

Read Genesis 31:1-3

- Describe the family dynamic between Jacob and his brothers-in-law.
- Who instructs Jacob that it is now time to leave after spending 20 years in Haran?
- Look at the LORD's command in verse 3. What strikes you about the way it is worded?

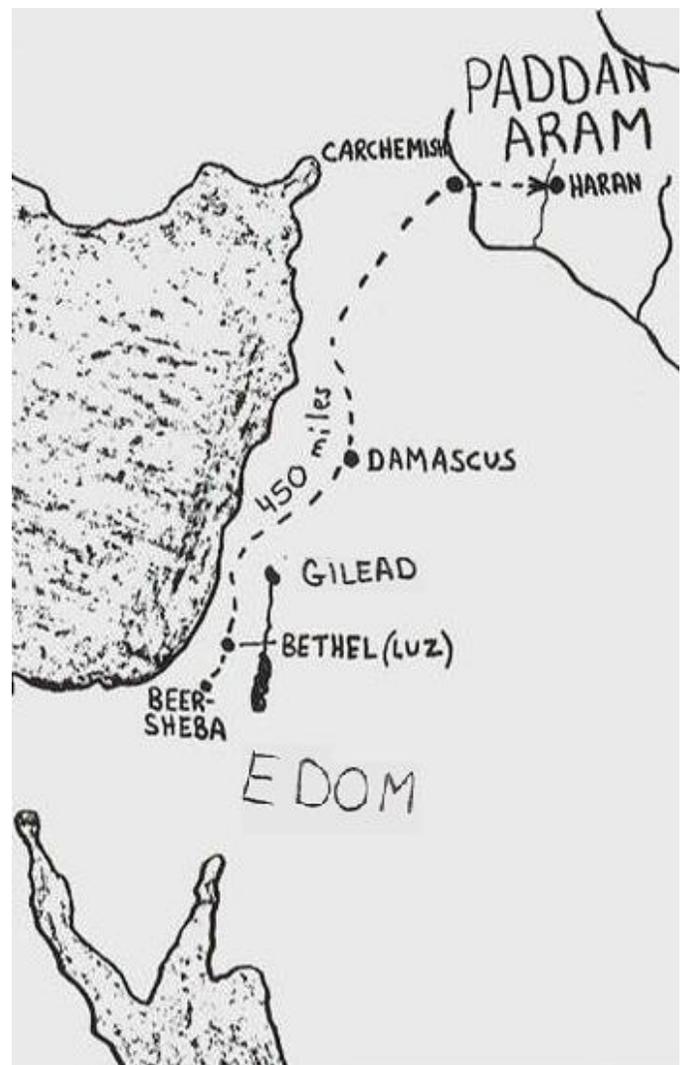
Read Genesis 31:4-13

- What did Jacob first need to do before leaving Haran?
- As Jacob tells his dream, note who it was that spoke to him? (v.11)
- In verse 13, the Angel of God further identifies himself as "the God of Bethel." How is that description comforting to Jacob?

Read Genesis 31:14-21

- Note how Laban's attitude had changed not only with Jacob but also with his daughters.
- What is meant by the phrase in verse 15, "For he has sold us and has certainly spent our money"?
- Note the ironies found in the way Jacob leaves Haran.

- What is meant by the phrase: “Rachel stole her father’s household idols”?
- Verse 21 tells us that Jacob fled with all of his possessions. To give us an idea of how great his wealth and possessions were at this time, consider the gift he sends to his brother Esau in the next chapter: *“He spent the night there and took part of what he had brought with him as a gift for his brother Esau: 200 female goats, 20 male goats, 200 ewes, 20 rams, 30 milk camels with their young, 40 cows, 10 bulls, 20 female donkeys, and 10 male donkeys”* (Genesis 32:13-15).



Read Genesis 31:22-35

- Note the hypocrisy in Laban’s words.
- Explain: “Rachel appears to have inherited her father’s cunning.”

Read Genesis 31:36-42

- Where were you in 1996? What has happened for you and your family in the last 20 years? That’s how long it has been that Jacob has been dealing with the deception of his uncle Laban. That’s how long it has been since Jacob has seen any of his immediate family.
- What is meant by the final phrase in verse 42: “But God has seen my affliction and my hard work, and He issued His verdict last night”?

Read Genesis 31:43-55

- As Laban answered Jacob in verse 43, he said, *“The daughters are my daughters; the sons, my sons; and the flocks, my flocks!”* When he speaks of “sons” who is he talking about?
- As Jacob and Laban make a covenant, note the significance of the names given to the place:
 - Jegar-sahadutha = “Mound of Witness” (Aramaic)
 - Galeed = “Mound of Witness” (Hebrew)
 - Mizpah = “Watchtower”
- Note the difference in translations of verse 53 below. Remember that Hebrew does not capitalize in the same way as English does. Therefore, the capital letters are a translator’s decision based on the context. After noting the difference, defend each translation.
 - HCSB09 – *“‘The God of Abraham, and the gods of Nahor—the gods of their father—will judge between us.’ And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.”*
 - NIV84 – *“‘May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.’ So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.”*
 - KJV – *“The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us. And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.”*
- Note: “Laban too returned home. For two successive generations, Abraham’s relatives in Haran had provided wives for men who were bearers of the covenant promise. But since the rest of Laban’s family was outside the messianic line, Laban is at this point dismissed from the pages of Genesis. From this point on, the reader’s attention will be directed away from the land of Aram to the land of promise, where Jacob’s descendants were to grow into a great nation.” *(People’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, p.264)*