

Free - Take One

Shaqah

10th
YEAR

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Colossians 2:8

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In our last segment, we continued our overview of the book of Genesis, and made it to the story where the blessing from their father Isaac goes to Jacob instead of his older brother Esau. After this, Jacob is told by his mother Rebekah that he should flee the anger of Esau by going to her brother's house in Mesopotamia. Rebekah also pleads with Isaac to have Jacob go, on the basis Jacob should not take a wife from the people of Canaan as Esau had already done. Isaac would listen to his wife in this, and Jacob would leave for Mesopotamia to take the very same journey, for the very same purpose that his grandfather Abraham had specifically not wanted Isaac to take.

Abraham had been worried that Isaac would not return from Abraham's former home to establish himself on the land

God had promised to give them in Canaan. However, many years had passed, and Jacob was of the second generation to actually be born in the land of Canaan. His chances of looking at the promised land as more of his home over Mesopotamia was good. Jacob also was more

keen on the family covenant and it

being something he desired

and was willing to fight to obtain. It was

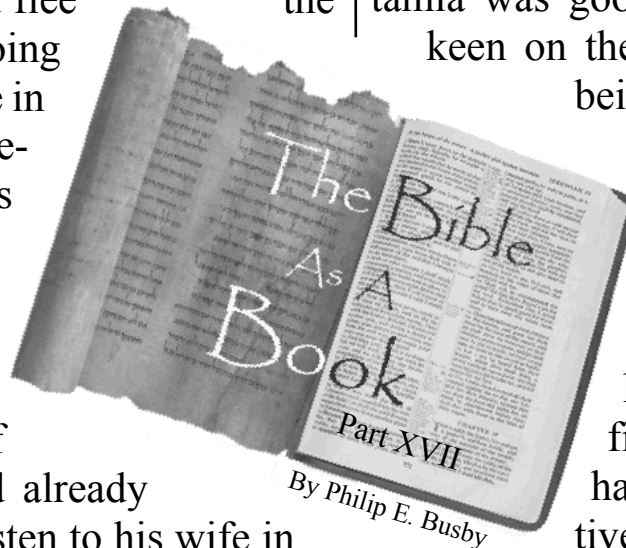
this desire that brought Jacob to the point

where he needed to flee his brother's wrath in the

first place. All this would have given him more incentive to someday come back

to the family's new, God given home, than Isaac may have had.

That being true, the task ahead for Jacob would not be an easy one, and he would certainly not be encouraged by those in Mesopotamia to return. God knew what Jacob would face, and so, as Jacob is leaving the land of Canaan, God



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meets with him. Jacob would have a dream where he would see a ladder and angels ascending and descending from heaven to that spot on earth where he had stopped to spend the night. The town in this place, which is about twelve miles north of Jerusalem, was originally called Luz; but Jacob would vow a vow that if God would keep him on his way and return him to his father's house, just as God had promised him in the dream, Jacob would always serve God as his God. All these things were necessary for making Jacob the promised nation of the covenant God made with Abraham, and Jacob would rename that place, calling it Bethel, which means "House of God."

When Jacob gets to the place his mother Rebekah had come from, he is led of God to a very similar situation as the servant who was sent by Abraham to find Rebekah for Isaac. At a well, Jacob meets herdsmen who are waiting to take the stone from the wells mouth, until all those who water their flock at that well have arrived. Jacob asks them if the family he is looking for is known by them, and they tell him it is. In fact, a member of that family, which keeps the sheep, is - at the very least - one of the ones they are waiting on. This person was Rachel, who kept her father Laban's sheep. Laban was the exact person Jacob had been sent to find. Laban was Rebekah's brother, and his daughter Rachel would be the first of the family Jacob would meet. Jacob was smitten with Rachel immediately, and he would remove the stone

and water her sheep for her. After Jacob explains who he is in relationship to her family, Rachel runs to tell her father Laban, who runs back to meet Jacob and is very happy to see him!

Jacob tells Laban all the family news, and Laban is thoroughly convinced Jacob is who he says he is. Jacob would stay with Laban and his family for an entire month, at which point Laban would begin to solidify the idea that Jacob was there for more than just a visit. Laban suggested that just because Jacob was family, he should not continue to work for no pay. Laban asks Jacob what he would like to receive for wages, and Jacob wastes no time striking a deal which would grant him Laban's daughter Rachel, after working seven years for Laban. Because Jacob loves Rachel so much, serving these seven years for her seemed to Jacob but a few days, and when the time came, Jacob was more than ready to receive his wage. However, Laban had no intention of giving Jacob Rachel as long as Leah was unmarried, and so Laban used the darkness of evening and the traditional wedding veiling of a bride, to trick Jacob into marrying Leah.

The next morning when Jacob realizes what has been done, he confronts Laban about it. Laban tells him they can't go against the tradition of marrying off the younger before the elder. However, Laban eagerly uses this as an opportunity to secure Jacob's employment

for another seven years, which was likely his ploy all along. Laban tells Jacob if he will celebrate the traditional wedding customs for Leah, which last for one week, Jacob could then marry Rachel, with the agreement Jacob would then work the next seven years for Laban. Jacob agrees, and so after spending seven years with Laban, Jacob would end up with both Rachel and Leah as his wives, and a commitment to stay in Laban's employment for another seven years. All this would set the stage for Jacob to begin a very large family, a family that would, in fact, be necessary for him to be the true start of the chosen nation God had promised would come through Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob.

