

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION TO GENESIS 31

This chapter relates how that Jacob observing that Laban and his sons envied his prosperity, and having a call from God to return to his own country, acquaints his wives with it; and reports to them Laban's ill usage of him, and the wonderful appearance of God to him, and for him, and his orders to him to depart from thence, (^{-01310L}Genesis 31:1-13); to which they agreed, knowing full well their father's unkindness, and that they had nothing to expect from him, and therefore judged it best to go off with what they had got through the gift of God unto them, (^{-01314L}Genesis 31:14-16); upon which Jacob set out privately, with all he had, towards his own country, while Laban was shearing his sheep, (^{-01317L}Genesis 31:17-21); three days after, Laban, being informed of it, pursued after Jacob, and overtook him at Mount Gilead; but was warned by the way to be cautious what he said to him, (^{-01322L}Genesis 31:22-25); yet nevertheless he warmly expostulated with him about his secret flight, not giving him the opportunity of taking his leave of his children, and especially for taking away his gods, (^{-01326L}Genesis 31:26-30); to which Jacob gave an answer, (^{-01331L}Genesis 31:31-35); and in his turn was warm likewise, and chided Laban severely for his hot pursuit of him, his charge of stealth, when he could find nothing on him, his hard labour for the space of twenty years with him, and his ill requital of him for it, (^{-01336L}Genesis 31:36-42); however, upon the whole, an amicable agreement was made between them, and they parted in a friendly manner, (^{-01343L}Genesis 31:43-55).

Ver. 1. *And he heard the words of Laban's sons*, etc.] That is, Jacob, as is expressed in the Septuagint and Syriac versions, either with his own ears, overhearing their discourse in their tents, or in the field, or from the report of others, his wives or some of his friends, who thought proper to acquaint him with it; these were the sons of Laban, who had the care of the cattle committed to them, separated by the direction of Jacob, and with the consent of Laban, (^{-01335L}Genesis 30:35);

saying, Jacob hath taken away all that [was] our father's; meaning not precisely all that their father had, for that would have been a downright lie;

for what was become of them that were committed to their care? besides, we afterwards read of Laban's shearing his sheep, (^(C1319)Genesis 31:19); but that all that Jacob had was their father's, and he had taken it away from him, if not by force and stealth, yet by fraud; and so Jacob might fear he would treat him in an ill manner, and therefore began to think it was high time for him to be gone:

and of [that] which [was] our father's hath he gotten all the glory; his many servants, numerous cattle, sheep, camels and asses, in which carnal men place all their happiness; or those riches, as the Targum of Jonathan, by which he got the name and glory of a rich man among men: and it was so far true what they say, that it was out of their father's flock that Jacob got all his increase; but then it was according to a covenant that Laban and he entered into, and therefore was obtained in a just and lawful manner.

Ver. 2. *And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban*, etc.] Upon this he observed Laban's looks, that he might gather from thence how he took his prosperity; what were his thoughts about it, and what he might expect from him on that account:

and, behold, it [was] not towards him as before; he said nothing to Jacob, nor charged him with robbing of him, or any false dealing with him, yet was uneasy at his growing prosperity; he put on sour looks, and an envious countenance, sad, and surly, and lowering; so that Jacob saw it foreboded no good to him, and therefore thought it most advisable to depart as soon as he could; though perhaps he first sought the Lord about it, who spoke to him as in (^(C1303)Genesis 31:3).

Ver. 3. *And the Lord said unto Jacob*, etc.] In answer to a prayer of his; or seeing what difficulties and discouragements Jacob laboured under, he appeared unto him for his encouragement and instruction how to proceed:

return unto the land of thy fathers; the land of Canaan, given to Abraham and Isaac by promise:

and to thy kindred: his father and mother, and brother, who all dwelt in the land of Canaan at this time, or as many as were living: or "to thy nativity"^{f1508}, the place where he was born, and to which he must have a natural desire to return: and

I will be with thee; to protect him from any injury that might be attempted to be done unto him, either by Laban or Esau.

Ver. 4. *And Jacob sent,* etc.] Having this encouragement and direction from the Lord, which seems to have been given him in the field, while he was attending his flocks, he dispatched a messenger home to his wives, one of his servants or under shepherds. The Targum of Jonathan says it was his son Naphtali, whom he sent, because he was a swift messenger; the Targumist alludes to (^{<0142>}Genesis 49:21); but the former is more probable;

and called Rachel and Leah; Rachel is mentioned first, as being his proper and lawful wife, and is only called so, (^{<0145>}Genesis 46:19); and it was for her sake Jacob had Leah. Jacob, like a prudent man and an affectionate husband, thought proper to acquaint his wives with his case, and advise with them, and neither leave them nor take them away suddenly and by force; and therefore sent for them,

to the field unto his flock; where he was feeding his flock: this he might do for divers reasons; he might not judge it so proper and convenient to go home to them, since it might be difficult to get one of them to come to the apartment of the other; and it was proper they should be together, and that might cause some suspicion in Laban's family, who might listen to overhear what passed between them; and besides, he might be afraid of Laban and his sons, that being in such an ill temper they would lay violent hands on him, and do him a mischief; and therefore he sent for his wives to him in the field, where they could more privately and freely converse together, without being overheard or interrupted, and the flock in the mean while not neglected.

Ver. 5. *And said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it [is] not towards me as before,* etc.] (See Gill on "^{<0130>}Genesis 31:2"); no notice is taken of what their brethren, the sons of Laban, had said:

but the God of my father hath been with me; not only by affording him his gracious presence with him, which supported him under all his troubles; but by his good providence prospering and succeeding him in his outward affairs, as well as he had lately appeared to him, and encouraged him to return to his own country.

