





Secret Flight – Genesis 31

GENESIS 31:1-3

In this chapter we see the tension rising between Jacob and Laban's family due to Jacob's increasing wealth and Laban's sons' jealousy. Laban's sons are jealous of Jacob because he has become wealthy while working for their father. They mistakenly believe that Jacob has taken what rightfully belongs to their family. Laban, too, has changed his attitude toward Jacob, not treating him with the same kindness as before. This situation shows us two things clearly:

First, it highlights how God looks out for Jacob. Despite the increasing hostility from Laban and his sons, God has a plan to protect Jacob and guide him back to his homeland safely. This part of the story teaches us about God's care and guidance, ensuring Jacob's well-being amidst difficult family dynamics.

Second, the story reflects human nature, specifically how jealousy can affect relationships. We saw Rachel struggle with jealousy in the previous chapter over not being able to have children. Now, Laban's sons show jealousy towards Jacob's success. This repeating theme of jealousy reminds

us to be mindful of our feelings and the impact they can have on our relationships.

Nobody wins in the game of greed and comparison, not the person we're jealous of, and certainly not ourselves. Therefore, it's important to destroy negative thoughts before they take root.

In Genesis chapter four we read about Cain. He was so jealous of Abel that his anger consumed him, and led him to kill. But notice verse 7: "Sin is crouching at your door," God said to Cain, "It desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

The Hebrew word for crouching there is "rabats." It is a primitive root word, meaning to crouch on all four legs folded, like a recumbent animal. (Strong's H7257). This imagery is consistent with the nature of sin being ever-present and ready to pounce, akin to a predator like a lion. This analogy carries through to the New Testament, where Satan is described as a prowling lion looking for someone to devour: Be alert and



of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8, NIV)

We're playing with fire if we're toying with sin, and so it's important to "rule over it" as God said in that verse. Rule over it, or it will rule over you. How do we do that? If you struggle with feelings of envy and jealousy, consider adapting the following steps. By practicing them, you can begin to loosen the grip of envy and jealousy on your mind and heart:

8 Steps to Overcoming Envy and Jealousy

1. **Recognize and Acknowledge:** Be honest about feelings of envy or jealousy. Acknowledge them as soon as they surface in your thoughts.
2. **Seek God's Help:** Pray for the strength to overcome these thoughts. Ask God to transform your heart and to fill it with gratitude for what you have.
3. **Meditate on Scripture:** Focus on Bible verses that encourage contentment and love, such as Hebrews 13:5, which reminds us to be content with what we have, and 1 Corinthians 13:4, which states that love does not envy.
4. **Stay Accountable:** Confide in a trusted friend or a spiritual leader about your struggles with envy and jealousy. This can help provide perspective and encouragement.
5. **Avoid Comparison Triggers:** If certain situations or social media platforms lead to feelings of jealousy, limit your exposure to them.
6. **Practice Gratitude:** Actively count your blessings and thank God for what you have. Keeping a gratitude journal can help shift your focus from what you lack to what you possess.
7. **Serve Others:** By serving those in need, you can cultivate empathy and reduce the focus on your own desires.
8. **Cultivate Love and Kindness:** Actively wish well for those you feel envious of. This could be through prayer, kind gestures, or positive affirmations about their success.

Looking at the list of steps above, list the ones that you think you should practice more often.

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Do you remember a time when you were jealous of something that someone else had? If so, did you let it consume you or did you rule over it?