Because Rachel was the one who Jacob truly loved, and Leah had, in many ways, been simply the victim of circumstances, God closes Rachel's womb while opening Leah's; so it would be Leah who would bear the first and greater number of children. This would also start a battle - of sorts - for bearing children, and would draw in two more women so Jacob's sons would have the diversity of being from four different women. Also, all four of the mothers were from the correct gene pool to provide the genetic marker necessary to ensure the chosen nation would have a solid genetic distinction as a specific people.

First, Leah would give birth to three sons, naming them names which held the hope that in bearing sons she would come into favor with her husband. These three were Reuben, Simeon, and Levi. Leah would then give birth to a fourth son, and this one would be named, not for the idea she hoped to gain her husband's favor, but to give credit to The One Who had truly blessed her. In this fourth son, Leah simply wanted to praise The Lord; and thus, she names him Judah! In later centuries this son's name would be the one by which all the children of Israel would be known, and this is why we call the chosen people Jews, even today. Hand in hand with that is the fact it would be through this son's line that The Messiah, The Lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ would be born! (Rev. 5:1-5, Matt. 1:1-25)

Now, Rachel would feel her life was meaningless if she could not give Jacob children, and so in a practice that we have already seen before with Sarah, Rachel gives her handmaiden to Jacob to bear children for her. This handmaiden, named Bilhah, was given to Rachel by her father when she married Jacob. Jacob would take Bilhah as a wife, and Bilhah would give birth to two sons. The first, Rachel would name Dan, and the second Naphtali. These names were chosen because Rachel felt she was in a competition with her sister Leah, and God had finally heard her cry. When

Leah sees this arrangement is bearing results for Rachel, and she was no longer bearing children, Leah takes the same course of action and gives to Jacob the handmaiden her father had given her when she married Jacob. This handmaiden's name was Zilpah, and she also bore two sons. The first Leah named Gad, and the second Asher, because Leah was getting the picture that Jacob's house was going to be great in number mostly because of her.

The next story we come to is one that many see as containing mysticism, but which is, in fact, simply part of the conflict these two sisters had. Leah's oldest son Reuben finds a specific plant that bears fruit which can be harvested about the same time the wheat is. Reuben brings this fruit to his mother on a day that it would seem was a typical day for Jacob to come into Rachel's tent in the evening, or was a night they would have to vie for Jacob's attention, possibly because Jacob would not necessarily expend the energy to come into either wife. In any case, both women know there is nothing like this fruit to get a man in the mood, and because of this, Rachel attempts to obtain some of the fruit from her sister. Leah puts this request down harshly, and Rachel knows Leah will win the day because of the fruit. To ensure this, Leah goes out to meet Jacob as he is coming from a hard day's work in the fields. She wants to make sure Jacob knew she had something special, and he should spend the night with her.

Jacob grants this request, and God blesses Leah with a fifth son, which is biologically hers. Leah gives credit to God for blessing her again, and names this son Issachar. Leah goes on to conceive again and bare a sixth son, which she believes will solidify her place in her husband's heart. She names him Zebulun. Leah would even bare yet another child, this time a daughter, and her name would be Dinah.

After all this, God would allow Rachel to have a biological son of her own. Rachel would give birth to a son she would name Joseph, for she believed God would give her another. It was about the time of Joseph's birth that the seven year time period of Jacob's employment with Laban came to an end, and there can be no doubt that at this point Jacob has gotten what his mother and father had told him to go to Mesopotamia to receive. He had two wives from his mother's house and four wives altogether from that region. As he did the work that he had agreed upon in order to pay the dowry of the two daughters of Laban, Jacob was content to gain nothing more from the situation. Jacob desired to return to the land he had promised God he would come back to. Laban, not being a fool, had the wisdom to see that his household had greatly prospered because Jacob was blessed of God. It would seem Laban did not serve God in his heart, but desired the bless-

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A Matter Of Life And Death

Part II

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

“Does the spirit leave the body at the time of death? Then Jesus comes at the end of time and takes the soul home to heaven.”

Last time, we began our discussion about this question by looking at how we were created to function, and the best way to understand how we were created to function is by talking about how the environment God placed us in was created and how it functions. Any understanding about death must begin with the foundational understanding that none of what we know could have existed without God; and thus, everything we are revolves not around an accident, such as evolution teaches, but around a design God put in place. What happens to us upon death will be no accident, but an event dictated by the dynamics God put in place from creation, coupled with God's interaction with us, and our interaction with Him over the course of time man has spend in this universe! Because this is all true, because death may be one of the most personal things we will ever experience, we must also have a firm understanding about what we, as individuals, were created to consist of! That is the subject we will begin a deeper look into in this segment of “A Matter Of Life And Death.”

In the end result, it simply does not matter how much people may try to reject God, the problem we all face is the fact we

have little to no control over death. Ultimately, we cannot stop it from taking us. On top of this, we cannot observe what is on the other side; and thus, we do not understand it, and many fear it. In many ways, this is simply because we were not meant to die. God originally placed man in a garden which contained a tree called the Tree of Life. (Gen. 2:8-9) This tree had the ability to sustain our physical forms indefinitely. (Gen. 3:22) However, without this tree man is no different from the animals, when it comes to the physical. If we go on down the verses in Genesis which we have been talking about, we arrive at Genesis chapter 2 verse 7, which tells us God created humans, not by speaking us into existence, nor by commanding an element - such as the earth - to bring us forth, but by specifically forming us out of the dust of the ground.