Ver. 6. *And ye know, that with all my power I have served your father.*] With all faithfulness and uprightness; with all diligence and industry; with all wisdom and prudence; with all my might and main, contriving the best methods, and sparing no pains by day or night to take care of his flocks, and increase his substance: of this his wives had been witnesses for twenty

years past, and to them he appeals for the truth of it; so that there was no just reason for their father's behaviour towards him.

Ver. 7. *And your father hath deceived me*, etc.] In the bargain he had made with him about his wages for keeping his cattle the six years past, after the fourteen years' servitude were ended:

and changed my wages ten times; that is, either very often, many times, as the number ten is sometimes. Used for many, (see ^{<0375>}Leviticus 26:26); or precisely ten times, since he repeats it afterwards in the same form to Laban's face, (^{<0344>}Genesis 31:41); he had now served him six years upon a new bargain; that he should have all that were of such and such different colours, which were produced out of his flock of white sheep. Laban was at first highly pleased with it, as judging it would be a very good one to him, as he might reasonably think indeed: and it is highly probable he did not attempt any alteration the first year, but observing Jacob's cattle of the speckled sort, etc. prodigiously increasing, he did not choose to abide by the any longer. Now it must be observed, that the sheep in Mesopotamia, as in Italy ^{f1509}, brought forth the young twice a year; so that every yearling time, which was ten times in five years, Laban made an alteration in Jacob's wages; one time he would let him have only the speckled, and not the ringstraked; another time the ringstraked, and not the speckled; and so changed every time, according as he observed the prevailing colour was, as may be concluded from (^{<0308>}Genesis 31:8):

but God suffered him not to hurt me; to hinder his prosperity, or having justice done him for his service; for whatsoever colour Laban chose for Jacob to have the next season of yearling, there was always the greatest number of them, or all of them were of that colour, whether speckled or ringstraked, etc.

Ver. 8. *If he said thus, the speckled shall be thy wages*, etc.] Sometimes Laban would say to Jacob, only the speckled lambs which the ewes shall bring forth shall be thine hire, and not the spotted; or the ringstraked, or the brown, which according to the bargain should have been his, the one and the other:

then all the cattle bare speckled; that season, God ordering it so in his providence, that Laban might be disappointed, and Jacob might have his full hire; that is, the greatest part of the cattle bore such, as Ben Melech observes:

and if he said thus, the ringstraked shall be thine hire; observing the cattle to bring forth only speckled, or the greatest part such, then he changed his hire, and would have it be not the speckled, nor the brown, only the ringstraked, there being none or few of that colour the last yeaning time:

then bare all the cattle ringstraked; or the greatest part of them were such; so that let Laban fix on what colour he would as Jacob's wages, there were sure to be the greatest part of that colour; which shows the hand of God in it, as is next observed by Jacob.

Ver. 9. *Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father*, etc.] Not all of them, (see ^{<0319>}Genesis 31:19); but a great part of them; his flock was much lessened by those means, and more were taken away, and came to Jacob's share, than if Laban had abode by the original agreement:

and gave [them] to me; who has the disposing of all things in the world, whose the world, and all in it, are, and gives of it to the sons of men as he pleases. Jacob takes no notice of any artifice of his, or of any means and methods he made use of, but wholly ascribes all to the providence of God, and points to his wives the hand of God only; and indeed it seems to be by his direction that he took the method he did, as appears from (^{<0311>}Genesis 31:11-13).

Ver. 10. *And it came to pass, at the time that the cattle conceived*, etc.] Whether in spring or in autumn cannot be said, for it seems this was twice a year; this probably was at the beginning of the six years' servitude, or just before the agreement was made between Laban and Jacob, and was an instruction to the latter how to make his bargain with the former:

that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream; in a vision of the night, so things were represented to his fancy and imagination:

and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle [were] ringstraked, speckled, and grisled; from whence he might conclude, that the cattle they leaped upon would bring forth the like, and so be a direction to him to make his agreement with Laban to have such for his hire; not that the rams in the flock were really of those colours, for they were all white, but so they were represented to Jacob in the vision, to suggest to him, that such would be produced by them; and it is not improbable by the artifice Jacob was directed to, and took, that the ewes, when they came to the watering troughs to drink, upon seeing the party coloured rods in the water, these made such an impression upon their imaginations, that they fancied the

rams that leaped upon them were of those colours, and so conceived and brought forth the like. Here is another colour mentioned, not taken notice of before, at least by this name, “grisled”; it stands in the place of “spotted”, and seems to be the same with that, and signified such as had spots on them like hailstones, and distinguishes them from the speckled: the speckled were such as were white with black spots, these such as were black, and had white spots like hail.

Ver. 11. *And the Angel of God spake unto me in a dream,* etc.] In the same dream before related, and to direct him to observe what was presented to him, and to confirm what he saw, and lead him to the design and use of it. This was not a created angel, but the eternal one, the Son of God, and who is afterwards called God, and to whom Jacob had made a vow, which he would never have done to an angel; but to God only, as Ben Melech observes:

[saying], Jacob; and I said, here [am] I; the Angel called him by his name, to which he answered, and signified that he was ready to attend to whatsoever he should say to him.

