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The Family of Abraham: Part 21—The Flight from Laban and the Stolen Teraphim

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I discuss Genesis 31, as God appears to Jacob, Jacob flees from the house of Laban, Rachel takes Laban's teraphim, and Laban and Jacob make a covenant.

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Transcript

Welcome back to this, the 21st in my series on the story of the family of Abraham. We've arrived at chapter 31 of the book of Genesis, where God appears to Jacob in a dream. Jacob flees the house of Laban, where Laban pursues him, overtakes him, and then they make a covenant together.

This is a difficult passage in many ways, although it may not immediately appear to be so. Unlike the previous chapter, this is a chapter that doesn't seem to have immediate problems on the surface. The incident with the teraphim is a bit odd, but beyond that, it seems to be fairly straightforward what's going on.

It's just a blow-by-blow account of these things that happened, and doesn't seem to require an awful lot of explanation. But the closer that we look, the more we should see that there are details here that are perplexing, surprising, and arresting. And as we look at these details, I think we might get a better sense of what's taking place here, and be left with maybe more questions than we have answers.

But hopefully, as we wrestle with these questions, we'll come to a deeper understanding of what is taking place here. First of all, we've seen that Jacob grows within the house of Laban. His family grows, his flocks grow, and gradually he dispossesses Laban, taking over his flocks through his wages.

Laban had tried to cheat him, and now he outwits Laban. And this story is one in which God is working throughout. God is the one who hears the prayers of the wives in chapter 30.

God is also the one who intervenes on Jacob's account against his unfaithful and duplicitous father-in-law. The story here really takes up with God appearing to Jacob in a dream, and telling him that he should return to the land of his fathers and to his kindred. Jacob sees that Laban is not favourably disposed to him.

Laban was never particularly favourably disposed to him, except when he first arrived, when Laban presumably thought that he would be coming with great gifts, that great gifts would follow him. But that was not to be. And as a result, Laban reduces him to a state of servitude.

And now it seems that Laban, recognising he no longer even has the upper hand with his servant, is starting to get angry. And his sons are really turning against Jacob. And there is an ugliness in the atmosphere.

Jacob sees that the countenance of Laban is not favourable to him as it was before. It's not to him as it was before. It wasn't ever really favourable.

But now it's very ugly. Laban really dislikes him at this point. And so he goes and he calls Rachel and Leah in the field, his flock.

It could be referring to his flock in a way that speaking of Rachel and Leah as his flock. He says to them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not favourable to me as before. But the God of my father has been with me.

And he talks about his experience of serving with Laban and the way that Laban had at each point tried to trick him. But God had intervened. God had acted, even though there had been a change of wages ten times over.

God had acted and had taken away the livestock of the father of Rachel and Leah and given them to their husband. And he had this dream in which, as he saw the flocks, the

rams which leaped upon the flocks were streaked, speckled and grey spotted. And the angel of God speaks to him in a dream saying, and he responds, here I am.

And God tells him to look up and see that God has acted on his behalf. God has heard his plight. And this story at this point is already starting to sound familiar.

We've heard this story before, the story of the person reduced to a state of servitude. The posture of the ruler having changed towards the people under his charge and reducing them to a lower state of service. We've seen also the way that God appears and recognises the distress that his people are in and intervenes on their behalf.

And the way that he blesses them, even though the rulers are seeking to reduce them further. God causes his people to multiply in the land of Laban and Haran. And he does the same thing in the land of Egypt.

The same story is played out in a different way. We once again see Israel struggling in a sort of captivity and servitude. God blessing them and raising them up, causing them to be, making them grow and become a source of fear and concern for the ruling group.

This is what we see in the story of Laban. And the echoes don't end there. As we read through the story at each point, we'll see the Exodus narrative in the background.

We've seen the story of Exodus where God appears to Moses in the burning bush. And in that story, it's a very similar thing. Moses, here I am.

And here we have Jacob. Here I am. It's a very similar sort of introduction.

God has heard the plight of his people. God tells them to return. And this is what Jacob is told.

And then he leaves. Rachel and Leah answer and say to him, Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us and also completely consumed our money. For all these riches which God has taken from our father are really ours and our children's.