This is not completely unlike the way He created the plants and the animals. Just as with them, God formed our bodies from the elements already in existence; thus, our bodies are very similar to every other living thing we can observe. The biggest difference is that as individuals, Adam and Eve were created by the direct will of God. This is not to say the plants and animals were not the will of God, but plants and animals are part of the environment created for us. They have always lived and died in a cycle of events which sustain the plan-

et and provide the things we need. When it comes to humans, God did not simply command an element, created prior to us, to bring forth an initial population of humans according to the earth's needs and/or space.

This is another reason theories that man comes up with - such as evolution - are not really one hundred and eighty degrees off from the truth. In fact, these theories are only a few degrees off, because if you get too far from the truth, the story is so obviously not true it won't survive. Thus, evolution calls itself "science" because it wants us to believe it's going on the basis of things that can be observed. What can be observed is the fact our bodies are very similar to those of the animals, but at the same time, we are not the same species as any animal. We share many physical characteristics, but why wouldn't we? Animals were created to survive and work in this environment God created, just the way He desired to create it, and so is our physical form! However, humans are in a very different category from the plants and animals in spite of the fact our physical forms are very much the same. This is a big part of why man wonders so much about death. Humans understand they are not simply like the other living things on this planet, and the teaching of evolution has not changed that hard fact.

To put it in more modern scientific terms, humans are not part of any ecosystem which exists. We are outside of them and drawing off the abundance the systems God created produces. This is why the first thing God did was try to get man

to understand the consequences of living only for this life, and not for the purpose He created us for. To do this, He cursed the ground. After this, man's ability to simply feed off the excess this world produces was greatly hampered. As we see how easy it is for us to strip areas of the world of its resources, we should be struck with the truth: our lives are not made to simply be a part of the repeating living systems of this world. Our purpose is unto God. We are more than the plants and animals, and that is why God originally gave us a tree which could sustain us indefinitely!

Another reason man wonders about death so much, even though he gets many occasions to observe other living things go through it, is because man knows something else the creation story tells us. Man, unlike the animals, consists of more than just the physical form God made from the dust. Genesis 2:7 goes on to tell us God also, "...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." That brings us directly to our question, which asks about the "spirit." If we are going to thoroughly understand this issue, we must understand the fullness of what we are. Looking at the creation story, we do not just see the fact God created us, we see God's determination about exactly how to make man. It would not be until chapter 2 we are given the specifics about God forming our bodies out of the dust of the ground; because first and foremost, God wanted us to understand and be clear on the basic facts and sequencing of creation. Thus, what we are told in chapter 1 is, before God ever puts hand to dirt, there

was a blueprint for how man was going to be made.

In chapter 1 verse 26 God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:..." Just to be clear, this does not mean we are God, or able to become gods. This is why the word "image" is used. When you look in a mirror what you see is a likeness of yourself, but it is not you, nor very much like you in anyway, save the fact it visibly appears to be you. Your image is not alive; it cannot move on its own. In truth, it only consists of light which is reflecting off you, then off the mirror and back into your eye. This light is then processed by the brain. The image you see is something more than just in your head; because if someone else is standing in the right place, your reflection is also visible to them; but if you leave, your reflection leaves with you.

In making us, God did not make duplicates, nor the attempt at a duplicate of Himself. What these words tell us is God determined humans would consist of parts which have relation to those parts He consists of. What the Bible tells us about God is that God is a Triune Being, consisting of God The Father, God The Son, and God The Holy Ghost. This is why we see the words "us" and "our." It could be said, at more than one point, God is talking to Himself, but this is not a phenomenon we should be surprised about. We also talk to ourselves. Those people who study the mental states of humans will tell you it's a bad thing if we do it too much, but this is

only because it has been their observation: people who go on to have certain problems in life tend to share this activity in excess. In truth, it's impossible to say how much is too much. We consist of more than one part, each one made in the image of one of the parts God consists of. This is why there are also some very smart people who talk to themselves on a regular basis and find great value in doing so!

Now, we know the definitions of the parts God consists of mostly because of what the New Testament tells us, and more specifically because of what Jesus explained while walking this earth. However, let us not forget the words used here in Genesis, "us" and "our." The reason I say we see the truth, God consists of three parts, mainly once Jesus comes to this earth, is because we, again, see God talking to Himself. The difference in the case of Jesus living as a man among us is, Jesus attempts to explain to us how this all works, by giving us definitions. Jesus is God, and He clearly talked on many occasions about and to The Father - Who is also God. Jesus also spoke about The Holy Ghost. Some references come out as "Holy Spirit," which is the same; I just prefer to use the term "Ghost." In English, I feel this gives us more of a substance for this part of God in the same way calling Jesus The Son does, but it's simply a technical preference. The point here is, for our benefit, Jesus, who is God, is talking about how God is composed, which means He must use terminology we can understand!