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GENESIS 31:4-13

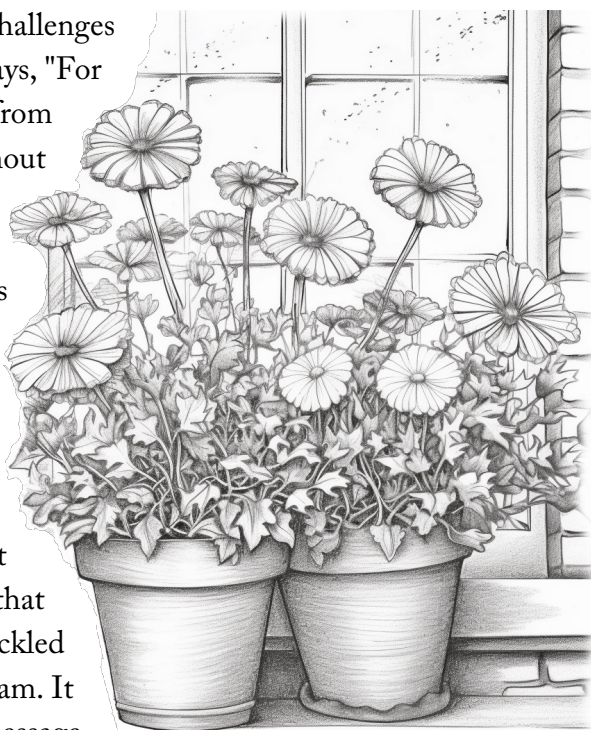
Notice what Jacob says in verses 8-9, "If he said, 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then the entire flock gave birth to speckled [young]; and if he said, 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then the entire flock gave birth to streaked [young]. Thus, God has taken away the flocks of your father and given them to me." (NIV)

This verse is a reminder to us that God's purpose and His promises are sovereign and will be fulfilled, even if the means by which they come about are unexpected or if there are challenges along the way. Isaiah 55:10-11 says, "For just as rain and snow fall from heaven and do not return without watering the earth, making it bud and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

Genesis 31:10 tells us what chapter 30 didn't—which is that this idea of breeding the speckled cattle was given to Jacob in a dream. It would seem, however, that the message

in Genesis 31:11-12 was given at a later time. God had given Jacob a promise and now it was time for Jacob to act on that promise.

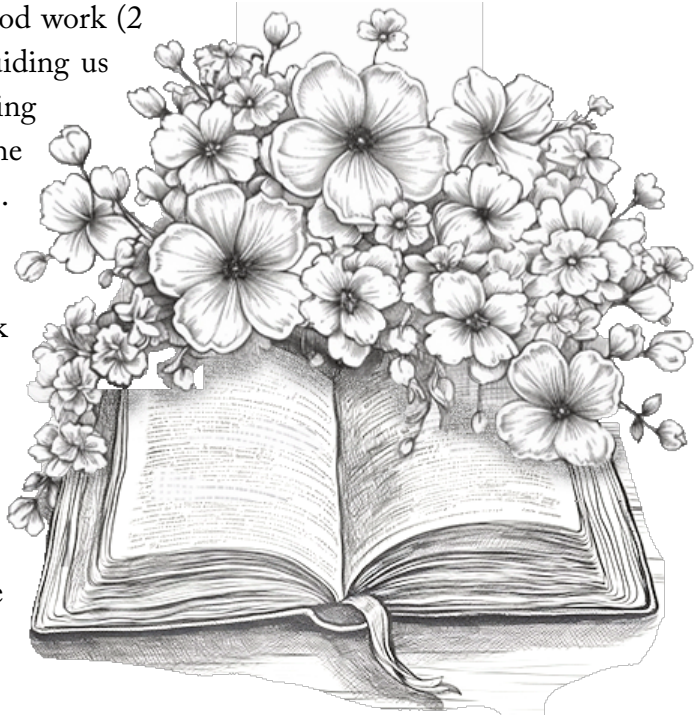
When God reveals a plan or promise, as He did with Jacob, it's not the end of the story. It's an invitation to partner with Him—an opportunity to put our faith into action. James 2:17 reminds us that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." As believers, we are co-laborers with Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9), called to actively engage with the faith we profess. In doing so, we affirm the trustworthiness of God and His Word.



I call this a living faith. Just as God's word is living and active (Hebrews 4:12), so too should our response be. God's promises are true and faithful. As recipients of these promises, it's our responsibility to respond with obedience and action. Jacob is a great example of this as he doesn't merely listen to God, he responds to Him.

Even today, there is skepticism surrounding Jacob's breeding techniques. Some would say it's based on superstition rather than an understanding of genetics. Others say, the story encourages belief in outdated ideas. If they are saying that today, I wonder what they said back then. In much the same way, our faith will be challenged. Some might say our faith is based on superstition rather than an understanding of science, while others may say that we're encouraged to believe in an outdated book. But just as Jacob's actions were a necessary step towards the fulfillment of God's word in his life, our response to God's word should be one of faith in action. We're invited to engage with the Scriptures, not as an ancient text detached from our present reality, but as a living guide that calls us to active participation in God's ongoing story. Our faithfulness today is the bridge to the promises and plans He has for us, just as it was for Jacob. His word equips us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17), guiding us in truth and prompting us to move towards the promises He has for us.