Now then, whatever God has said to you, do it. Reading this, what is going on? Well, Jacob had originally worked for seven years for the hand of Rachel and then had to work another seven years for the hand of Leah after he had received Leah. This was supposed to be a bride price that would be held in trust, in security by Laban for his daughters.

But what Laban does is he just consumes that money. He treats them as if he's sold them to Jacob rather than giving them as his daughters and blessing them and giving them the full property that was due to them. What he did was just used the money that Jacob gave for them as his own possession, not as something that was held in trust for

his daughters.

And so he treats them as servants. He treats them, disowns them, doesn't really acknowledge them as his daughters. And God's justice in this situation is seen in giving to Jacob what was rightfully the possession of Rachel and Leah, but their father had denied and stolen from them.

And Jacob arises, sets his sons and his wives on camels and carried away all his livestock and possessions, which he had gained to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. And this happens at the time of sheep shearing. Again, pay attention to these small little details.

There are great things that are revealed in the connections between these details. Let's give a few examples. Where else do we find sheep shearing in scripture? There are a few other occasions.

One of them is the story of Judah and Tamar. Another occasion is the story of Absalom and Amnon and the killing of Amnon and revenge for the rape of Tamar, the other Tamar in that occasion. And the further occasion is the story of Nabal and David.

And each one of these occasions, we have similar themes. The story of Judah and Tamar very closely attaches with the story of Absalom and Amnon. There's another character called Tamar involved.

There's a coat of many colors. There's a number of different events there that are paralleled. We have similar tragic events occurring to the son of Jacob.

And we have a similar thing in the story of David, where David is Jacob and a number of tragic things happening to his sons. We have similar things in the story of Nabal. Nabal is Laban backwards in Hebrew as in English.

And that story with the time of sheep shearing is similar to the timing of this event in the story of Laban. So these stories connect and these little details are things that the ears should be attuned to. As you listen to these details, it will clue you into the fact this is possibly a related story.

Consider this story alongside these other stories. And as you consider them in dialogue with each other, you may find something, you may see something that you would not otherwise see. This is the way that I find it very helpful to read scripture.

Where have I heard this before? What detail? Why give this particular detail? Why tell us that it was a particular length of time or something? Why tell us that the wages were changed 10 times? All these details within the context of this story, I think they're for chiasmic purposes. And I've mentioned that in a previous talk. I think it was on Chapter 28 or 29.

But here, I think we see in that detail of sheep shearing, there's a clue to some of the connections, connections that might help us to unlock what's taking place here. He steals away, unknown to Laban the Syrian and does not tell him that he intends to flee. He flees with all that he has, arises, crosses the river and heads towards the mountain of Gilead.

Fleeing, crossing the river, heading towards the mountain of Gilead. These are all themes of Exodus. The themes of multiplying within the land of captivity or the land of servitude, the land being having the countenance of the ruler changing towards multiplying in flocks and multiplying in children.

The themes of wicked treatment that 10 times the wages change. Is that connected to 10 plagues? I don't know. There might be something there.

But at each point, we're seeing certain echoes. And then what happens next? Laban, when he finds out, what does he do? He pursues. He takes his brethren with him and pursues him for seven days journey and overtook him in the mountain of Gilead.

And within this context, he comes as an armed man. He has power to do harm to Jacob. He's pursuing like Pharaoh pursues later on within the story of the Exodus.

Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains and Laban and his brethren pitch in the mountains of Gilead. And Laban says to Jacob, what have you done that you've stolen away unknown to me and carried away my daughters like captives taken with the sword? Why did you flee away secretly and steal away from me and not tell me? For I would have sent you away with joy and with songs and with timbrel and harp. And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters.

Now you have done foolishly in so doing. It is in my power to do you harm. But the God of your father spoke to me last night saying, be careful that you speak to Jacob, neither good nor bad.

And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house. But why did you steal my gods? Again, pay attention to the character of Laban. We know the character of Laban, that he's duplicitous, that he's someone who does not keep his word, that he's someone who's a trickster, that he's someone who seeks to reduce Jacob to slavery.