Some people do not like the idea we say God is Triune, because they believe to do so is to teach there is more than One True God. However, this is a great misunderstanding of the point. First, we should recognize it was not a theory of man which brought about the terms: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is directly from Scripture we get these terms. It was even The Messiah Himself who told us there was a Father and a Holy Ghost, and who called Himself The Son. The other times we hear Jesus called The Son is when God The Father is speaking about Jesus. (Matt. 3:13-17, 17:1-9) The true problem comes from the fact people believe this is somehow suggesting they are separated from being one entity. This is sometimes heightened by the fact those who believe in what is termed, "The Trinity," are not often clear on the facts themselves. They will also often refer to The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as three distinct "personalities," as a way to explain it. While I'm not totally opposed to this definition, I will say it can be misleading. Again, what you're up against is the weakness of language.

The reason it can be problematic to talk about "personalities" is, as humans, we look at each person and say, "They have their own unique personality." If we say God has three distinct personalities, it can seem as if we are saying God is actually three individuals who work together in what is at best, a symbiotic relationship. Without a better way to say it, the truth is, we are actually talking about only parts which makeup one entity. This is why Jesus did not attempt to use words like

"personality" to explain this truth, but instead used illustration. By giving the parts illustrative names, Jesus was attempting to help us understand the relationship that causes the parts to function properly as a whole!

The disciples had a bit of trouble with this idea themselves. In truth, it is a hard concept, especially if we are not thinking in the way we should about God being greater than what we can observe physically. The physical is what we see, and as the saying goes, "Seeing is believing." This is why one day Jesus is in the middle of explaining to the disciples that if they knew Him they knew The Father, and Philip asks Jesus to "show" them The Father, and with that they would be sufficed. (John 14:1-11) Jesus points out, after spending all the time together which they had, the disciples should have understood the concept by then. Because they obviously did not, Jesus explains again the point: if you have seen Him (Jesus), you have seen The Father!

Some people think what Jesus was saying is, I'm so much like The Father, or I'm so wrapped up in The Father, there is no reason to "see" The Father for yourself. That is not what Jesus was saying! Jesus emphasized the fact they should have understood the point already, because they should have understood before He ever came, there is only One God; and by that time in walking with Jesus, they should have grasp the fact their forefather Abraham knew centuries before - God was going to provide Himself a Lamb. (Gen.

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

Last time, we talked about Genesis chapter 10 verses 9 through 12, and the fact Nimrod had progressed in his lore to god-like status in the minds of many people. He had even obtained a name that denoted this fact: "Asshur." Now the names of false gods morph as much as anything in this world. This is why some people worship more than one god, which originally is the same god or derived from the same thing, and never realize it. They have gods of their own; they pick up a god from one place or people and another from somewhere else. They mix and even match at times. It would even appear some people, such as the Romans, at the very least, understood their gods had equivalents with many others. The Romans may very well have copied some of their gods off the Greeks to begin with. However, the point is that false gods the world over are not really as complicated as they may seem. In truth, they are all simply the worship of creation rather than The Creator. (Rom. 1:21-25)

What creates the complication is that one day a god is something like the wind, then an image is made to represent the wind, and it's given a title to denote it is the god which is wind. Before you know it, the image becomes a god in and of itself, and the wind is controlled by that specific god. If the god becomes greatly revered and/or the original story is lost, the next thing you know the graven image can become disconnected from the wind altogether, or become something like: the god of all the heavens.

Once this happens, it can bring many changes to any number of things believed about that false god. I suppose it could take a lifetime to put together all the false gods in this world that we know at one point or another has been or still is worshiped, and attempt to figure out who's who and what. However, this is a good thing because we should all see how gods come and go with time, which shows they really are, no god at all. This is all connected to what happened just after the flood. In that time there arose one false god which was very clear, Asshur, who was Nimrod. He was the man who, in the eyes of other men, became godlike.

It's as if Nimrod tore a hole in the fabric of human thinking that would never be mended. Certain people in certain places would no doubt have come around to worshipping a certain amount of natural forces, at times. However, directly on this side of the flood it was obvious God had control of those forces. The flood had proven that beyond the shadow of a doubt. God was God, and even Nimrod was looked at, not as being God so much as a man between God and other men. However, the fact people began to worship Nimrod's abilities, opened a door for people to revere something they felt was more tangible than God Himself. This also has to do with feeling you're in control to some degree. In the beginning of the worship of a person there is often the feeling, if people put you in that place they can control you as well, but this

quickly gets out of hand, especially when/as someone is elevated to a godlike status.

Nimrod's new title, "Asshur," which as we talked about last time, means "water boundary," and denotes the heavens, or the end of where God put the firmament above, makes even more sense when you consider that the tower the people would go on to construct was for the purpose of reaching out into the heavens. They believed this tower would take humanity closer to where they felt people as great as Nimrod already belonged. It would take them to the stars or, at the very least, give them a better vantage point of the heavens. From their perspective, God lived out there somewhere, and they knew God was powerful. They believed if they could reach out, or get closer to where He was, they themselves could obtain some of that power, and/or become more godlike themselves. This is what led to the belief that the stars held the key to knowing the future, which is a power man has always desired. It is no small wonder that after Nimrod died, there became a grouping of stars which, to this day, are considered to be him in the night sky. Not many would call the constellation Nimrod or the very appropriate name of "Asshur" today, but that is because God confounded our languages. Today, many people know that constellation as the mighty hunter Orion!