Ver. 12. *And he said, lift up now thine eyes, and see,* etc.] This was all visionary, Jacob was still in a dream; but it was so impressed upon his mind, that he was spoke to, and bid to observe, and take notice, as follows: that

all the rams that leap upon the cattle [are] ringstraked, speckled, and grisled; thereby assuring him, that such would be those the ewes would bring forth, which would be right in him to agree with Laban for as his hire; and it is probable that there was some distance of time, at least a night, between the first motion of Laban’s to Jacob to settle his wages, (^(GEN 30:28)); and his repeating that, and being urgent to have it done, (^(GEN 31:31)); and in this interval of time might be the night Jacob had this dream and vision in, for his direction; or if it was after the bargain made, since it is said to be at the time the cattle conceived, he had it to assure him of God’s approbation of it, and of his success in it:

for I have seen all that Laban doeth to thee; had took notice how he had made him serve fourteen years for his wives, and had given him nothing for his service; and how he now was taking advantage of Jacob’s modesty to get him to fix his own wages, which he supposed would be lower than he could have the face to, offer him.

Ver. 13. *I [am] the God of Bethel*, etc.] The same Angel that appeared to Jacob in a dream, at the beginning of his six years' servitude, now appeared to him at the close of it, declaring himself to be the God of Bethel; or that God that manifested himself to him at Bethel, as Onkelos and Jonathan paraphrase the words; for this is a distinct vision from that in the preceding verses, concerning the rams of different colours, and are both put together for the sake of brevity, and because they belong to the same affair:

where thou anointedst the pillar, [and] where thou vowedst a vow unto me: (see Gill on "⁰²⁸¹⁹Genesis 28:19"), (see Gill on "Gen 28:20"); hereby signifying the divine approbation of the name Jacob gave to that place, and of what he did in it, and to put him in mind of his promise there made:

now arise, get thee out from this land: of Mesopotamia, or Syria, and out of Haran, a city there, where Jacob now was, and Laban lived:

and return unto the land of thy kindred: to the land of Canaan, the place of his nativity, and where his relations dwelt: this shows, that this appearance of God to him, as the God of Bethel, was at the close of his six years' service.

Ver. 14. *And Rachel and Leah answered and said unto him*, etc.] One after another, and their answers agreeing, are put together; it may be Rachel answered in the name of Leah, and for herself, since she is mentioned first, and the verb is singular. The Targum of Jonathan is, Rachel answered with the consent of Leah;

[is there] yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? it was what might have been justly expected, as they were his children, that they should have been used as such, and have had children's portions given them; but by the whole of Laban's attitude towards them, both at their marriage, and ever since, it was plain he never intended to give them anything; but kept all he had to himself, or designed it for his sons, and therefore it was in vain for them to hope for anything; signifying to Jacob hereby, that they were willing to leave their father's house, and go with him when he pleased, since they could expect nothing by their stay here.

Ver. 15. *Are we not accounted of him strangers?* etc.] He had not treated them as children, nor even as freeborn persons; but as if they were foreigners that he had taken in war, or bought of others; or at least, that they were born bondmaids in his house, and so had a right to sell them as he had:

for he hath sold us; he had sold them to Jacob for fourteen years' service, as if they had been his slaves, instead of giving dowries with them as his children:

and hath quite devoured also our money; that which he got by the servitude of Jacob, instead of giving it to them as their portion; he spent it on himself and his sons, and there was nothing left for them.

Ver. 16. *For all the riches which God hath taken from our father*, etc.] And given to Jacob for his labour:

that [is] ours, and our children's; it belonged to us by the law of nature, before it came into thine hands; and our right unto it is still more manifest, and is confirmed by the service thou hast done for it, by which means it came into thy possession; and therefore it is no point of conscience with us, nor need it be any with thee especially, to go off with it:

now then, whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do; for that must needs be right: this was well spoken indeed; they mean, that he should leave their father's house, and go into the land of Canaan, as God had directed him; and they signified that they were willing: to go along with him.

Ver. 17. *Then Jacob rose up*, etc.] And went with them to Laban's house, where his children were, as is plain from Rachel's theft, (⁽⁰³¹⁹⁾Genesis 31:19):

and set his sons and his wives upon camels; which were his own, (see ⁽⁰³¹⁸⁾Genesis 30:43); creatures fit for travelling; on these he set his wives, Rachel and Leah, and his concubine wives, Bilhah and Zilpah; for these went with him, as appears from (⁽⁰³¹⁶⁾Genesis 33:6 35:22); and "his sons", or rather "his children": for they were not all sons, there was one daughter, and they were all young; his eldest son Reuben could not be much more than twelve years of age, and his youngest son Joseph about six.

Ver. 18. *And he carried away all his cattle*, etc.] His sheep, camels, and asses: the Jews say ^{f1510} he had 5,500 head of cattle:

and all the goods which he had gotten: all the rest besides his cattle; his menservants, and maidservants, and all his gold and his silver, and whatsoever else he had:

the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padanaram: or Mesopotamia: this seems to be purposely observed, to show that he took

nothing but what was his own getting, not anything that belonged to Laban:

for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan; but it was some years before he got to his father's house, staying at several places by the way. No mention is made of his mother Rebekah, she perhaps being now dead.