Now, we've seen earlier on that Jacob has asked for, that Jacob has asked to be sent away. And he's requested his wives and his children. Give me my wives and my children.

In verse 26 of chapter 30. Now, why is he still asking for his wives? It seems that Laban is not really, he's been wily. He's not really kept up his end of the agreement or he suggested that he was going to make an agreement.

When we actually read back through the story of what actually happened, it's not entirely clear that Laban agreed to or openly agreed to give Rachel. He said it would be better to give it to you than someone else. But there's no clear agreement.

And maybe he's trying to weasel out of his words or try to avoid any commitment to Jacob. But the fact that Jacob still 14 years later, he's asking for his wives and children. It suggests that there's something going on, that his wives and children are being treated as the possession of Laban.

And so Laban is treating him. Oh, he's my son in law, but he's a member of my house. He belongs to me.

He works for me. I'm the boss. He's not going to leave my house.

I'm not going to let my son in law go. He's part of my household now and he works for me. And if I let him go, then he'll end up taking all these things with him.

And these are my daughters. These are my sons. And they've been born in my house.

And Jacob is not going to take them away from me. And the way that Laban speaks about the sons of Jacob and his two daughters is striking. It suggests that he does not truly honour them as Jacob's.

He treats them more as his possession. And Jacob has stolen his people away, that these people belong to him ultimately. And that Jacob is like a servant, a servant who's living within the house, who can go free, but he has to leave everything behind.

He has to leave his wives. He has to leave his property. Any possessions that he has within the house, those all belong to the house of Laban.

And Jacob is not about to take those things away from the house of Laban. This is an agreement turned very sour. As we read through this, we'll see also some other details.

The God has intervened on the behalf of Jacob and has spoken to Laban in a dream. Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad. Again, think about the references to dreams.

We've had dreams earlier on in the story. And we'll have a few dreams later on. We'll have dreams in the story of Pharaoh.

We'll have dreams in the story of Joseph. And here we have dreams in the story of Jacob and of Laban. And the presence of dreams at key points is something to pay attention to.

I've mentioned this before. And so he complains about taking away his daughters like captives taken with the sword. That's a bit rich coming from Laban, who's reduced his daughters to strangers.

He's eaten up all their possessions, all their bride price. He's someone who's treated them as strangers, reduced them, his son-in-law, to a state of servitude. And now he's treating Jacob as if he's stolen these people away like captives in war.

No, they are Jacob's people. And they've been reduced to a status that was unreasonable, that was a status of servitude, a status of bondage. When we read through this, we'll see that there are themes that might recall previous events in chapter 12, chapter 20 and 26 when the king blames the people of God for their actions in those stories of the women pretending to be sisters, the wives pretending to be sisters.

In each one of those, we see the king presenting the righteous person as if they were the wicked character, as if they were the one to be blamed for what they had done. And here we see a similar thing, that Laban, the duplicitous and wicked Laban, is presenting Jacob as if he were the bad guy. Of course, I'm Laban, I'm this benevolent and I'm someone who's generous and warm-hearted.

And if you'd wanted to go, of course, I would have sent you away with many gifts. I would have been singing songs and playing music for you and throwing a great feast. Of course, Jacob had asked previously to go and that had not been agreeable to Laban and Laban had just detained him further.

And at this point, it's entering the seventh year and now he's the slave that's going to go free in the seventh year. This is a moment of liberation, but Laban presents it as if Jacob has gone away of his own accord, but if he had gone away with Jacob's blessing, he would have been richly rewarded. And we all know Laban better than that.

We know that he was not that sort of character. And the father's gods, the household gods, have been stolen. The gods of Rachel and Leah's father.

And that is something that he is really angry about. These aren't just... what are the terror theme? The terror theme, as we read earlier on, Rachel has stolen the household idols, the terror theme that belonged to her father. And those terror theme could be associated with status within the household, with inheritance.

They could be associated with worship. They are treated as gods by Laban. I think the other thing is that their means of divination.

And that is something that we see within the story of Laban. The suggestion that he was involved in divination is given within the previous chapter. He found something out by experience or divination.

I think it's more likely it's not divination at that point, but it might be divination. One way or another, he is associated with pagan practices, with divination, things like that. And the terror theme would seem to be involved with this.