The name given to Nimrod would go forward after the confounding of the languages to carry both the context of being a gracious provider, which is that perceived luxury idea we talked about last time, as

well as the idea Nimrod belongs somewhere, at the very least, between man and The One True God. Later names derived from this base name given to Nimrod were bestowed on other false gods which were/are considered the rulers of the firmament, heavens, sky, etc. Very often these titles were also given to men, or positions held by men, just as Asshur was given to Nimrod. There is just no doubt that what happened with Nimrod is the basis for why later rulers were, and often still are in many ways, considered, at the very least, a minor god, or a person with more direct access to those things beyond us than the average man had/has. This is a dangerous precedent, not just because it hinders and/or blocks our path to The One True God, but also because the more a human leader or position is perceived in this way, the more the person in that position is unjustly feared by those they rule over. When people do not see their rulers as just fellow humans who have a job to do, they do not have the will or even the inclination to replace them when they don't do that job, or abuse the opportunities of having that job. In this way, people find their creation of these positions coming back to bite them in numerous ways. What happened with Nimrod solidified this post-flood path man would walk, a path that persists even to this very day, and which would be interacted with by God Himself by giving us a Saviour from our bad choices, in the man Jesus Christ!

Now, the verses that go on down from verse 12 here in chapter 10, continue to give genealogy, which shows us the earth's population was growing. As I pointed out before, there is information in these verses

that has to do with the development of tribal or national groups. However, we will come back to this information, because before we go on to talk about how separate nations developed, we want to talk about what Nimrod's kingdom went on to do, which kept everyone from separating into those divisions that led to what we know today. For that, we need to couple this story about Nimrod's actions and the population's reaction, with the events we are told beginning in chapter 11 verse 1!

Genesis chapter 11 verse 1 tells us a fact we have covered many times already, but one that we should stop to consider every time we talk about the way God created us and especially when we study the time period from creation leading up to the tower. The entire earth was of one language! This verse also tells us the earth was of one speech. This may seem like just an emphasis, but it is important. To be of one language is to point out everyone spoke the same language. However, there are truths in this world when it comes to language, which we all know. For example, the people in Great Britain, Australia, and the United States all primarily speak the language known as English. The reason this is true even has to do with the fact many of these people came to their new homes in Australia and the U.S. from Great Britain. This means their English has direct ties from the past. English is also spoken in many other nations and by people all over the world, but all English is not the same!

People like to say Australia and the United States are two common countries

separated by a foreign language, because the English in the two countries uses phrases and words so differently and to mean different things, we often just don't get each other in spite of the fact we are speaking the same language from the same root. Of course, when talking about these two countries, we are talking about peoples who are separated from one another by great distance. It may come as no small surprise that our language has become very different in many aspects. However, you don't have to go that far before you find challenges among English speaking people. Those who live in the Eastern United States have very different accents from those who live in what is defined as the Mid-west and certainly from those who live in the South. In some cases, these accents can get so heavy that people from different areas are in fact speaking a language which is, by all accounts, a different speech. First and foremost, on a physical level, language is sound. When you compare the sounds made to speak each word between people with what is - for lack of a better term - differing accents, the sounds of each word are very different indeed. The only reason many people speaking these words to each other can understand each other, in spite of this, is that on a mental level we know the other person's words are founded in the same language. This makes it possible to literally interpret what the other person is saying and, for the most part or on a basic level, understand each other.

That being said, it is hard to know just how much is actually being lost between two people in this situation. Expression can

be so deep, and when you are not even vocalizing the same words, in reality, how much of the expression in the other person's voice are you missing? This is shown in the fact, accent and change in the vocalization of individual words, as well as the cadence in which they are presented can only go so far before they are no longer able to be interpreted, in spite of the fact both people believe they are speaking the same language. This is why people who come from other countries, where they also speak a common language, can learn a new language such as English and still find it very hard to speak to people more native to that language. If they can not get the vocalization of their words into a certain range, they will not be understood. At the same time, it may be very easy for people who come from the same non-English speaking environment, who all learn English as a second language, to understand each other's "English." This truth is not specific to English; it is the nature of all language. We may not have words to describe this, but this concept is what the verse is talking about when saying the whole earth was all of one speech! It's just a truth that, many times, the fact you come from the same cadence and accent of verbalization, it can be far easier to understand the other person no matter what "language" you claim to be speaking to each other. This is also why coming to agreement on what is and what is not the purest vocalization of any particular spoken language can be a debate never won by any particular group!

Suffice it to say, that language in our post Tower of Babel world is a tricky thing, to say the least; and while many people in

the world may be attempting to learn a common language, they often are, in fact, only sowing the seeds necessary for a whole new set of languages to emerge. Unfortunately, there is also a watering-down effect to all this. It seems the more people attempt to worry about being able to speak a common language, the worse this can all be; and oddly enough, it can be even worse yet when languages are already similar. There are languages which are, to some degree, so similar, a person speaking one can almost pick out the words of the other, but only in part. Spanish, French, and Italian, all come from very similar roots; and the roots of English are even similar enough that an English speaking person with a little knowledge about the other language's phrasing can pick out some of what a person speaking one of these is saying. This can be even more true when looking at the words in writing. However, this is how watering down happens.