Ver. 19. *And Laban went to shear his sheep*, etc.] Which were under the care of his sons, and were three days' distance from Jacob's flocks; this gave Jacob a fair opportunity to depart with his family and substance, since Laban and his sons were at such a distance, and their servants with them also:

and Rachel had stolen the images that [were] her father's; afterwards called gods, which he made use of in an idolatrous and superstitious manner, one way or other: they seem to be a kind of "penates", or household gods; in the Hebrew they are called "teraphim"; and which De Dieu thinks were the same with "seraphim"^{f1511}; and were images of angels, consulted on occasion, and placed in the house for the protection of it, and to increase the substance thereof: some take them to be plates of brass describing the hours of the day, a sort of sundials; or were such forms, that at certain times were made to speak, and show things to come: but they rather seem to be images of an human form, as say the Jewish writers, and as seems from (^{<0913>}1 Samuel 19:13-16); and which it is supposed were made under certain constellations, and were a sort of talismans, and were consulted as oracles, and in high esteem with the Chaldeans and Syrians, a people given to astrology, and by which they made their divinations; (see Gill on "^{<2804>}Hosea 3:4") and also (see Gill on "^{<3802>}Zechariah 10:2"); and therefore Rachel took them away, that her father might not consult them, and know which way Jacob fled, as Aben Ezra; but this looks as if she had an opinion of them, and that they had such a power of discovering persons and things that were attributed to them: and indeed some think she took them away from an affection and veneration for them, supposing she should not be able to meet with such in Canaan in Isaac's family; and what is observed in (^{<0132>}Genesis 35:2) seems to countenance this; but one would think she had been better instructed by Jacob during his twenty years' conversation with her; and besides, had she been tinctured with such sort of superstition and idolatry, she would never have used them so indecently, as to have sat upon them in the circumstances in which she was, (^{<0134>}Genesis 31:34,35); it is more to her

credit and character to say with Jarchi, that she did this to take off her father from the idolatrous worship of them, and to convince him that they were no gods; since they could not inform him of the designs of Jacob, and of his flight, nor secure themselves from being carried away by her; unless it can be thought that she took them because of the metal of which they were made, gold or silver, being willing to have something of her father's goods as her portion, which she thought she had a right unto, or in recompence of her husband's service. Dr. Lightfoot^{f1512} thinks she took them for a civil use, to preserve the memory of some of her ancestors, of which these were the pictures, and Laban had idolized; but whether pictures were so early is questionable.

Ver. 20. *And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian,* etc.] Went away without his knowledge, or giving him any notice of it; he was too cunning for Laban the Syrian; notwithstanding his astrology and superstitious arts, which the Syrians are addicted to, he had no foresight of this matter: or he "stole away the heart of Laban"^{f1513}, that which his heart was set upon; not his gods, these Rachel stole away; nor his daughters, for whom he does not appear to have had any great affection and respect; but rather the cattle and goods Jacob took with him, which Laban's eye and heart were upon, and hoped to get into his possession by one means, or at one time or another; but the former sense, that he "stole from" his heart^{f1514}, or stole away without his knowledge, seems best to agree with what follows;

in that he told him not that he fled; or that he designed to go away, and was about to do it.

Ver. 21. *So he fled with all that he had,* etc.] His wives, his children, cattle and substance;

and he rose up, and passed over the river; the river Euphrates, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it, which lay between Mesopotamia and Canaan;

and set his face [toward] the mount Gilead: he travelled and bent his course that way: this, was a mountain on the border of the land of Canaan, adjoining to Lebanon, near which was a very fruitful country, which had its name from it: it is so called here by way of anticipation; for this name was afterwards given it from the heap of stones here laid, as a witness of the agreement between Laban and Jacob, (⁰³⁴⁵Genesis 31:45).

Ver. 22. *And it was told Laban on the third day, that Jacob was fled.*]

Three days after Jacob was gone he had the report of it, by some means or another; by some of his neighbours, or servants left at home, and sooner he could not well have it, since the flock he went to shear was three days' distance from Jacob's, (^{f0336}Genesis 30:36).

Ver. 23. *And he took his brethren with him,* etc.] Some of his relations, the descendants of his father's brethren, the sons of Nahor, of whom there were seven, besides Bethuel; and who all perhaps lived in Haran the city of Nahor, (see ^{f0223}Genesis 22:20-24); or some of his neighbours and acquaintance whom he might call to:

and pursued after him seven days' journey; which must be reckoned, not from Jacob's departure from Haran, but from Laban's; for Laban being three days' journey from thence, whither he had to return, after he received the news of Jacob being gone; Jacob must have travelled six days before Laban set out with his brethren from Haran; so that this was, as Ben Gerson conjectures, the thirteenth day of Jacob's travel; for Laban not having cattle to drive as Jacob, could travel as fast again as he, and do that in seven days which took up Jacob thirteen:

and they overtook him in the mount Gilead; said to be three hundred and eighty miles from Haran ^{f1515}.

Ver. 24. *And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night,* etc.] It is probable that Laban came to Mount Gilead late in the evening, and so had no sight of, or conversation with Jacob until the morning; and that night God came to him, and in a dream advised him as follows: or it may be rendered, "and God had come", etc. ^{f1516}; in one of the nights in which he had lain upon the road; though the former seems best to agree with (^{f0329}Genesis 31:29); the Targum of Jonathan has it, an angel came; and the Jews ^{f1517} say it was Michael; by whom, if they understand the uncreated Angel, the Son of God, it is right:

and said unto him, take heed that thou speak not to, Jacob either good or bad; not that he should keep an entire silence, and enter into no discourse with him on any account, but that he should say nothing to him about his return to Haran again; for it was the will of God he should go onward towards Canaan's land; and therefore Laban should not attempt to persuade him to return, with a promise of good things, or of what great

things he would do for him; nor threaten him with evil things, or what he would do to him if he would not comply to return with him.

Ver. 25. *Then Laban overtook Jacob*, etc.] He was come to the mount the overnight, but now in the morning he came nearer to him, so as to hold a conversation with him:

now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead; both on the same mount; one perhaps at the bottom, and the other at the top; or one on one hill of it, and the other on another, or right over against one another.