And they're taken away from him and they're hidden. They're hidden by Rachel. Within the story of the Exodus, what we see is the humiliation of the false gods.

Throughout the story of the Exodus, the gods are humiliated, the gods of the Egyptians, as in each one of their realms. The God of Israel proves his supremacy. He turns the Nile to blood.

He turns the sun to black. He's the one who can bring out the frogs and the locusts and all these sorts of things. And he can destroy the lifeblood of Egypt.

He's the one who can overturn all the powers of Egypt's gods. And this is highlighted within the narrative that God is proving his supremacy over the false gods. And in the same way, there is a humiliation of the idols within this story.

The idols of the household of Laban are taken and they're humiliated. They're stolen from him. And Rachel is sitting upon them during her period.

Now within Scripture, in the Old Testament, particularly Leviticus, it's a period of impurity. It defiles the things, the blood of menstruation defiles the things that it comes in contact with, and the menstrual woman as well. And so this is a pretty humiliating position for the false gods to be in.

They're humiliated in this respect. Now where else do we find terror theme within Scripture? One other occasion is in the story of Michael and Saul. Michael deceives Saul and enables David to escape by taking the terror theme and using goat's hair to disguise it, putting it in a bed and letting down David by a rope through a window.

Now we've heard that story before. It's the story of the disguise of Jacob with goat's hair by his mother. It's the story of Rachel deceiving her father to protect her husband using the terror theme.

And it's the story of Rahab as well, letting down the spies through the window so that the king of Jericho will not get them. And each one of these stories we're seeing something that would help us to interpret what's taking place here. There is an exodus event.

There's a humiliation of the false gods. And there are events going on that help us to understand the rivalry with the father-in-law, the way that the woman deceives the serpent figure. This is a reverse or poetic justice related to the story of the serpent and Eve.

Eve was deceived by the serpent. Now we see the serpent or the tyrant being deceived by the Eve character. And within this story, what we see is the serpent character, the one who's associated with divination, which is associated with the word Nahash for the serpent.

It's something that connects those figures. And so Laban is the serpent figure and Eve here is like Rachel. And Rachel deceives the serpent in a way that gives some sort of comeuppance.

And we look elsewhere in scripture, we'll see that theme again. Esther deceives Haman. Jael deceives Sisera.

Michael deceives Saul. Rahab deceives the men of Jericho. And each one of these occasions what we're seeing is a poetic reversal of what happened in the Garden of Eden.

There's more going on here. If you pay attention to the Garden of Eden themes, you may notice a few things that you've not seen previously. A woman has taken something that isn't hers.

Taken something from a father. There is a reference to good and evil on a couple of occasions. But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night and said to him, Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor evil.

And again, we find that later on in verse 29. Not to speak good or evil. This is a reference to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Why have you fled? Why have you hidden yourself? What is Jacob's response? Because I was afraid. What does Jacob say when he is told that the household gods have been taken? Household gods that would give the owner some power. The power that enables them to be like the gods.

To have some power that belongs to the gods. The power of divination. Dying you shall die was the statement in Genesis chapter 2. That the judgment upon the person who took up the fruit of the tree.

Dying they shall die. And what does Jacob say concerning the person whose possession it's found in? With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren identify what I have of yours and take it with you.

Dying you shall die. And so it's a playing out of the story of Eden again. So you have the reversal of the serpent and the woman.

As the woman outwits the serpent on this occasion. But then the woman is also connected with Eve in a more negative sense. She has taken something that is not hers.

And in taking something that is not hers. She becomes the object of a dreadful curse. A dreadful judgment.

The judgment that's declared by Jacob. Dying you shall die. It's a tragic event.

As we will read on and we consider the implications of this. There is something that has happened here that will have ramifications many years down the line. What do we have within the events of the fall? What happens after the fall? There's a judgment upon the serpent.

There's a judgment upon the man. Or the judgment upon the woman and the judgment upon the man. What is the judgment upon the woman? The judgment upon the woman is that she will have pain and difficulty in childbirth.