If, by natural forces such as proximity, or by unnatural forces such as war and conquest, it becomes necessary for people to communicate with one another who do not speak the same language, there can develop a new bridge language and speech. The problem with this is that the bridge often only contains necessary communication. Because there was never a "necessity" to preserve it, most of what made the two preexisting languages beautiful and in-depthful is lost. Each generation takes this process forward. The bridge language only comes about out of necessity. That "necessity" will often cause the children not to bother learning their parents' lan-

guage well, even at home, nor will they learn the language of the other side. Instead, they learn or retain mostly the bridge language, only because that is all they need in order to interact in what has become their greater society. As this happens, there is in the minds of the children no understanding about what is being lost. The next generation or so, not even being exposed to anyone who knows the original languages well, will lose even more until the knowledge that there even was two or more languages to begin with is only a fact in a history book or forgotten altogether.

If this happens to a couple of groups in one place, and a couple more in another, four languages which were strong become two weaker languages. If the two new groups or part of them meld together, they will likely take the two weaker languages and make a third even more watered-down one. Because of accent change and the like, the languages can even split into several, and down we go! In Romans chapter 1 the Bible talks about man thinking himself to be wise and becoming fools. What man does here in chapter 11 of the book of Genesis is something he thinks is a great thing for humanity, when in actuality it is such a bad thing, God has to once again take something very valuable away from us so we do not simply drop off into ultimate worthlessness. The end result of man's sinful actions is God having to take something from us that was more valuable than anything we hoped to gain by our actions! Just think, before the sin of Adam and Eve we had a perfect environment without a care in the world, and access to the Tree of Life. Before the sin of those at

the Tower of Babel, we still had a world with one language and one speech. It was not just that we all spoke the same language for the time being, but that we all utilized linguistic ability in a way which is probably beyond our comprehension today, as well as being a reason we do not have as good a comprehension!

God wants us to love each other and interact with each other; but when we do, it is often with a mindset of wanting to drown God out. Our lives are driven by selfish, fleshly desires; and thus, our interactions with each other become corrupted with greed and many other sins too numerous to mention. Because of sin, this happens a majority of the time no matter how good our initial intentions were/are. To keep us from corrupting each other very quickly, God had to implement something which made our interaction harder, but not impossible. If we would take the time to learn each others thoughts instead of just pushing ahead with what gets us what we want the quickest, if we valued the right things instead of the wrong things, if we would allow God to be our guide about what is truly right and wrong, not only would we not be in this situation in the first place, we would still find the ability to grow and accomplish even now. If we would take the time to truly learn, the mixing of languages could develop a stronger language and a stronger understanding between each other. If our intent was not continually that of Nimrod and those who willingly followed him, which is to force the entire world into one idea or concept for the sake of hurried accomplishment, we could truly cooperate, while still valuing

individual thoughts and freedom. Instead, we simply continue to make a bad situation, which we created in the first place, worse!

Chapter 11 verse 1 is telling us that when the world was one language and speech, man's interactions with each other automatically brought the right pieces together to accomplish great things. People did not argue about so many things because they simply understood each other. They may not have always agreed, but they understood each other! Never were they in a situation where they were just trying to catch what the other was saying in spite of an accent or verbal cadence. Such things simply did not develop. As time went on, man could have built his language to contain words that others would understand because of the word's construction, even if the other person had never heard those words before. Human interaction would have grown human speech and thought, without the danger of watering it down. Again, we just can't imagine this, and what we have lost.

Now, looking at it chronologically, we can feel certain that verse 2 of chapter 11 happens before the verses about Nimrod from chapter 10, which we have been studying over our last couple of segments or so. Nimrod was only the third generation of post-flood people if you start your count with Ham, Shem, and Japheth, as we did in our chart from Issue #56. However, if you start with those who were actually born on this side of the flood, you start with Ham's son Cush, who was Nimrod's father, and

that makes Nimrod just the second post-flood generation. This puts him in the same generation bracket with Salah, who was the grandson of Shem. According to the information given here in chapter 11, Salah was born about 37 years after the flood, and Salah was the grandfather of Peleg. Peleg's name means "division" or "separation," and according to Genesis 10:25, he was named this because of the confounding of the languages and the division of peoples that confounding caused. According to the age facts given in the genealogy listings, Peleg was born right around 100 years after Noah and his family left the ark. These numbers clearly show us that Nimrod and his kingdom building activities, which are told to us in chapter 10, are directly connected, facilitate, and precipitate the building of the tower! However, before Nimrod could build his kingdom in Shinar, the families of Noah had to go there.

Verse 2 of chapter 11 tells us they found the plain of Shinar, "...as they journeyed from the east..." If you draw a line on a map, such as the one in Issue #58, from Mt. Ararat straight south, you will come to the lower Mesopotamian Valley or Shinar. This would seem to make the wording of verse 2 incorrect. They did not travel from the east going west to get to Shinar, but we must remember it is only in our modern time that we can think this way. Today, we have maps and even aerial and satellite photography, which causes us to have more than a bird's-eye view of our world. However, people living in most of the centuries preceding ours did not have good maps at all, much less photos. People, and

thus the Bible, refer to direction as it happens on the ground. If when leaving one place you have to travel a certain direction to get to another, you say the other place is in that direction. The area where the ark landed is not very hospitable country, and is comprised of very rugged terrain for the most part. It is also considerably North and is very cold in the winter.

