

CHAPTER ANALYSIS FORM

Chapter: 31

Chapter Title: Jacob runs, again

1. Chapter Summary:

1. Chapter 31

- a. The relationship sours 1-3
- b. Decision time 4-16
- c. No goodbyes 17-21
- d. Laban warned 22-24
- e. Confrontation 25-33
- f. Lies, lies, and more lies 34-35
- g. Things get ugly 36-43
- h. A covenant, of sorts 44-54
- i. Finally, goodbye 55

2. Observation		3. Interpretation	
What Does It Say?		What Does It Mean?	
Verse		Verse	
	Chapter 31		
1-3	Jacob's dealing with the flocks has been noticed. Laban and his sons are not happy with the way things have gone. God tells Jacob it's time to go back.	1-3	Other's success at my expense – how it does rankle. Given what we know about the nature of this family, that type of envy will lead to nothing good. Does ours?
4-16	Jacob tells Leah and Rachel they must leave. He explains it in negative terms about his father-in-law and by way of oracle from God. They, also, have noticed a change in their father and do not feel like part of the family anymore. They express their reasoning in monetary terms. All agree to leave.	4-16	Sounds like us, doesn't it? It is apparent that the happenings are God's way of getting Jacob to go. I personally think he would stay, no matter how bad the situation, because he fears confrontation above all. So, if it's time to go, it must be because of the situation and other people – especially the boss. Notice how Leah and Rachel have turned on Laban. There is some background there with which we are not aware. Jacob also contrasts the actions of Laban with the actions of the God of his father. Rachel and Leah do as well. In these situations do we see God's hand or do we only bring God into it as lip service because we are Christians?
17-21	Jacob sets out with his family and all his livestock. He never tells Laban he is leaving. Rachel steals Laban's household gods.	17-21	See my comment above about fear of confrontation. The entire story of Jacob, to this point, has been to weasel around behind the scenes and not directly confront people. There is a way to have a confrontation that will lead to mutual benefit and understanding. But we don't normally choose that type of confrontation, do we? Given Laban's and his son's attitude Jacob may have also feared they would keep him by force.

22-24	Laban learns of Jacob's deceit and goes after him. God warns him not to confront Jacob – good or bad.	22-24	Jacob is still heir to the promise, even if he isn't completely devoted to God and even in the face of his deceit. Laban is warned that God has Jacob's back (As he promised earlier.) so Laban better tread carefully. God has our back in any circumstance. Do we live that out as fact or in more of a "My dad can beat up your dad." kind of way?
25-33	Laban catches up with Jacob and berates him despite God's warning. He tells Jacob of the warning and wants to know why Jacob stole his gods. Jacob invites him to search for the idols.	25-33	Both men are operating in the human. Anger, recrimination, bitterness, lies – God still works with his chosen. Further, because Jacob does not completely understand the situation with the idols, he rashly puts Rachel's life on the line.
34-35	Laban searches for his idols. He comes to Rachel's tent and she lies to him about being on her period, all the while lying on the stolen goods.	34-35	Lying seems to be a way of life with this family. You must wonder why Rachel stole the idols. Did she think they were the reason Laban was wealthy and she was just trying to hedge her bets with Jacob? Did she really think they were that powerful? Since they were household gods did she think they would protect her household? Is it possible Jacob's weak faith gave her no confidence in the true God or she thought of him as one god among many? Did she just want them for the gold and silver they must have been constructed from? But, then, how powerful are these "gods" that are hidden in a camel's saddle lain upon by a woman lying to her father?
36-43	Jacob is angry with Laban and berates him in turn for being accused of theft. He also vents about the way Laban treated him while he was working for him and how he was an exemplary employee. He states that the God of his father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac was on his side and rebuked Laban in the warning. Laban, in turn, claims that everything Jacob has is really his.	36-43	Jacob's anger is unwarranted given he does not understand the entire situation. His accusations against Laban are true but, given his emotional state, this is probably not the time to vent. He is also correct in his stand that God has his back. It's interesting that he describes God as, "...the God of my Father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac..." Laban claims everything Jacob has taken (including his family) is really Laban's. The first thing that came to my mind was the seagull scene from "Finding Nemo." Mine, mine, mine, mine, mine,.... What do we try to grasp so tightly that it cannot be a blessing for anyone?

44-54	Laban and Jacob build a monument to seal their covenant. Basically, they agree to a border – you stay on your side, I’ll stay on mine.	44-52	There is a sort of covenant but, unlike the ones we have seen earlier in Genesis, there is no real mutual trust or friendship here. Only the marking of a “stay on your side” line. Both Laban and Jacob appeal to God but Laban’s appeal is more generic. Like the stones they set up – Jacob sets up a single stone (as he did at Bethel) while Laban and his family pile up a “heap of stones.” Laban appeals to the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor and the God of their father – he wants to make sure he has all his bases covered. Jacob swears by the Fear of his father Isaac. He knows there is one God.
55	Laban kisses his daughters and grandchildren goodbye and returns home.		

4. Correlation		5. Application
Where Else Is It Explained?		What Will I Do About It?
Verse		
	Chapter 31	
1-3		
4-16	Genesis 28:20; 30:32	
17-21	Hosea 3:1-5	
22-24	Genesis 20:3, 6; 24:50	
25-33	Genesis 44:9	
34-35	Exodus 20:12 Leviticus 19:32	
36-43	Psalm 24:1 (read the entire Psalm) Matthew 5:45	
44-54	Genesis 21:27; 26:28	
55		

6. Conclusions

7. One Personal Application