After pulling his wives aside to discuss their future, Jacob took action. Gathering his property, his family, and his cattle together, he embarked on a journey back to the land of Canaan.



Are there any specific ways that God has recently called you to actively engage with the faith you profess?

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What does Genesis 31:8-9 teach you about God's hand being present even in challenging situations?

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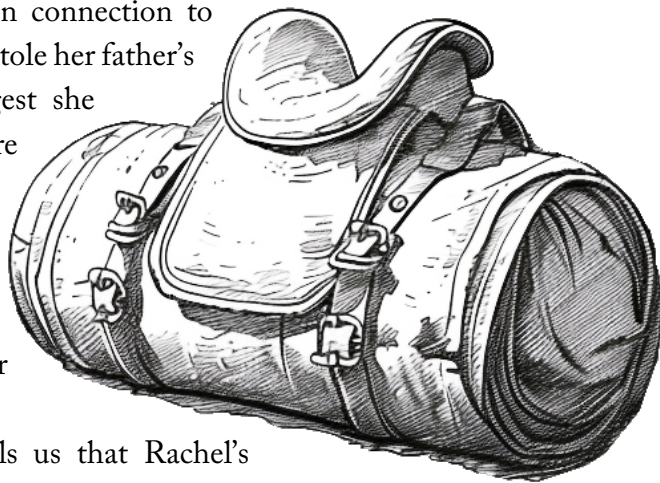
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GENESIS 31:14-35

There are varying opinions in connection to this chapter as to why Rachel stole her father's idols (teraphim). Some suggest she may have taken them to secure a family inheritance, others say that perhaps she believed they would provide guidance or protection as she and Jacob embarked on their journey.



A closer look at this tells us that Rachel's actions highlight a struggle common to many believers—clinging to our old, familiar ways as we step into a new life of faith. These household gods were commonplace in her culture, and her attachment to them suggests a lingering connection to her past. Taking the idols represents the inner conflict we all face when confronted with change, especially the transformative change of embracing our faith. Holding onto these idols is indicative of a heart divided between the allure of the world and the call of the spiritual.

Rachel's actions invite us to consider any personal "idols" we might be holding onto. It's a reminder to examine our hearts and to ask ourselves if any attachments we have conflict with our faith. Have we truly let go of the past? Are we set on the spiritual path marked before us?

As we grow in faith, we're challenged to let go of worldly attachments and embrace a life shaped by God's will.

Hebrews 12:1 encourages us in this process: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." "The race," in this case, was a journey to Canaan, which symbolized a return to a place of covenant and promise. Canaan was the land God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it was a place of inheritance and blessing. For Rachel, physically

moving towards Canaan meant leaving behind her father's household and the associated pagan practices, exemplified by the household idols.

In a broader sense, Canaan can represent the journey of faith each believer undertakes: leaving behind old ways and moving towards the fullness of life that God has promised. Just as Canaan was the land flowing with milk and honey, the spiritual journey is one toward a life enriched by God's presence and sustained by His promises.

The symbolism deepens the impact of Hebrews 12:1. To "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" means to steadfastly follow the path God has set, looking ahead to the spiritual "Canaan" — our inheritance in Christ. It's about moving from the old life to the new, a journey that is both physical and spiritual. It involves a process of transformation and a call to live out the faith we profess, not just in moments of decision but throughout our lives.

❓ Is there anything in your past that you're still holding onto when you know that you shouldn't?

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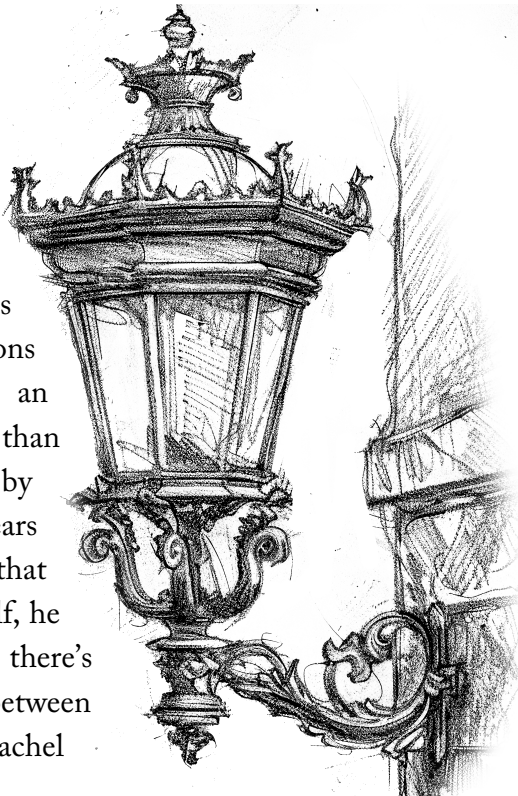
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GENESIS 31:36-43