Ver. 26. *And Laban said unto Jacob*, etc.] Upon their meeting together; perhaps in some middle place between their two tents:

what hast thou done? what evil hast thou committed? what folly art thou guilty of? and what could induce thee to take such a step as this? suggesting that he could see no necessity for it; and as if he had done nothing that should occasion it, and that Jacob had done a very ill thing

that thou hast stolen away unawares to me: of this phrase (see Gill on “^{Q312}Genesis 31:20”);

and carried away my daughters, as captives [taken] with the sword; as were commonly done by a band of robbers that made incursions upon their neighbours, and plundered them of their substance, and carried away by force their wives and daughters; and such an one Laban represents Jacob to be, a thief and a robber; who had not only stolen away from him, but had stole away his goods, and even his gods, and carried away his daughters against their will: all which were false, and particularly the latter, since they went along with him with their free and full consent.

Ver. 27. *Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me?* etc.] Intimating as if he should not have been against his departure, if he had but acquainted him with it, and the reasons of it; so that he had no need to have used such privacy, and go away like a thief by stealth, as if he had done something he had reason to be ashamed of:

and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret and with harp: pretending that he would have given him leave to depart; and not only have dismissed him from his house and service in an honourable way, but very cheerfully and pleasantly: he would

have got a band of music, men singers and women singers, and others to play on musical instruments, as the tabret and harp; and so had a concert of vocal and instrumental music, which would have shown that they parted by consent, and as good friends: whether this was an usual custom in this country, of parting with friends, I cannot say, but it seems to be very odd; for usually relations and friends, that have a cordial affection for each other, part with grief and tears: by this Laban appears to be a carnal man, and had but little sense of religion, as well as acted the hypocritical part.

Ver. 28. *And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters?* etc.] Did not give him an opportunity of taking his farewell, which used to be done with a kiss, as it is with us at this day: by his sons he means his grandsons, and so the Targum of Jonathan, my daughters' sons; and by his daughters Rachel and Leah, and Dinah his granddaughter:

thou hast done foolishly in [so] doing: since, as he would have him believe that he was both a loser by this step he took, and exposed himself to danger, seeing it was in the power of Laban to do him hurt, as in (⁽⁻⁰³²⁹⁾Genesis 31:29); but Jacob knew what he did, and that it was the wisest part to follow the direction of God.

Ver. 29. *It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt,* etc.] Jacob and his family, wives, children, and servants, who were not able to stand against Laban and the men he brought with him; and so the Jerusalem Targum paraphrases it,

“I have an army and a multitude;”

a large force, which Jacob could not withstand: or, “my hand could have been for a god”^{f1518} to me: you could have no more escaped it, or got out of it, or withstood me, than you could God himself: such an opinion had he of his superior power and strength, and that this would have been the case:

but the God of your father spoke unto me yesternight; the night past, or the other night, some very little time ago, since he came from home at least: by his father he means either his father Isaac, or his grandfather Abraham, whose God the Lord was, and who came to Laban and told him who he was. This serves to strengthen the opinion that Laban was an idolater, and adhered to the gods of his grandfather Terah, from whom Abraham departed, and which Laban may have respect to; intimating that he abode by the religion of his ancestors at a greater remove than Jacob's: however,

though he does not call him his God, he had some awe and reverence of him, and was influenced by his speech to him;

saying, take heed that thou spake not to Jacob either good or bad: this, though greatly to Jacob's honour, and against Laban's interest, yet his conscience would not allow him to keep it a secret; though, doubtless, his view was to show his superior power to Jacob, had he not been restrained by Jacob's God.

Ver. 30. *And now, [though] thou wouldest needs be gone,* etc.] Or, "in going wouldest go"^{f1519}, was determined upon it, and in haste to do it:

because thou sore longedst after thy father's house, or "desiring didst desire it"^{f1520}; had a vehement desire for it, which Laban signifies he should not have opposed, if he had let him know his mind: but be it so that he had ever so great desire to leave him and return to his father's house, says he,

[yet], wherefore, hast thou stolen my gods? what reason had he for that? if he took away himself, his wives, his children, his goods, what business had he with his gods? he could not claim these as his, meaning the images or teraphim before mentioned, (⁽⁻⁰³¹⁹⁾Genesis 31:19); by which it appears that Laban was some way or other guilty of idolatry in the use of these images; looking upon them as types, or representations of God, as Josephus^{f1521} calls them, and worshipped God in them, or along with them and by them; for he could never think they were truly and really gods, that could not preserve themselves from being stolen away, and that must be a poor god that a man may be robbed of.

Ver. 31. *And Jacob answered and said to Laban, because I was afraid,* etc.] That he would have done all he could to have hindered him from going away himself; and not only so, but would have prevented his taking his daughters with him; and especially would have detained his cattle; but of this last Jacob makes no mention, only of the former:

for I said; either within himself, or to his wives;

peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me; which of right belonged to him; for though they were Laban's daughters, they were Jacob's wives; and being given in marriage to him, he had a right unto them, and to take them with him; nor had Laban any right to detain them, which Jacob feared he would have attempted to have done, had he known his design; and this must have been done by force if done at all; for neither

Jacob nor his wives would have agreed that they should stay with Laban upon his departure: what Laban charges Jacob with, in going away with his wives, he himself would have done, namely, using force to them. Laban's charge was false, but there was much reason for Jacob's suspicion.

Ver. 32. *With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live*, etc.]

