

The Battle of the Spotted Goats

Genesis 30.25-43

Humans are nothing if not gullible. God is nothing if not faithful to His promises. Put those two things together, and you discover why God blesses us, in spite of our own foolishness. Jacob exhibits this in Genesis 30 (and 31). It's a lesson we should never forget.

A quick look back...

- Jacob tricks Esau, gets the blessing, and flees for his life.
- God promises to bless Jacob in his 'ladder to heaven' dream.
- Laban tricks Jacob, who gets two wives and has 12 children.

Jacob wants to go...but Laban keeps him around (30.25-34)

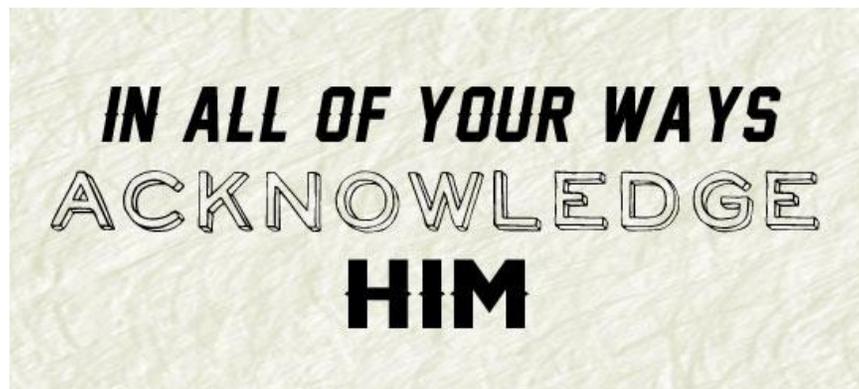
- Jacob has put in 14 years, and wants to leave for Canaan.
- Laban became rich at Jacob's expense and wants him to stay.
- Jacob proposes a plan to provide for his growing family.

Laban and Jacob scheme, but God fulfills His promise (30.35-43)

- Laban schemes to get richer, and leave Jacob poor.
- Jacob schemes in return to get richer at Laban's expense.
- God acts behind-the-scenes to fulfill His promise. (31.10-13)

A Lesson for the Christian Life

Material success, like all blessings, are ultimately from the Lord.



1. Throughout the patriarchal narrative of Genesis, we encounter one 'loser' after another. None has come out unscarred by sin: Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and now Jacob all are shown to have 'feet of clay.' But for sheer self-serving audacity, none is worse than Laban. How would you describe this man? Think about the way he treated his daughters, and his new son-in-law. You'd think a father would want the best for his daughters, but what does Laban show in Genesis 30.25-36 (what one thing is more important to him than anything else)? How is his sneaky move in vv.35-36 designed to achieve his goal?
2. In Gen. 30.31-33, Jacob seems to be putting his conniving ways behind him, playing it straight with Laban, and trusting God to provide for him. Woops! Then comes vv.37-42...and Jacob is up to his old shenanigans. What was his end goal? How did he plan to reach it? What's the deal with the 'peeled rods'? What is Jacob putting his 'faith' in here?
3. While God is not happy with Jacob for his effort to succeed by using a superstitious practice, He still causes what Jacob wants to happen: His flocks become very large, and he is exceedingly prosperous (v43). Why did God do this? Can you think of any other times God blessed the patriarchs *in spite of* their faithless actions? Read Gen. 31.10-13. What does God want Jacob to recognize? What does God want us to recognize in our lives?
4. All these narratives in the book of Genesis formed the basis for the instruction of the nation of Israel throughout Old Testament times, and beyond this they were the 'Bible' for New Testament authors, and continue to be instructive for Christians today (see 1 Cor. 10.11). What does God want to teach us about Himself in this story? Do you see any evidence of God's grace? Read Matthew 6.24-33. How do Jesus' words here reflect the lesson God was teaching Jacob in Genesis 30-31? How can you apply this lesson in your life?