In Genesis 31:36, Jacob has a heated conversation with Laban. He's been accused of theft, and in his own defense, Jacob details the history of his service to Laban, emphasizing his integrity. Obviously, Jacob's accusations against Laban are true. Jacob was an honest man who gave more to Laban than he got in return. He was deceived by him and treated unfairly for the 20 years he was there. If it wasn't for the fact that God was intervening on Jacob's behalf, he would have left with nothing. But there's another part to this heated exchange between the two men: Jacob has no idea that Rachel has stolen her father's idols.



As I got to thinking about that today, I wondered how often I've formed an opinion or spoken out without realizing that there was more to the story than what I was given. In 1 Corinthians 13:12 Paul uses a metaphor to describe our limited ability to understand and see things completely. He writes, "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." (NIV)

Jacob's interaction with Laban is a reminder to challenge our assumptions and prayerfully consider our reactions. Our vision is limited this side of eternity, and so it's important to humbly practice patience and think before we speak, especially when emotions are running high.

Another lesson we find in this chapter is the virtue of humility, especially when facing our fears. When confronted by Laban about his secret departure, Jacob openly admits his fear. His humility is a stark contrast to Laban's pride when he asserts his ability to harm Jacob, if not for the fact that God spoke to him. Additionally, the claim that he would have sent Jacob's family off with a grand celebration, seems highly unlikely given his character. His "would have" and "could have" are nothing but a poor attempt to portray himself in a more generous light than his past behavior would support. Integrity and trustworthiness must align with our words if they are to mean anything.

Finally, the protection that surrounded Jacob along with Laban's inability to harm him testifies to God's providential care and power.

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.
—Romans 8:31-33, NIV

❓ What can the events of this chapter teach us about our assumptions and the way we approach others?

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❓ Laban’s pursuit of Jacob is a reminder that our past will pursue us at times. In light of that, what does Proverbs 10:9 teach us about the eventual exposure of our actions?

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GENESIS 31:44-55

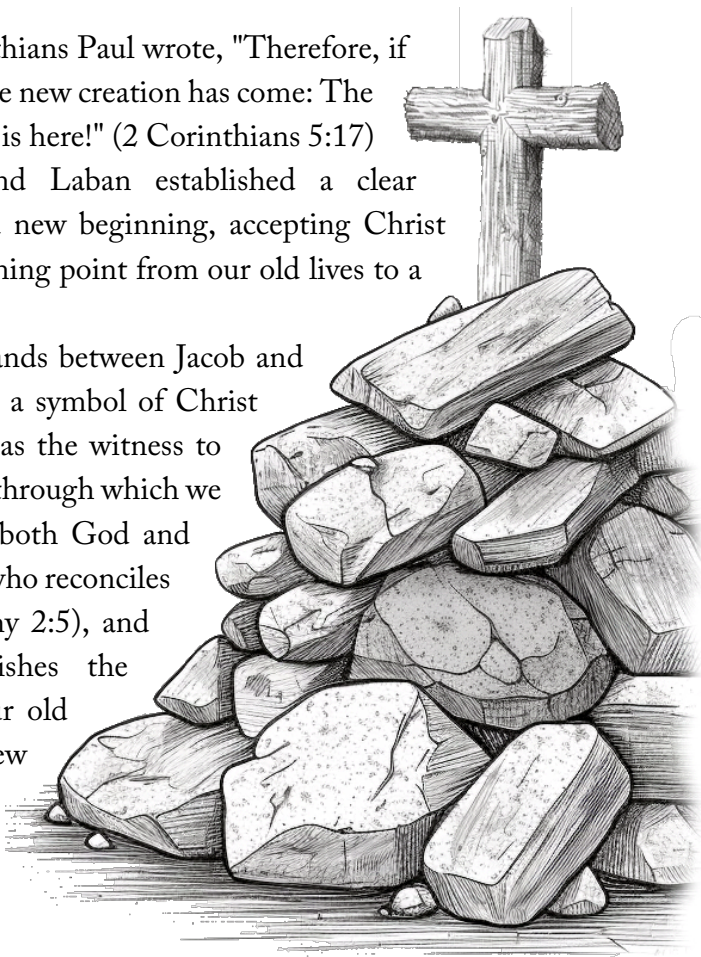
As we read through the account of Jacob and Laban's covenant, we see a reflection of the transformative journey from an old life of sin to a new life in Christ. The boundary they establish echoes the clear separation that occurs when we step into a new life transformed by faith in Jesus. Just as Jacob and Laban agreed to respect the boundary and part ways, so are we called to leave behind our old sinful ways and embrace our new identity in Christ.