This is the answer to his last question, as what goes before is to his first: Jacob knew nothing of their being taken away by any, and thought himself safe in saying what he did, being confident that no one with him could ever take them; but it was too rashly spoken by him, giving leave to Laban to put to death the person with whom they should be found, or imprecating death on him by the hand of God; "may he not live", but die, die immediately or before his time, as the Targum of Jonathan: hence the Jewish writers^{f1522} observe, that Rachel died in giving birth in consequence of this imprecation, but without any foundation:

before our brethren discern thou what [is] thine with me, and take [it] to thee: not only his gods, but any of his goods or cattle, whatsoever he could find in his tents, or in his flocks, that were his property, he was welcome to take; and this he declared before the men that Laban brought with him, whom he also calls his brethren, being his kinsfolks and neighbours; and these he appeals to as witnesses of his honesty, integrity, and fair dealing; being conscious to himself that he had took nothing but what was his own:

for Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them; the images or gods; or he would have been more careful of his expression, in love and tenderness to his most beloved wife.

Ver. 33. *And Laban went into Jacob's tent*, etc.] Into that first where he most suspected they were, being taken not out of value for them, but contempt of them;

and into Leah's tent; and not Leah's tent next, whom next to Jacob he might suspect of taking them, out of veneration to them, because her tent lay next:

and into the two maidservants' tents: Bilhah and Zilpah; or "the" tent of them; for the word is singular, and perhaps they had but one tent for them both, which distinguished them from the principal wives:

but he found [them] not; in neither of these tents:

then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent; which he went into last of all, as least suspecting her, being less addicted to the superstition and idolatry of his family than Leah and the maidservants: Aben Ezra thinks that he was twice in Leah's tent, and at the last time came out of that into Rachel's; and that Jacob's tent lay between Leah's and Rachel's. From this account it more clearly appears that men and their wives had separate tents or apartments; (see ^{<0247>}Genesis 24:67).

Ver. 34. *Now Rachel had taken the images*, etc.] Hearing her father inquire about them, and her husband having given leave to search for them, and to put to death whoever should be found to have them, took them from the place where she had before laid them:

and put them into the camel's furniture; perhaps the camel's furniture she rode on, and therefore it was in her tent, which some understand of the saddle on which she rode; rather, it seems to be the saddle cloth or housing, in which she might wrap the images and put them under her clothes; though some interpret it of the straw or litter of the camel, which is not so probable:

and sat upon them; the images, which, if she had the veneration for, as some suggest, she would never have used in such a manner:

and Laban searched all the tent, but found [them] not; excepting the place where Rachel sat; but Aben Ezra thinks she was not in the tent, but in some place without it, and if so, there needs no exception.

Ver. 35. *And she said to her father*, etc.] As he approached nearer to her, having searched her tent all over:

let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise up before thee: she addresses him with great honour and respect; calling him her lord, being her father, though an unkind one, and entreats him not to be displeased that she did not rise up and yield that obeisance to him which was due from her to a father:

for the custom of women [is] upon me; her menstrues; which before the law of Moses were reckoned a pollution, and such persons were not to be touched or come near unto, and everything they sat upon was unclean, and not to be touched also; (^{<0859>}Leviticus 15:19-23);

and he searched; all about her, and around her; but did not oblige her to get up, nor could he imagine that ever the images could be under her in such circumstances:

but found not the images; and so left off searching; nor do we find that he searched the flock for any of his cattle there, knowing full well Jacob's honesty and integrity.

Ver. 36. *And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban*, etc.] Having answered Laban's questions to the silencing of him, and nothing of his upon search, being found with him, Jacob took heart, and was of good courage and in high spirits, and in his turn was heated also; and perhaps might carry his passion a little too far, and is not to be excused from some degree of sin and weakness; however, his reasoning is strong and nervous, and his expostulations very just and pathetic; whatever may be said for the temper he was in, and the wrath and resentment he showed:

and Jacob answered and said to Laban; that whereas he had suggested that he had done a very bad thing, he asks him,

what [is] my trespass? what [is] my sin? what heinous offence have I committed? what law of God or man have I broke?

that thou hast so hotly pursued after me? with so much haste and swiftness, and with such a number of men, as if he came to take a thief, a robber, or a murderer.

Ver. 37. *Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff*, etc.] Or all my vessels ^{f1523}, or utensils; whether household goods, or such as were used with regard to the cattle, or armour for defence:

what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? is there any vessel or utensil, or anything whatever thou canst claim as thine own? is there anything that has been taken away from thee either by me or mine?

set [it] here before my brethren and thy brethren; publicly before them all, and let it be thoroughly inquired into whose property it was, and whether lawfully taken or not:

that they may judge betwixt us both; Jacob was so conscious to himself of his own uprightness, that he could safely leave anything that might be disputed in arbitration with the very men that Laban had brought with him: it was so clear a case that he had not wronged him of anyone thing.

Ver. 38. *This twenty years [have] I been [with] thee*, etc.] So that he now must have been ninety seven years of age:

thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young: or very few of them: it was a rare case for any to be abortive, if ever: this, though owing to the blessing of God, was for Jacob's sake, and, under God, to be ascribed to his care and diligence in watching and keeping the flock, and doing everything needful for them:

and the rams of the flock have I not eaten: being content with meaner food, as lentil pottage and the like; see the contrary of this in shepherds, (^{234B}Ezekiel 34:3).

