights, responsibilities, implementation
- Identify loopholes
- Develop details to reduce loopholes
- Define conditions for changing the rules
- Jacob-Laban labor-wage deal developed problems because of insufficient details