And within the story of Rachel here I think you have some premonitions of that. What would happen if she stood up? If she removed herself from a camel what would be seen beneath her? Bloody clothes. What would later on happen? What would later on happen when she gave birth to Benjamin? She would die in childbirth.

She would bleed out. It's a tragic premonition of what will later befall Rachel. She will die on the way just as she is overtaken here on the way.

This is a tragic premonition of what's going to come in the future. There's also a reference to the struggle in labour for the man. And as Jacob talks to Laban he speaks about the difficulty of the labour that he is engaged in.

What is my trespass? What is my sin that you have so hotly pursued me? Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Said it here before my brethren and your brethren that we may judge between us both. These twenty years I have been with you. Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young.

And I have not eaten the rams of your flock. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you. I bore the loss of it.

You acquired it from my hand, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. There I was in the day the drought consumed me and the frost by night and my sleep departed from my eyes. Thus I have been in your house twenty years.

I served you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flock. And you have changed my wages ten times. The difficulty of his labour, the sweat of his brow, the forsaking of sleep from his eyes and all these different things.

But yet there are also premonitions here of something tragic. What does he say? Your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young. Who is the ewe? Who is ultimately the ewe belonging to Laban? Rachel.

Rachel, her name means you. How will Rachel die? In a near miscarriage, but she will die giving birth to Benjamin. She will not miscarry, but she will die because she does not miscarry.

It's a tragic premonition of what's about to come to pass. That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you. That should send a chill down our spine.

Where do we hear that again? What is torn by beast and brought to the father? It's supposedly Joseph. He's torn apart by wild animals, the brothers suggest. And they bring his bloodied cloak to Jacob.

Do you identify this? And Jacob said, I did not do that to you. But that is what exactly what will happen to him in the future. The bloodied garment of his son being brought to him.

The bloodied animal or the bloodied sheep that was torn by the wild beasts. These stories then are not detached. They connect with things that are going to happen later.

It gives us a premonition of what's happening further on down the line. God has seen my affliction and the labour of my hands and rebuked you last night. What else is going on here? There is a series of events here that connect with something else that we see later on.

There is something about what happens with Rachel in the terror theme that should alert us to these greater connections. Rachel will ultimately die in childbirth. And what happens in the loss of Rachel in the declaration of death over Rachel.

It has implications for her sons as well, for Joseph and for Benjamin. Rabbi David Foreman is absolutely superb on this. Many of these insights are things I've found in him and nowhere else.

He talks about the way in which when we read on through the story, there are threats to both Joseph and Benjamin. And threats in both cases that hark back to this story. What do we see in the story of Joseph when Joseph is taken? We are told that he is torn.

We're told that it's as if wild beasts have torn him. He sees the bloody tunic. And the words we have are taroth, tarath.

And that's the words his father uses. Put those together. What do you get as a plural form? It would suggest it's connected with the terror theme.

It's the same sort of word. It's a reminiscent thing. What would happen if Rachel were to stand up? You would see the torn flesh as it were.

The torn or the bloodied coat that represents the torn son. The son torn by wild beasts. There is a premonition of what is going to happen in the future.

And as we read that story, we'll see a number of other things that take place. What else takes place? The torn child. And where is the terror theme stored? They're stored in the saddlebag, in the bakar.

And what will Rachel lose? She'll lose her baker. She'll lose her firstborn. And Joseph being sold into slavery.

We talked about Rachel's tears from the previous chapter. And the way that Rachel's tears hang over the story of scripture. And here we see more of what's taking place.

That Rachel is a tragic figure in many ways. That there are events that befall her that have deep consequence. And they will play out throughout the rest of the biblical narrative.

She bears the loss of the torn child. Ishmaelites come from Gilead. Where are these events taking place? In the area of Gilead.

What else happens? Two stories of brothers sitting down to eat bread. It's what we find at the end of this story of the terror theme. It's what we find in the story of the brothers sitting down to eat bread before they sell Joseph into slavery.

These are stories that connect with each other. Now there's another occasion where we see a similar event. Where else do we see in the story of Genesis someone being pursued as they leave a place? Pursued, overtaken, and then an investigation of the property of each person from the oldest to the youngest.