Ver. 39. *That which was torn [of beasts] I brought not unto thee*, etc.] To show what had befallen it; that so it might appear he had one the less to account for to him:

I bore the loss of it; took it upon himself, as if it had been somewhat blameworthy in him, as the word used signifies; and so made satisfaction for it; which, how he did, when he had no wages, is difficult to say: he might have some perquisites allowed him by Laban, though he had no settled salary; or he might lay himself under obligation to make it good whenever it was in his power, as follows:

of mine hand didst thou require it, [whether] stolen by day, or stolen by night; whether by men or beasts; or by men in the daytime, and by beasts in the night, as the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem distinguish: Laban was so rigorous and unjust as to require the restoration of them, or an equivalent for them at the hand of Jacob; all which were contrary to the law of God, (¹²²⁰Exodus 22:10-13).

Ver. 40. *[Thus] I was*, etc.] In such a situation, as well as in the following uncomfortable plight and condition:

in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night: the violent heat in the daytime scorched him, and the severe frosts in the night pinched him: that is, in the different seasons of the year, the heat of the day in the summertime, and the cold of the night in the wintertime; for it cannot well be thought that there should be excessive heat in the day and sharp frosts in the night, in the same season of the year: it looks as if Laban did not allow Jacob the proper conveniencies of clothes, and of tents to secure him from the inclemency of the weather, which other shepherds usually had:

and my sleep departed from mine eyes; through diligent care and watchfulness of the flocks in the night season, which on some occasions were necessary; (see ^{}Luke 2:8).

Ver. 41. *Thus have I been twenty years in thy house*, etc.] Attended with these difficulties, inconveniencies, and hardships;

I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters; Rachel and Leah; first seven years for Rachel; and having Leah imposed upon him instead of her, was obliged to serve seven years more, which he did for her sake; whereas he ought to have given them, and a dowry with them, to one who was heir to the land of Canaan, and not have exacted servitude of him:

and six years for thy cattle, to have as many of them for his hire, as were produced from a flock of white sheep, that were speckled, spotted, or ringstraked, or brown:

and thou hast changed my wages ten times; (see Gill on ^{}Genesis 31:7");

Ver. 42. *Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had been with me*, etc.] One and the same God is meant, who was the God of his father Isaac, and before him the God of Abraham, and now the fear of Isaac, whom he feared and served with reverence and godly fear, being at this present time a worshipper of him: now Jacob suggests, that unless his father's God had been on his side, and had protected and preserved him, as well as before blessed and prospered him,

surely thou hadst sent me away now empty: coming with such force upon him, he would have stripped him of all he had, of his wives and children, and servants and cattle:

God hath seen my affliction, and the labour of my hands; what hardships he endured in Laban's service, and what pains he took in feeding his flocks:

and rebuked [thee] yesternight; in a dream, charging him to say neither good nor evil to Jacob, which he himself had confessed, (^{}Genesis 31:29).

Ver. 43. *And Laban answered and said unto Jacob*, etc.] Not denying the truth of what he had said, nor acknowledging any fault he had been guilty of, or asking forgiveness for it, though he seemed to be convicted in his own conscience of it:

[these] daughters [are] my daughters: though thy wives, they are my own flesh and blood, and must be dear to me; so pretending strong natural affections for them:

and [these] children [are] my children; his grandchildren, for whom also he professed great love and affection:

and [these] cattle [are] my cattle; or of my cattle, as the Targum of Jonathan, sprung from them, as indeed they did:

and all that thou seest [is] mine; all this he observed in a bragging way, that it might be thought that he was generous in not insisting upon having it, but giving all back to Jacob again:

and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? I cannot find in my heart to do them any hurt, or wrong them of anything, and am therefore willing all should be theirs.

Ver. 44. *Now therefore, come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou,* etc.] Let us be good friends, and enter into an alliance for mutual safety, and make an agreement for each other's good. Laban perceiving that Jacob's God was with him, and blessed him, and made him prosperous, and protected him, was fearful, lest, growing powerful, he should some time or other revenge himself on him or his, for his ill usage of him; and therefore was desirous of entering into a covenant of friendship with him:

and let it be for a witness between me and thee; that all past differences are made up, and former quarrels subside, and everything before amiss is forgiven and forgotten, and that for the future peace and good will subsist; of which a covenant made between them would be a testimony.

Ver. 45. *And Jacob took a stone, and set it up [for] a pillar.*] To show his readiness to agree to the motion, he immediately took a large stone that lay upon the mount, and set it up on one end, to be a standing monument or memorial of the agreement now about to be made between them.

Ver. 46. *And Jacob said unto his brethren, gather stones,* etc.] Not to his sons, as the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi; these would not be called brethren, and were not fit, being too young to be employed in gathering large stones, as these must be, to erect a monument with; rather his servants, whom he employed in keeping his sheep under him, and might so call them, as he did the shepherds of Haran, (⁽¹⁰²⁰⁾Genesis 29:4); and whom

he could command to such service, and were most proper to be made use of in it; unless it can be thought the men Laban brought with him, whom Jacob before calls his brethren, (⁻⁰¹³⁷Genesis 31:37), are meant; and then the words must be understood as spoken, not in an authoritative way, but as a request or direction, which was complied with:

and they took stones, and made an heap; they fetched stones that lay about here and there, and laid them in order one upon another, and so made an heap of them:

and they did eat there upon the heap; they made it like a table, and set their food on it, and ate off of it; or they “ate by” it ^{f1524}, it being usual in making covenants to make a feast, at least to eat and drink together, in token of friendship and good will. The Chinese ^{f1525} call friendship that is most firm and stable, and not to be rescinded, “stony friendship”: whether from a like custom with this does not appear.

Ver. 47. *And Laban called it Jegarsahadutha*, etc.] Which in the Syriac and Chaldee languages signifies “an heap of witness”; it being, as after observed, a witness of the covenant between Laban and Jacob:

but Jacob called it Galeed; which in the Hebrew tongue signifies the same, “an heap of witness”; or “an heap, [the] witness”, for the same reason.

