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So Jacob Took a Stone and Set It Up as a Pillar, and He Called It Galeed

31: 43-55

So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar, and he called it Galeed DIG: How was Laban's greeting to Jacob on his arrival different from his farewell when Jacob left? What changed his attitude?

REFLECT: When someone tries to make himself or herself look good at your expense, how do you react? What does the Bible have to say about syncretism (see John 14:6)? Do you fear the Lord? Should you fear Him (see Proverbs 9:10)?

When **Laban** finally spoke, **he** didn't even try to defend **himself**. **He** just changed the subject. **Laban** answered: **The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet, what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne (31:43)?**

Laban's implication was this: How could **Jacob** think that **he** would do anything to hurt **his** daughters or **his** grandchildren? More than that, everything that **Ya'akov** had had come from **Laban**. So why wasn't **Jacob** grateful to **him** for giving **him** the opportunity to acquire **them**?

Although **he** knew **he** was in the wrong, a self-seeking hypocrite like **Laban** could not bring **himself** to admit it in front of **his** entire family. **He** was an expert at shifting the blame away from **himself**, so **he** proposed a formal **covenant**, or treaty, between **himself** and **Jacob**. **Laban** said: **Come now, let's make a treaty, you and I and let it serve as a witness between us. Jacob** (Hebrew: **Ya'akov**) already made one pact with **Laban** about **his** wages for service, which **Laban** didn't honor. Why should **Jacob** think **Laban** had changed? **Ya'akov** does not answer, but only responds with action.⁴⁹⁶ **He** knew that both men should remember such a treaty. **So Ya'akov took a large stone and set it up as a pillar, or matzeivah. Then he said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, or gal, supporting the pillar, and they ate there by the heap (31:44-46).** But what should **they** name this place, so **they** could remember it?

Naming it in **his** own Aramaic language, **Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha**, which means *a heap of witness*. Then **Jacob** translated the same phrase into Hebrew, and **called it Galeed**. **Laban** said: **This heap is a witness between you and me today. That is why it was called Galeed**. Even though **Laban** had already named this place *the heap of witness*, he added to it the Hebrew name **Mizpah**, meaning *watchtower*. **He** said: **May ADONAI keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other (31:47-49)**. **Laban** did not intend this as a blessing; it was a warning for two men who could not trust each other. **Laban** did not want **Jacob** crossing back over to Haran with the **household gods** to claim **his** property.



Still trying to justify **his** pursuit of **Ya'akov**, **Laban** took the initiative of proposing the terms of the treaty after the **pillar** and **stones** had been erected. **If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me**. **Laban** even tried to take credit for setting up *the heap of witness* by saying: **Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this pillar to my side to harm me (31:50-52)**. *Therefore, to cross the pillar would break the treaty and render the household gods useless*. In describing the terms of the treaty, **Laban** used projection, projecting **his** real thoughts and feelings about himself onto **Jacob**, projecting **his** own untrustworthiness onto **Ya'akov**. The undependable **Laban** was trying to imply that **Jacob** was a slippery character who needed to be watched and bound by a whole series of terms and conditions.⁴⁹⁷

According to **Laban**, this **pillar** or memorial was to serve **as a witness** and **the gods** were

to umpire **between Ya'akov and himself**. Believing in syncretism, *or the belief that all paths lead to God*, **Laban** placed **his** own favorite household **god**, or the **god of Nahor, the god of their father Terah, who had worshiped other gods (Joshua 24:2)**, and the **God of Abraham** on the same level.⁴⁹⁸ Rather than trying to clear up **Laban's** theological confusion or start an argument, **Ya'akov** simply made **his oath in the name of the God** who had been the **God his father Isaac (31:53)**.

Most of the day was gone by that time and both **men** retreated to **their** respective camps **in the hill country of Gilead** for one last night before departing the next morning. **Jacob** was so thankful and relieved for **ADONAI's** final deliverance from **Laban** that **he offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and invited his relatives to a meal. After they had eaten, they spent the night there. Early the next morning Laban** came back from **his** own camp and **kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. He** knew that at the very least **they** must have come to resent **him** by now, and **he** was probably feeling a little remorse. However, **he** could not humble **himself** to apologize to **Ya'akov** or give **him** any words of blessing, so **he left and returned home (31:54-55)**. Like **Lot** after leaving **his** two **daughters (19:34-38)**, no further mention is made of **Laban** again in Scripture. It is probably merciful of **ADONAI** not to say any more about **him**.⁴⁹⁹