Paul illustrates this spiritual transition in Romans 6:4: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

And to the Corinthians Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Just as Jacob and Laban established a clear boundary to signify a new beginning, accepting Christ marks a definitive turning point from our old lives to a new one.

The pillar that stands between Jacob and Laban can be seen as a symbol of Christ Himself, who stands as the witness to the covenant of grace through which we are saved. Christ, as both God and man, is the mediator who reconciles us to God (1 Timothy 2:5), and His sacrifice establishes the boundary between our old life of sin and our new life under grace.



❓ What do you think Paul meant when he said we are “buried with Him through baptism?”

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❓ What does this statement, “May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other,” say about God, and how might it motivate a believer to walk with integrity?

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IF YOU LOVE ANYTHING BETTER THAN GOD YOU ARE
IDOLATERS: IF THERE IS ANYTHING YOU WOULD NOT GIVE
UP FOR GOD IT IS YOUR IDOL: IF THERE IS ANYTHING THAT
YOU SEEK WITH GREATER FERVOR THAN YOU SEEK THE
GLORY OF GOD, THAT IS YOUR IDOL, AND CONVERSION
MEANS A TURNING FROM EVERY IDOL.

- CHARLES SPURGEON



Answer Key

Chapter 7 – Genesis 31

GENESIS 31:1-3

Looking at the list of steps above, list the ones that you think you should practice more often.

(This answer will be different for everyone)

Do you remember a time when you were jealous of something that someone else had? If so, did you let it consume you or did you rule over it?

(This answer will be different for everyone)

GENESIS 31:4-13

Are there any specific ways that God has recently called you to actively engage with the faith you profess?

(This answer will be different for everyone)

What does Genesis 31:8-9 teach you about God's hand being present even in challenging situations?

That God exercises control over every situation, no matter how unfair or challenging it may seem. His sovereignty ensures that His plans for His people will succeed despite human interference.

GENESIS 31:14-35

Is there anything in your past that you're still holding onto when you know that you shouldn't?

(This answer will be different for everyone)

Is there any sin that you haven't confessed and addressed? Maybe something you're excusing as "not that bad," or pushing aside to deal with another day.

(This answer will be different for everyone)

GENESIS 31:36-43

What can the events of this chapter teach us about our assumptions and the way we approach others?

This situation shows that jumping to conclusions can lead to false accusations and strain relationships. It reminds us that even when we think we are right, we might not be.

Laban's pursuit of Jacob is a reminder that our past will pursue us at times. In light of that, what does Proverbs 10:9 teach us about the eventual exposure of our actions?

This verse teaches us that living a life of integrity as Jacob did not only provides security and peace but also protects us from the turmoil of being exposed for wrongdoing. This wisdom encourages us to maintain honesty and upright conduct, knowing that our actions, whether good or bad, will ultimately come to light.

GENESIS 31:44-55

What do you think Paul meant when he said we are "buried with Him through baptism?"

Baptism represents the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. By being baptized, Christians symbolically die to their old sinful selves and are raised to a new life of righteousness in Christ.

What does this statement, “May the Lord keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other,” say about God, and how might it motivate a believer to walk with integrity?

This expression reflects the belief that God is always observing us, even when no other human can. For a believer, this awareness that God is constantly overseeing our actions can motivate a walk of integrity, inspiring us to act righteously not just in public but in private as well.
