

James F. Polk
313823
BLS 501XE
1-25-2013
Dr. Laney

Scripture Project Assignment #1
Context of Genesis 31:6-12

**“You know that I have served your father with all my strength.
Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times;
however, God did not allow him to hurt me.**

If he spoke thus,

‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled;

and if he spoke thus,

‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth striped.

Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me.

And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating *were* striped, speckled, and mottled.

Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.’ ”

Genesis 31:6-12 NASB (emphasis mine)

The text I have chosen is a narrative expression of the interpersonal justice issues surrounding Jacob's indentured servitude to his Father-in-Law Laban. The text is also a statement of God's basic agreement with Jacob's perspective on the situation. The text is also a theological God's-eye-view on the situation as expressed in the words of the Angel of the Lord. The words of the Angel of the Lord express to us a sense of God's unsearchable justice, mercy and grace and His unfathomable and unsearchable wisdom and insight into reconciliatory circumstances.

The feeling of the passage gives the clear message that Jacob is not happy with the deceitful actions of Laban and neither is God. Laban made Jacob work twice as long for his desired bride than he initially had promised. It is a funny thing to think about in our modern era of women's rights that it is not possible to make a fungible exchange of women. Of course no two people are of the exact same quality of combined traits, but women are not a commodity in our day and age to even be judged being the objects of a fungible exchange. The peculiar breeding techniques which precede this passage are Jacob's attempt to cause the animals to produce the striped, speckled and mottled animals which he and Laban have agreed will become his. Whether these methods had any effect or not is indeterminate. What is known is the fact that God does not judge Jacob as having sinned by attempted to cause the livestock to produce only speckled, mottled and striped young.

God's favorable judgment upon Jacob in this situation is held in between the lines of the statement made by the Angel of the Lord, "see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you." Implicit in this statement is that because of the way God is and the way God made His world, the only breeding males are the striped, speckled and mottled goats and this is because of the

mistreatment you have received from Laban and it is right and the results are your due repayment. In legal terminology, the resulting striped, speckled and mottled goats are Jacobs's rightful damages for lost time and wages, for breach of contract; however you want to look at it, for the damage caused to Jacob by Laban's actions.

Following this passage are several passages about the continued conflict between Laban and Jacob, which ultimately ends in a peaceful agreement. I can't help think that God allows Laban to treat Jacob this way because of his own past deceitful dealings with his brother Esau. Even though God in his omniscient foreknowledge and predestination said that the older brother would serve the younger and gave His blessing to Jacob to be the father of His chosen people, God allowed the deceit to be punished in the sense that Jacob though repaid in livestock still had to labor for longer than initially agreed upon for his desired wife. To add weight to this thought is the fact that this interlude of conflict with Laban is sandwiched by two episodes between Jacob and his brother Esau.

If this passage were not in the scripture, I think that there would be less of a narrative sense of God's justice and grace. God's justice is manifest by Jacob being tricked after having tricked his brother Esau. God's justice is manifest by Laban being bereft of his livestock after having tricked Jacob. God's justice is manifest along with His grace by the reconciliation which takes place at the river Jabbok. Though tricked, Esau loved his brother and God blessed Esau by softening his heart and enabling him to forgive Jacob. It would seem cosmically wrong if God having foreordained Jacob to be the father of the nation of Israel had allowed Esau to take vengeance upon his brother. Jacob had to sweet out several situations and tough out several different situations. Jacob wrestled with God in his body and in his conscience, having almost undoubtedly been convicted of his own deceitfulness towards his brother and also feeling the

sting of being on the deceived end of a similar scenario with his father-in-law Laban. Jacob earned and deserves his name Israel, “for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.”

**James F. Polk
313823
BLS 501XE
2-5-2013
Dr. Laney**

Scripture Project Assignment #2
Outline of Genesis 31:6-12

6“You know that I have served your father with all my strength.

7“Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow
him to hurt me.

8“If he spoke thus, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled;
and if he spoke thus, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth
striped.

9“Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me.

10“And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in
a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating *were* striped, speckled, and
mottled.

11“Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’

12“He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped,
speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

Genesis 31:6-12 NASBⁱ

I. Jacob speaks to both wives about his unfavorable position with Laban (31:6-7).

-Jacob argues that it is Laban to blame and not himself for the situation now at handⁱⁱ.

-The Hebrew word TEV here translated into English as “You” from verse 6 is a plural you and is emphatic in the Hebrew sentence structureⁱⁱⁱ.

II. Outcome of wage agreements based on breeding results of flocks (31:8).

-No matter which way Laban attempted to tip the scales in his favor, the results of the breeding went in the favor of Jacob^{iv}.

III. Jacob’s view that the outcome was God’s doing (31:9).

-Jacob can be seen as either a fraud by not explaining to his wives what he did in an attempt to cause the results of the breeding to end up in his favor and by simply giving credit to God for bringing about the results or Jacob can be seen as piously giving God the credit for the results^v.