To find who had stolen goods. And those stolen goods being means of divination. Where else do we find that? Of course we find it in the story of Joseph pursuing his brothers and finding the cup of divination in the possession of Benjamin.

Benjamin is the son that Rachel bore as she died. And so we have the threat to Joseph and we have the threat to Benjamin. The shadow of the terror theme is hanging heavily over this history.

What she has stolen, the forbidden fruit as it were, the thing that she has taken from her father, and that judgment of death. There are other events here that might recall, other events later in scripture that might recall this. In Genesis 38, the story of Judah and Tamar, similar events take place there.

And there's a judgment, a rash judgment of the person that shall die. A woman that will end up dying. And in that case Judah acts before the judgment is carried out.

And it's playing out the same sort of themes. When we read this story later on, I'll discuss it in more detail. How this resolves some of the themes that we see within this chapter.

But it's important to recognise that this is part of a deeper series of events that goes back to the story of the fall. It reverses the serpent deceiving the woman. Now the woman deceives the serpent.

But then there's also a negative theme here as well. Because Eve, Rachel has taken something that isn't hers. It connects with the story of Jacob.

And later on the presentation of the blood, the bloody garment. The bloody garment that came from beneath Rachel as it were. The torn, the taroth, tarath of her son, the son that has been torn in pieces.

And there we have him presented to Jacob by his sons. And within this story we're having what sets all this in motion in different ways. There's also something that is an event that looks forward to the Exodus as I've highlighted.

There's the humiliation of the foreign gods. We have the same thing in the story of Dagon. As the Ark of the Covenant goes into the land of the Philistines.

And there's humiliation of the false god Dagon. And plagues upon all these different cities. Ashdod and the other cities of the Philistines.

Here what we see is that there is a humiliation of Laban and his false gods. There's a playing out of Laban as Pharaoh pursuing etc. But there's a reversal as well.

What we find also is that this looks back to a sort of poetic justice by Rachel against her father Laban. Now Laban goes into the tent. And he's groping around in the tent.

And he's looking within the tent and he's not able to find what he's looking for. As he gropes around he feels around. He's not able to use his sight.

This is something that might make us think of how Laban himself had deceived, had mistreated Rachel. He had given Jacob Leah instead of Rachel. And Jacob had not recognised that it was Leah.

And in the same way here what we see is that Laban is tricked. He goes into the tent and he's feeling around and he can't see what he's looking for. And he's deceived.

He's outwitted. And so there's a lex talionis principle here. There's a principle of an eye for an eye.

There's a justice, a principle of poetic justice that's playing out. And as we read this story then we need to connect it with this great matrix of other stories. They're all interplaying here in complicated ways.

It's not just a straightforward playing out of a straightforward theme. Each theme is slightly differently modulated. It's changed in different ways.

It's not a straightforward repetition. It's a variation on the theme. A variation that helps us to see things that we would not have otherwise seen.

And so we go back to these previous stories and we see poetic justice. We see reversal. But we also see some sorts of repetition.

These themes are not resolved but these themes will play out further on down the line. In the story of the two sons of Rachel who has this death sentence that's not carried out. But a death sentence that's declared over her.

A death sentence that ultimately foreshadows her death. Her death and bleeding out in childbirth. And the near death of her two sons.

One caught in possession of instruments of divination and when pursued and inspected. And the other who is connected with a bloody garment. And those two words.

The words that are associated with taroth, tarath. Those two words that bring to mind the teraphene. Now as we go through the story.

I want you to keep these things in mind because they'll come up in future chapters. Laban answers and said to Jacob, these daughters are my daughters. And these children are my children.

And this flock is my flock. All that you see is mine. Again, Laban does not acknowledge that these things belong to Jacob.

He thinks they're his. That Jacob has stolen them from him. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they are born? Now, therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.

So Jacob takes a stone and sets it up as a pillar. This, again, is a sort of parallel. He has set up a stone at Bethel.

And now he sets up a stone as a pillar at Bethel. And now he sets up a stone as a pillar at this place, Galid, associated with the word of Gilead. The setting up of this stone is accompanied with the establishment of a heap.

Where all the people who are with Jacob gather stones and place them in a heap. And they eat at the heap. Now gathering together these stones, it's as if God is, we talked again about the bricks and stones theme.