Laban was a Syrian, as he sometimes is called, (⁻⁰²⁵⁰Genesis 25:20) (⁻⁰¹³⁰Genesis 31:20,24), wherefore he used the Syrian language; Jacob was a descendant of Abraham the Hebrew, and he used the Hebrew language; and both that their respective posterity might understand the meaning of the name; though these two are not so very different but Laban and Jacob could very well understand each other, as appears by their discourse together, these being but dialects of the same tongue.

Ver. 48. *And Laban said, this heap [is] a witness between me and thee this day.*] A witness of the covenant now about to be made between them that day, and a witness against them should they break it:

therefore was the name of it called Galeed; by Jacob, as before observed; (see Gill on “⁻⁰¹³⁴⁷Genesis 31:47”).

Ver. 49. *And Mizpah*, etc.] Which being an Hebrew word, it looks as if the heap had also this name given it by Jacob, which signifies a “watch” or “watchtower”; though, by what follows, it seems to be given by Laban, who could speak Hebrew as well, as Syriac, or Chaldee:

for he said, the Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another; or “hid one from another”^{f1526}; when being at a distance, they could not see each other, or what one another did in agreement or disagreement with their present covenant: but he intimates, that the Lord sees and knows all things, and therefore imprecates that God would watch over them both, them and their actions, and bring upon them the evil or the good, according as their actions were, or as they broke or kept this covenant.

Ver. 50. *If thou shall afflict my daughters*, etc.] In body or mind, by giving them hard blows, or ill words, and by withholding from them the necessaries of life, food and raiment, and the like:

or if thou shall take [other] wives besides my daughters; which also would be an affliction and vexation to them, (see ^{<CRISIS>}Leviticus 18:18). Laban, though he had led Jacob into polygamy, and even obliged him to it, did not choose he should go further into it, for the sake of his daughters, to whom he professes now much kindness and affection, though he had shown but little to them before; as well as talks in a more religious strain than he had been used to do:

no man [is] with us; the sense is not that there were none with them at the present time, for the men or brethren that Laban brought with him were present: or that there were none fit to be witnesses, because these were kinsmen, for they are appealed to by Jacob as judges between them, (^{<CRISIS>}Genesis 31:33); but this refers to time to come, and may be supplied thus, “when no man be with us”; when there is none to observe what is done by either of us, contrary to mutual agreement, and to report it to one or other: then

see, take notice, and observe,

God [is] witness betwixt me and thee; who is omniscient and omnipresent, sees, observes all the actions of men, and deals with them accordingly; and so will be a witness for or against each of us, as we shall behave in observing, or not observing, the terms of our covenant.

Ver. 51. *And Laban said to Jacob*, etc.] Continued speaking to him, as follows:

behold this heap, and behold [this] pillar which I have cast betwixt me and thee; the heap of stones seems to be gathered and laid together by the

brethren, and the pillar to be erected by Jacob; and yet Laban says of them both, that he cast them, or erected them, they being done by his order, or with his consent, as well as Jacob's; unless the pillar can be thought to design another beside that which Jacob set up, and was like that, a single stone at some little distance from the heap: but the Samaritan and Arabic versions read, "which thou hast seen or set", etc. agreeably to (¹⁰³⁴⁵Genesis 31:45).

Ver. 52. *This heap [be] witness*, etc.] Agreeably to its name, which both he and Jacob gave unto it:

and [this] pillar [be] witness: which was set up for the same purpose:

that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm; not that these were to be the boundaries of their respective countries; for neither of them at present were possessed of lands that reached hither, if of any at all; nor that it would be a breach of covenant to pass over or by those, from one country into another, but so as to do, or with an intent to do, hurt to each other.

Ver. 53. *The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us*, etc.] And the father of these was Terah, so that the god of them was not the true God, and is not meant, at least not as truly worshipped; but the god or gods of Terah, Nahor and Abraham worshipped while idolaters, and Laban still continued to do, though perhaps not in so gross a manner as some did:

and Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac; that is, by the true God his father Isaac feared, served, and worshipped: or "but Jacob"^{f1527}, etc. which seems plainly to suggest, that the God whom Laban called upon to be a judge between them, should they break covenant, and swore by, and he whom Jacob swore by, were different; each swore by their own deities.

Ver. 54. *Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount*, etc.] On Mount Gilead, not in a religious way, in which he could not join with Laban, or admit him to it; but in a civil way he "slew a slaughter"^{f1528}, or rather made one; that is, as Jarchi explains it, he slew cattle for a feast, as it was usual to make feasts for the several parties concerned in covenant, (see ¹⁰³³⁰Genesis 26:30):

and called his brethren, to eat bread; the, men that came with Laban, and him also, these he invited to his feast, for all sorts of food is called bread:

and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount; this affair between Laban and Jacob had took up the whole day, at evening they feasted together upon the covenant being made, and then tarried all night to take their rest.

Ver. 55. *And early in the morning Laban rose up*, etc.] In order to prepare for, and set forward on his journey home:

and kissed his sons and his daughters; Jacob and his sons, who were his grandsons, and his daughters Rachel and Leah, with Dinah his granddaughter, as was the custom of relations and friends in those countries and times, at parting:

and blessed them; wished all happiness to them:

and Laban departed, and returned unto his place; to the city of Haran, where he dwelt; and after this we hear no more of him, nor of any transaction of his in life, or when and where he died, only his name is once mentioned by Jacob, (^{OLD}Genesis 32:4).