IV. Jacob’s dream about the mating striped, speckled and mottled flock (31:10).

-some think that this verse is an indication that the previously mentioned method of breeding from Gen. 30 which involved placing the white rods of the peeled tree branches in the gutters while the desired flock type was drinking was revealed to Jacob by God^{vi}.

V. The Angel of God confirms breeding results God’s judgment on Laban (31:11-12).

-Though Jacob made an attempt to manipulate the outcome of the breeding results in his favor as chronicled in Gen 30, it was not Jacob’s attempt at controlling the results but God’s blessing upon Jacob for Laban’s treatment of Jacob which caused the results^{vii}.

Bibliographic Endnotes

ⁱ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (Ge 31:6–12). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

ⁱⁱ Mathews, K. A. (2005). *Vol. 1B: Genesis 11:27–50:26*. The New American Commentary (511). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Reyburn, W. D., & Fry, E. M. (1998). *A handbook on Genesis*. UBS Handbook Series (709). New York: United Bible Societies.

^{iv} *Genesis*. 1909 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.). The Pulpit Commentary (374). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

^v *IBID* (374–375)

^{vi} Mathews, K. A. (2005). *Vol. 1B: Genesis 11:27–50:26*. The New American Commentary (509). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^{vii} Strassner, K. (2009). *Opening up Genesis*. Opening Up Commentary (121–122). Leominster: Day One Publications.

James F. Polk

313823

BLS 501XE

2-5-2013

Dr. Laney

Scripture Project Assignment #3

Expositional Summary 31:6-12

6“You know that I have served your father with all my strength.

7“Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow
him to hurt me.

8“If he spoke thus, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled;
and if he spoke thus, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth
striped.

9“Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me.

10“And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in
a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating *were* striped, speckled, and
mottled.

11“Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’

12“He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped,
speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.

Genesis 31:6-12 NASBⁱ

This passage of scripture shows us a sublime paradoxical truth. We see here incarnate as an object lesson for the ages the truth that God is sovereign and that men are responsible for their actions. We see that God causes to come to fruition His will for the world. We see that God has created the world with a moral center and that He does not allow injustice to continue perpetually. We see here the simultaneous blessing and judgment upon God's people in God's perfect and righteous providence, sovereignty, grace, mercy and judgment.

Jacob is making a case to his wives about the injustice which their father has continually done to him. Jacob feels that he has been cheated by Laban their father, and Jacob feels that God has vindicated him after a long series of years. Jacob knows that Laban is not happy with him because all of the flocks which were once Laban's are now Jacob's. Jacob used some rather interesting techniques of placing the white rods of peeled tree branches in the gutters while the flocks he wanted to breed were drinking. Some people think that this was a technique which was revealed by God to Jacob. Other people think that this was just some type of common right or wrong understanding about breeding techniques. Either way, the Angel of God came to Jacob in a dream and validates Jacob's view that Laban had been unjust towards Jacob.

The results are what are being confirmed in this story. Not the techniques per se. It is logically inconclusive as to whether the resultant striped, speckled and mottled flocks were supernaturally caused to be born as such by God, or whether the breeding techniques which Jacob used caused the result. The fact remains that the Angel of God said to Jacob, "Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you." Gen. 31:12. Implicit in this statement is that God has passed judgment on the unjust behavior of Laban. Whether God caused the result or whether He is affirming Jacob's position and allowing the results to occur naturally due to the

breeding techniques without stepping in and causing the breeding to go Laban's way will remain unknown.

What we do know is that this is an example of God's moral center to the universe. He does not allow this injustice to go on perpetually. To me it shows that God's will is sovereign. Jacob's testimony affirms this when he says to his wives in Gen. 31:8-9, "If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be your wages' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth striped. Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me." The ownership of the newborn flocks was determined by an agreement of men. Laban was attempting again to cheat his Jacob because the odds of the majority of the flock being at once striped, or at once speckled, or at once mottled is very small. God used the agreements of men which were sort of like weighted dice in the favor of Laban against Laban and in favor of Jacob because He is a good and just God and does not allow injustice to last forever and makes right the unjust situations of men.

This segment of the Patristic history shows God's blessing and judgment on His people. Jacob cheated his brother Esau, and it was because of God's sovereign choice of Jacob the younger to be the son through whom the blessing flowed to the nation of Israel and to the world. God still in my view used Jacob's long work ordeal with Laban as a judgment of sorts against Jacob's former deceitfulness in tricking his brother out of his birthright and in tricking his father Isaac into giving him the blessing instead of his beloved oldest son Esau. God allows Jacob to be ensnared by Laban if you will, but only for a time. God in His sovereign will uses one person to be judgment against another, but also does not allow the one used as judgment to escape judgment themselves. It is a sublime paradoxical way of looking at God's sovereignty and our simultaneous responsibility for our actions and culpability for judgment on our actions. God is

sovereign and men are responsible still for the choices they make. God blesses those who wait on Him and rely on Him.

