

Pearl Seeking

TREASURING HIS WORD

Let's do a quick overview of the entire Torah portion:

Monday:	Gen. 28:10-22	Ya'aqob's dream at Beyth El and his promise to Yahweh
Tuesday:	Gen. 29	Ya'aqob meets Rahel; Laban deceives Ya'aqob; Wages and serving for Rahel; Le'ah has 4 sons
Wednesday:	Gen. 30	More wives, more sons and a daughter; Ya'aqob wants to leave with his family; Outwitting Laban and his games
Thursday:	Gen. 31:1-21	Ya'aqob takes his portion and family and leaves; Rahel steals the house idols from her father
Friday:	Gen. 31:22 - 32:2	Laban tries to get his family and his idols back; An agreement is made between Ya'aqob and Laban

In this edition of Pearl Seekers, we will observe the game play between Ya'aqob and his father-in-law Laban. The victor will be clear, because Yahweh fully supports Ya'aqob, and Laban realizes he needs to call a truce between them. Now, let's read Gen. 30:25-43 & Ch. 31.

PARSHA POINTS

- After Rahel gave birth to Yoseph, Ya'aqob went to Laban and told him that he wanted to go back to his homeland - 30:25
- He reminded Laban about his faithful service through the years, and that he now had the right to take his wives and children - 30:26
- Laban asked Ya'aqob to remain with him, for not only was Ya'aqob an invaluable worker, but he saw how he had prospered through Yahweh's blessing upon all that Ya'aqob did - 30:27
- When he realized that Ya'aqob intended to leave, Laban asked him what he owed him for his years of service - 30:28
- Ya'aqob reminded Laban that the increase in flocks was because of him, and although he needed to feed his large family, he didn't want to take anything that wasn't right - 30:29-31
- He proposed that Laban to allow him to separate and take the following as his wages (30:32):
 - all the spotted (**uteluim**) and speckled (**nequiddim**) sheep
 - all the black (**hum**) ones among the lambs
 - all the spotted and speckled among the goats



- He then declared that if any sheep or goat not having spots, speckles or black coat was found in his possession, it should be considered as stolen property - 30:33
- Laban agreed to the deal - 30:34
- Laban then had his sons separate the spotted and speckled animals, along with the black lambs, from his flock - 30:35
- Laban then put a 3 (**shalosh**) days' journey between his flock and Ya'aqob; but Ya'aqob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks - 30:35-36

The animals were accustomed to breeding near the water trough when they came to drink, so Ya'aqob took rods of green poplar and almonds and chestnut trees, then peeled them until white strips were showing. He placed the rods by the water trough, in sight of the animals - 30:37-38



- When Laban's plain-colored flocks conceived, they brought forth streaked (**aquddim**), speckled, and spotted animals - 30:39
- Yahweh blessed Ya'aqob's method of breeding, so that Laban ended up with a weaker flock and Ya'aqob ended up with the stronger ones - 30:39-42
- Ya'aqob continued to increase very much in all of the following (30:43):

- flocks
- male and female servants
- camels
- donkeys



- After this incident, Ya'aqob overheard Laban's jealous sons speaking unfavorably about him to their father, which caused Laban's demeanor to change toward Ya'aqob - 31:1-2
- Yahweh told Ya'aqob that it was time to take his entire family and return to his homeland. Yahweh reminded him that He was with him, just as He had spoken years earlier during Ya'aqob's dream of the ladder - 31:3
- Ya'aqob then called his 2 (**shtayim**) wives, Le'ah and Rahel, to meet him in the field away from the others. He explained that their father's demeanor toward him had changed, but assured them that Yahweh was with him - 31:4-5



- He continued to say that although Laban had changed his wages 10 (**eser**) times and had tried to do him evil, Elohim had been with him - 31:6-7
- Although Laban had tried to *outplay, outsmart and outwit* him, Yahweh had caused Ya'aqob to flourish - 31:8-12
- Ya'aqob told his wives that Yahweh had come to him in a dream, reminding him that He was the El whom Ya'aqob had spoken with years ago, when he had anointed the standing column and made a vow to Yahweh to return to his homeland if he prospered - 31:13
- Yahweh then instructed Ya'aqob that it was time for him to return to his relatives - 31:13
- Rahel and Le'ah supported Ya'aqob in his plan to move back to Kena'an, noting that their father had essentially sold them for marriage, and had already consumed their potential inheritance. They told Ya'aqob to do whatever Elohim instructed him to do - 31:14-16