This has a lot to do with why we do not know for certain where the ark is; and there are few, if not any, true records outside the Bible that tell of seeing Noah's ark. God wants us to serve Him because we have faith, which is a direct relationship with Him, not because we hold on to some physical object. God did not want man to worship the ark or see it as a point of power. The fact man goes on to build a tower in order to worship and obtain power, shows that if the ark had settled in what would have been a nice place for the people to live, it would very easily have become something much like the tower. I believe there can be no doubt God had His hand in the fact the ark landed where it did! Noah's family knew this was not the spot to settle down in; but to get out of this terrain, Noah and his family likely traveled, following the prominent rivers, and using the river banks as a path to get out of the mountains they had landed in. This took them in a westerly direction from Mt. Ararat. It was as they traveled from the east to the west from Ararat that they emerged from the rugged mountains and began their southern decent into the Mesopotamian Valley, finally settling on the plain of Shinar as their new home!

As the story moves forward, we should all remember that the people were not just all of one language, but also of one family. Because they were the only ones who survived the flood, Noah's family were the only humans on the planet. One can see how they did not want to spread out and lose contact with each other, especially after such a major event like the flood. Spreading too far and wide right out of the gate did not seem as practical as staying together and helping one another. On this, I want to emphasize two facts. The first is that contrary to what some Bible teachers and commentaries teach, God did not have a problem with this! There are those who will tell you that God laid out, or had divine divisions in the earth, which the three sons of Noah and their individual families were suppose to go out and live in, and what God did not like was that the families of Noah didn't go out into those divisions. If we take a quick look at verse 5, we see this has nothing to do with the reality. God came down to see what man was building. This was much like God coming to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, even after they had taken of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. God did not come to Adam and Eve with vengeance; He came walking in the garden and calling out to them in order to commune with them. Yes, God had told them not to eat of that tree, and yes, God was going to have to punish them for their actions, but what was truly upsetting was that Adam and Eve hid from God and then tried to make excuses for their actions. What got the people in trouble at the time of the tower, was not that they failed to follow some divine edict, which is not recorded as even being told to them, but

what they had chose to do with the new opportunity God had given man. It was not even about the fact they were building a tower or cooperating to do such a thing. It was the intent of the tower that was wrong.

The second fact is that picking a place to call a starting point was, in a way, following the example God had set by planting the Garden of Eden in the first place. Man chose the plains of Shinar as their hub, and even the fact that Nimrod's kingdom consists of cities up and down and on both sides of the rivers to the east and west of this plain, shows they were not festering in one spot. There was nothing wrong with the fact they all chose to travel to Shinar and live their lives there to begin with. David wrote in the Psalms, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalms 133:1 There is no doubt that the families of Noah were brethren, and God would be pleased to see them cooperate. It was certainly not God's intent that they fight among each other. However, they should never have forgotten what they learned through the flood; and they should never have forgotten that each of them were equal and created by One True Creator, Whom they should all serve!

What the families of Noah had was not a divine edict to separate from one another into far and distant lands immediately upon leaving the ark. What they had was a divine inheritance of the earth, which God had created for all individuals so they could commune with and live for Him while also interacting with other humans! The families of Noah traveling to a place that they all

agreed would be their point of connection, was a good thing. This gave them something very much like the Garden of Eden in its intent. They could all go out and explore the world from this spot, and do it with the assurance they could always come home again, even if just to share what they had found. This would have been a true blessing to humanity as a whole. In Shinar, people had a common, agreed upon place and God could have come down among humans to meet with them. They should have prepared there a sanctuary for the purpose, and God would have blessed them with His instructions and presence! It's true, we would never have re-obtained the Tree of Life, but everyone who desired to could have once again known where to physically come in order to meet with, learn from, and know their Creator. If the people had chosen this, humanity would have a whole different post-flood history. Instead of God having to later choose a specific nation and bloodline to create and preserve such a place, the place would have been built by all those who cooperated in service to God, leaving those who cared not for the things of God the opportunity to simply go out and away into the world wherever they chose. Instead, man, as a whole, chose to build a tower and a name for themselves. This was an attempt to teach everyone in every generation their human ideas of how man should live, no matter where they lived. (Prov. 14:12) Because they did this, we can add, a second chance at the Garden of Eden, to the list of things we have lost to sin!

Until next time, Shalom!

22:7-8) If they believed Jesus was that Lamb Abraham knew would be provided, it should be easy to understand Jesus is God Himself. There is no reason to ask to “see” The Father or The Holy Ghost. If God was going to physically come to us in the form we live in, it was going to be The Son we were going to “see”!

