

OVERCOMING THE DYSFUNCTIONS OF ISRAEL'S PATRIARCHS

XVI. Trusting God To Handle Manipulative Relatives

(Genesis 30:25-31:18)

I. Introduction

- A. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel's patriarchs and their respective wives and families, though blessed of God, were imperfect people who at times made huge mistakes that led to serious marital and family dysfunction.
- B. Thankfully, Romans 15:4 states that we can learn from whatsoever things were written in the Old Testament for our edification, and that includes our learning how to overcome the dysfunctions of Israel's patriarchs.
- C. We view Genesis 30:25-31:18 on trusting God to handle manipulative relatives for our insight and application:

II. Trusting God To Handle Manipulative Relatives, Genesis 30:25-31:18.

- A. We previously learned that Jacob had cheated his brother Esau out of Esau's blessing, so God let Jacob be cheated by his relative Laban in being tricked into marrying Laban's daughter Leah before he could marry Leah's younger sister Rachel whom Jacob loved. (cf. Genesis 27:1-28:9; 29:1-30)
- B. However, since God Himself had appeared to Jacob at Bethel and there promised to bless him as the heir of the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 28:10-22), there was a limit to how much God would let Laban keep taking advantage of Jacob: after all, the Abrahamic Covenant promised God's blessing on those who blessed Abraham's seed and God's curse on those who cursed his seed, cf. Genesis 12:3a.
- C. Thus, when Laban sought to take more advantage of Jacob in trying to cheat him out of even more material goods, God became involved to turn the tables on Laban as recorded in Genesis 30:25-31:18:
 - 1. After Rachel had given birth to her first son Joseph, Jacob asked Laban to release him and his wives and children from further obligations to Laban that he might return to his people in Canaan, Genesis 30:25-26.
 - 2. However, Laban told Jacob that he had learned by divination that God had prospered him because of Jacob, so he asked Jacob to name his wages, and Laban would agree to pay Jacob to keep working for him that Laban might be even more materially blessed, Genesis 30:27-28 NIV.
 - 3. Jacob thus asked Laban to let him have all the off-colored and spotted animals of Laban's herds as his pay, Genesis 30:29-32 NIV. Laban could thus check to see that any animal in Jacob's possession that was not off colored or speckled would be considered stolen by Jacob, Genesis 30:33 NIV.
 - 4. Laban agreed to the arrangement, and to make it hard for Jacob to build a large herd using Laban's animals in breeding, Laban removed all the animals of abnormal color, giving them to the care of his sons and putting a three-day's journey between them and Jacob's herds, Gen. 30:34-36 NIV; B. K. C., O. T., p. 77.
 - 5. God saw that Laban was trying to hinder Jacob's prosperity, so He caused all the off-colored male animals to breed aggressively with the female animals in heat so that Jacob's herds increased greatly, Gen. 31:10-12. In addition, Jacob used selective breeding to mate the animals so that the stronger animals that were produced he could keep for himself but leave the weak animals for Laban, Gen. 30:37-43; *Ibid.*, p. 77-78.
 - 6. In time, Laban's sons realized that Jacob had greatly profited in his arrangement with Laban, and Jacob heard the unsettling news that Laban's sons complained that he had taken all Laban's animals, Gen. 31:1.
 - 7. Jacob also noticed that Laban had become aware of this situation, and that he was not happy about it, Genesis 31:2. At that time, the Lord directed Jacob to return to his people's land in Canaan, Genesis 31:3.
 - 8. Jacob then secretly called his wives Rachel and Leah to the field where he worked and explained that their father Laban had mistreated him, changing his wages ten times in seeking to hinder his prosperity, Gen. 31:4-7. However, Jacob testified how God had overcome Laban's trickery by arranging for Jacob to have all of Laban's flocks at Laban's expense, Genesis 31:8-12.
 - 9. Jacob added that God Who appeared to him at Bethel now wanted him to return to Canaan, and Leah and Rachel said they were willing to go with Jacob to Canaan since their father Laban had used up the inheritance for them and their children and God had given Jacob Laban's wealth, Genesis 31:13-16 ESV.
 - 10. Accordingly, Jacob secretly set his sons and his wives on camels and led away all of his herds that he had acquired while working for Laban to return to the land of Canaan, Genesis 31:17-18.

Lesson: When Jacob's relative Laban sought to take unfair advantage of Jacob, God intervened to bless Jacob at Laban's expense in fulfilling Genesis 12:3a of His Abrahamic Covenant.

Application: If we face manipulative relatives, may we trust the Lord to protect us that He might fulfill His plan for our lives. (cf. Proverbs 21:30 NIV – "There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.")