- While Laban was away for many days shearing his sheep, Ya'aqob took the opportunity to gather up his family, his livestock and all his possession which he had acquired in Paddan Aram. He packed up and headed for Kena'an, where his father Yitshaq lived - 31:17-18
- Before they left, Rahel secretly went into her father's home without Ya'aqob's knowledge and stole his household idols - 31:19
- Without saying goodbye to his father-in-law, Ya'aqob fled with all his family and possessions, and headed toward the mountains of Gil'ad (Gilead) - 31:20-21
- Three days later, Laban was informed of Ya'aqob's departure. He took along his brothers and pursued him for 7 (sheva) days, until he overtook Ya'aqob in the mountains of Gil'ad - 31:22-23
- Laban had been warned by Yahweh in a dream not to speak any evil to Ya'aqob, nor to promise him any good - 31:24
- However, Laban did play the part of the innocent when he questioned Ya'aqob. Laban asked Ya'aqob (31: 26-30):
 - "Why did you take my daughters away like captives?"
 - "Why did you flee secretly and not inform me?"
 - "Why did you steal my mighty ones?"
- Laban told Ya'aqob (31:27-30):
 - "I would have sent you away with joy and songs, and lyre and tambourine"
 - "You did not allow me to kiss my family"
 - "You have been foolish to do this"
 - "It is in the power of my hand to do evil to you"
 - "Your Elohim did tell me not to speak to you either good or evil"
 - "I know you left because you long for your father's house"
- Ya'aqob then responded (31:31-32):
 - "I was afraid that you would take your daughters away from me"
 - "Whomever took your mighty ones you can kill"
- Unaware that his wife Rahel had taken the idols, Ya'aqob told Laban he could search the camp - 31:32
- Laban searched every tent, but when he came to his daughter Rahel's tent, he found her sitting on the camel's saddle, in which she had stashed them. Rahel explained that she was not able to rise up because of her condition - 31:34-35
- When Laban found none of his missing idols, Ya'aqob erupted with years of built-up anger, declaring that he was falsely accused. Ya'aqob pointed out that he himself had always treated Laban with the utmost respect, sometimes to his own detriment - 31:36-39



- As Ya'aqob rebuked Laban, he made the case for his innocence, using several examples in the presence of witnesses (31:38-41):
 - 20 (**esrim**) years I have been with you; 14 (**arba eser**) of those years I served for your 2 daughters, then 6 (**shesh**) more years I served for my flock. But you changed my wages 10 times (*Ya'aqob made it clear that he'd been taken advantage of, even though he always did the right thing*)
 - Your animals were very well taken care of by me (*He took great care so they would not miscarry*)
 - I never ate an animal I wasn't supposed to eat (*He didn't feed himself at the expense of what belonged to Laban*)
 - From my own herd I provided replacements to cover any loss of your flock (*It was an ancient custom that a shepherd could bring the torn carcass of a sheep to his owner, as evidence that he was brave enough to not let the wolf devour it or take it away, and thus the shepherd would be excused*)
 - During the day I experienced heat exhaustion, and at night I suffered frost and sleep deprivation (*He was always willing to sacrifice to promote Laban's success*)
- Ya'aqob was diligent to give honor to the One from whom he had received this protection and blessing—the Elohim of his father Abraham and the fear of Yitshaq, who was in him. He testified that if it had not been for Yahweh's favor, he would have been sent away empty-handed - 31:42
- Laban boldly proclaimed that everything belonged to him (his daughters, their children, and the flock). However, he generously acknowledged that he did not want to hurt them and make enemies of his own daughters - 31:43
- He then suggested that they 'bury the hatchet,' so to speak, and make a covenant between them before they departed from each other - 31:44
- Ya'aqob then took a stone and raised up a standing column; then he gathered stones in a heap to represent a border or boundary marker for the covenant - 31:45-46
- Laban named the standing column Yegar Sahadutha, in his native language, but Ya'aqob called it Gal'ed (meaning 'pile of witnesses') or Mitspah (meaning 'watch'), to signify that Yahweh would watch between them when they were out of each other's sight - 31:47-49
- The primary terms of the covenant were that Ya'aqob would treat Laban's daughter's well, and that he would take no other wives - 31:50
- Ya'aqob agreed to this - 31:53
- Ya'aqob and Laban then offered a sacrifice, ate bread between them and spent the night on the mountain - 31:54
- In the morning Laban kissed his family, blessed them and returned home, while Ya'aqob went on his way - 31:55



DIGGING DEEPER

Parents/Teachers may choose to use these prompts for further discussion of the Torah portion.

- What are some possible reasons that Rahel stole her father's household idols? Could it be that she didn't want her dad to use them to divine where they were? Did she herself worship them? Did she plan to destroy them?
- Although society back then was very male-dominated, notice that Ya'aqob consulted his wives before he made the decision to leave. What does this say about Ya'aqob as a husband and leader?
- Do you think Ya'aqob showed a lack of trust by waiting until Laban was far away before he packed up his family and left? Or was it more game play between them?
- Notice that the story of Laban and Ya'aqob is similar to that of Abraham and Lot. As both their households and flocks grew, so the conflict between them increased until they had to separate. What lesson can we learn from this? Is it important for us to separate from a toxic relationship?
- In this parsha, Yahweh spoke to one who is not covenanted. Can you recall other stories in the Scriptures where Yahweh did this?
- When Laban made the covenant between himself and Ya'aqob, do you think it was a sincere truce, or more of a statement that implied, "I've got my eye on you; watch your back?" What does the term 'mizpah' mean? Could it have been a warning to indicate, "If you break this agreement, I will kill you?"
- Why do you think Laban referred to Yahweh as the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Nahor and the Elohim of their father? Why do you think Ya'aqob swore his oath with reference to Yitshaq?