Laban is connected with bricks. His name is associated with bricks, with brick kilns, with brick making. And Jacob is a man of stones.

He's a man who gathers stones at Bethel. He's a man at Luz. And he's a man who sets up a stone when that place is named Bethel.

He's the man who takes the stone from the mouth of the well. He's the one who sets up the pillar here at Galid. He's the one who sets up the pile of stone here.

He's the one who sets up a stone again at another place called Bethel. And he's the one who sets up the stone over Rachel's tomb. In each of these cases, Jacob is the man of stones.

And Laban is the man of bricks. And that opposition is one that I've commented a bit upon within my discussion of chapter 29 and 28. If you want to go back and listen to those.

Looking here, what we see is once again Laban's refusal to acknowledge the proper status of Jacob, to treat him as a proper son-in-law, to send him away with a proper blessing, to acknowledge what belongs to Jacob. And there's now a division, a demarcation between their two lands. And this separation is a sort of exile, demarcation of two separate territories and exile.

It's something again playing out the story of the fall that might recall that. This line that's drawn. And in this line, there's the division between two territories.

And this heap is a witness between you and me this day. Therefore, its name was called Galid, also Mizpah, because he said, may the Lord watch between you and me when we're absent from one another. And there's this witness between them.

And again, the heap and the pillar of the witness, two witnesses that Jacob has set up of the covenant. And they will not pass between these things. He will not pass beyond the heap to Laban and Laban will not pass beyond the heap and the pillar to him for harm.

And these cases, what I think we're seeing is a replaying of some of the themes of Eden, although in a very different form here. It's a form in which Laban has pursued Jacob outside, but Laban's the serpent, Laban's the bad guy. And his house is not really Eden at all.

But there is the stealing of the household gods. And that's a theme that leads to a statement of death and judgment upon Rachel. And then Eve is also the one who deceives the serpent.

So there's a mixture of different themes that play both positive and negative themes of the original fall. This heap is a witness and this pillar is a witness that I will not pass beyond this heap to you. And you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me for harm.

The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor and the God of their father judged between us. And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac, an unusual name for God at this point. Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain and called his brethren to eat bread.

And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain. And early in the morning, Laban arose and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed

and returned to his place.

This departure is one that is the final parting of the ways between Jacob and Laban. It's the end of a sort of Exodus like pursuit with Laban playing the role of Pharaoh. Jacob has now left the land of Egypt as it were.

And we'll see in the following chapter that there is a full cycle that has been played out. Started off in darkness and then it will end up with the breaking of a new dawn. This is then a very significant moment.

It plays out Exodus themes. It plays out themes of the fall. And it plays out these themes that will recur again and again in the story of the life of Jacob, Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin.

We see it in the story of Rachel dying in childbirth, of Joseph and his death, supposed death, of Judah and the events with Tamar. And then with Joseph's pursuit of Benjamin and Judah interceding for Benjamin. Keep these thoughts in mind that this is a story that is not over yet.

All of these events overshadow and they have consequences for the next generation. The story of the deception of Isaac. The story of the confusing, the mixing up of the two daughters by Laban and the deceit and the duplicitous way that he treated Jacob.

All of these things have consequences going into the next generation and beyond. Pay attention then. Think about the details.

Think about the details of the sheep sharing. Why is it the teraphine that are stolen? Why is it that it's placed in the saddlebag? Why is it in camels? Think about camels. Where else? Where do we next see camels? Where do we see camels coming from Gilead? It's in the story of Joseph.

Joseph being taken and brought into Egypt. It's the camels of the Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. As if remembering this event, they've come to take the consequences of the stolen teraphine.

Then as we read the story, keep these things in mind. These will come back to haunt Jacob and his descendants in years to come. Thank you very much for listening.

Lord willing, I'll be back again tomorrow. And if you have any questions, please leave them on the Curious Cat account. And again, if you'd like to support this and other videos like it, please tell people about them.

If you would like to help transcribe them, you can contact me using the contact form on my blog. Or if you'd like to, you can support me using my Patreon or PayPal accounts. Thank you very much for listening.

God bless.