ⁱ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (Ge 31:6–12). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

James F. Polk
313823
BLS 501XE
3-13-2013
Dr. Laney

Scripture Project Assignment #4
Theology of Genesis 31:6-12

**“You know that I have served your father with all my strength.
Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times;
however, God did not allow him to hurt me.**

If he spoke thus,

‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled;

and if he spoke thus,

‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth striped.

Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me.

And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating *were* striped, speckled, and mottled.

Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.’ ”

Genesis 31:6-12 NASB (emphasis mine)

To me, the text of Genesis 31:6-12 contributes to the understanding of God's sovereignty. No matter what Laban was attempting to do to not pay his son in law his due, God made things work out in the way that was least likely to happen, and which would benefit Jacob. The text also contributes to the sense of God's moral centeredness. God is a God of justice and not injustice. Jacob fooled Esau and he later was duped into working twice as long as he had planned for his beloved wife Rachel because Laban had given him his daughter Leah without his knowing. To an unmarried man, Jacob seems like a whiner, but that's just a personal side note.

God's sovereignty is demonstrated by the text because the earlier text of Genesis 30 shows Jacob using a questionable breeding method of peeling fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees and placing them in the drinking troughs where the flocks were going to mate. This was supposed to cause the result which did occur, the production of speckled flocks. There is no real scientific evidence of this being an actually effective breeding method. The end of our text, **'Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.'** Genesis 31:12 shows that the outcome was due to God's sovereign control over life situations and His righteous judgment over unjust relationships.

This leads us right into my second theological contribution of the text. God's moral centeredness. God did not allow Jacob to go on indefinitely as an indentured servant. He brought an end to the imbalanced situation. I also see the period of indenturedness as a sort of righteous judgment on Jacob's deceitful dealings with his brother Esau. Even though God is sovereign and said, "Jacob I have love and Esau I

have hated”, God still as the morally centered creator of all of existence has to hold people responsible even for actions which bring about His sovereign will. I choose to take a position on these issues which I cannot fully wrap my mind around, because the God of my understanding is a God whom I can never fully understand.

Where does Jesus fit into this text? Not nowhere, but this isn't an especially predictive text in the Hebrew Scriptures. I suppose that the analogy of the Church being the Bride of Christ and Christ being willing to die for His Bride is the analogy which can be made. Jacob, though tricked was willing to keep working for his beloved Rachel. I can't really make any predictive connection between the flocks and Jesus' separation of the sheep and the goats, just in general our being in Christ's flock.

James F. Polk
313823
BLS 501XE
3-29-2013
Dr. Laney

Scripture Project Assignment #5
Principles and Applications of Genesis 31:6-12

**“You know that I have served your father with all my strength.
Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times;
however, God did not allow him to hurt me.**

If he spoke thus,

‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled;

and if he spoke thus,

‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth striped.

Thus God has taken away your father’s livestock and given *them* to me.

And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating *were* striped, speckled, and mottled.

Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ He said, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see *that* all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you.’ ”

Genesis 31:6-12 NASB (emphasis mine)

As I have discussed in the 4 earlier sections of my Scripture Project on Genesis 31:6-12, this passage is about God's Character, His Sovereignty and His just moral centeredness. God's Character is manifest in how His creation functions. We are His creation, and on a large scale and a small scale we see how He sort of balances out life equations if you will. The principle and application which I take from this passage of God making Jacob's situation with Laban work out in a just manner is that no matter what a person is going through, we can rely that God is always at work to bring about His will. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ¹" (2 Corinthians 5:19). In the end His will is a just recompense for evil and grace to undeserving sinners.

The heroes of the bible are not "saints" many times. Jacob stole the birthright and the blessing from his brother Esau. Jacob had a very guilty conscience and I think that his wrestling with the Angel of the Lord at the river Jabbok is a sign of this guilty conscience. I think also that in a way, his being tricked by Laban is God's justice on Jacob's earlier trickery. It is also God's blessing because for God's reasons alone, God loved Jacob and hated Esau. Therefore He blessed Jacob, though He had to punish him in a temporal sense. Maybe God would have blessed Jacob in a different way had he not stolen the birthright and the blessing from his brother.

We are all humans living in a fallen and sinful world. We do not deserve God's blessing in any contractual sense. We have never lived up to God's standard and we never will. God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham to make his seed a blessing to all nations. This is a donative gift promise to use contract language from our modern common law. It is sort of a ridiculously exaggerated analogy, but just like a donative gift promise cannot be enforced most

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. 1995 (2 Co 5:19). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

of the time, we as humans can never force God to bless us. He blesses us because of who He is and not who we are, therefore we can rely on God's promises. We can rely on the fact that He has promised to draw near to us if we draw near to Him.