Now, seeing Jesus is not experiencing all of God, but it is “seeing” God, just as seeing a person on the street is not knowing them, but it is, in truth, seeing them. To truly know a person, you have to develop a relationship with them. How deep you know a person is dependent on how deep each of you are willing to go and what you are willing to share with one another. Jesus wanted the disciples to know there is more to God than just the part which they could see with their eyes, and that is why Jesus instructs us to seek The Father through Him, and The Holy Ghost could also be known and help us know The Father, as well as The Son. (John 14:6-26)

All this perhaps makes better sense if we go back to the point that helps us understand death and its consequences for humans. Again, we, as humans, are made in the image of God. Unlike an animal or plant, which is nothing more than physical, we are physical plus something more. That something more is often simply referred to as “spirit,” but this is just a generic way of referring to everything which is not of the flesh. For the sake of reference, it may make better sense, when generally referring to those parts of us which are not of the flesh, to say our “soul.” The point,

again, is when people see us, they too do not experience all which we are, they only “see” us. Seeing may be believing in many people's book, but seeing is not finding all there is to know. All of what we actually are is triune in the image of God. We have the flesh, which we are very familiar with. Then we have a spirit, which is something we do not understand very much about, and which is not just that generic reference to all that is not of the flesh. We also have a mind, and this is not a reference to the gray tangled mass of nerves and such in our skulls. What is in our skull is the physical control panel which may be, for the sake of reference, best referred to as the brain. The true mind is another part of us that is not of the flesh. Once again, we are limited by language.

The reason Jesus said, if you have seen Him, you have seen The Father, is because Jesus (or The Son) is what our physical forms are a reflection of; and this is the reason The Son came to earth as a man. It's also the reason Jesus said He was the part which was going to prepare a “place” for us, so where God is, we can be also. (John 14:1-3) The fact Jesus is responsible for what we know here is pointed out to us in the Gospel of John. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:3 People who believe they understand things about the Bible will sometimes tell you the part you can see is not really them. They believe they understand a truth in the idea that what counts is what is on the inside. However, this is no more true than believing Jesus is not truly God. Our flesh is a part of us. The fact we lose it because of

death is a big problem for us, and the precise problem Jesus came to deal with!

What we call our spirit is that part which is reflective of The Holy Ghost. Again, we do not understand this part very well, but that is mostly because it's easy to neglect it. God sent The Holy Ghost to us after Jesus left this earth, because nurturing this flesh is not a useful thing. It is in this sense, we can apply the old adage: it's what's on the inside that counts. This flesh is going to die! Without the Tree of Life to sustain us, we cannot hope to escape this truth. What we need to understand is that Jesus did not come in order to change this fact, Jesus has accomplished the needed work to take care of the fact this is a problem! Jesus will also return in the future to take care of other business of our fleshly existence, which we will touch on later. In the meantime, we should understand our spirit is a part of us right now, but unlike the flesh, it will not die. Thus, The Holy Ghost was sent to nurture our spirit and draw our focus off the flesh. If we will follow His leading, we will become aware of the more important issues of the here and now and be able to make better choices in using our lives - even the flesh - as a tool in service to God. At the very least, we can and should work to make the flesh a slave to righteousness, instead of allowing it to harm others through sin. (I Pet. 4:1-11, I Jn. 2:15-17)

Directing our flesh, as well as our spirit, is ultimately the responsibility of the mind. The mind is the part of us that re-

flects God The Father, and one of the big reasons Jesus attempted to explain God's composition to us by using illustrative names, which come from the family structure God created humans to live in, is that it's something we should be able to understand no matter how fleshly we have allowed our thinking to become. In seeing the illustration, we can see the correct way we are suppose to order things in our lives. Being made in the image of God means we should order our existence in the same way God orders His. Of course, as we have been discussing, God is at a totally different level than we are; but the truth is, we were created to function in a like fashion.

Now, the father is the head of the household according to the way God set up a family unit; and while many like to look at this as authority, it's actually a big responsibility. (Matt. 19:1-9) For a family unit to function properly, there needs to be a decision maker who should be taking everything into account and ultimately making the final call on issues that arise. Now, as so much in our world of dysfunctional families, high levels of divorce and remarriage, etc. has proven, this is not an order we are forced to follow, or that is unbreakable. However, in spite of the fact children rebel against their parents, wives no longer want to honor their husbands, and husbands no longer seek God in order to lead their families properly, none of this negates the truth that God established an order to the family in the same way He established an order to all the universe we

live in. (Col. 3:15-24) Jesus uses this family order to show us God also created a similar order we should have in our personal lives; and we should be able to see, we would be much better off if we all attempted to use and cherish it.

Perhaps to understand what the mind is, it also helps to understand what it isn't. Animals, being only flesh, do not have a mind, only a brain. They do what they do because of instinct. Instinct, and the fact it can seem very complex at times, should not be an amazement to us. The body itself even has instinct built right into its individual cells. Humans are only now beginning to understand these facts, and the fact when these embedded instincts of the cells go wrong it's the cause of things, such as cancer. However, if cells can have built in instructions which guide them to be bone, skin, etc., it should not surprise us that the brain is capable of far more reactive and complex instincts.

At the core of it all, animal instinct is based on some very simple objectives no matter how complex their everyday living may seem. Animals, as well as plants, want to survive. Thus, they have instincts which causes them to avoid danger when they recognize it. They have the instinct to do what is needed to procreate. They also have the instinct to find food and water, which is necessary on a continual basis for all living things. Thus, some animals, such as ants and many vermin, even store these things for later use. Our flesh, again, is much like the plants and animals, and it has all these instincts as well. Our brain, which is still part of the flesh, and even

more complex in and of itself than any animal's brain, can learn facts far beyond the "smartest" animals; and it can react to things, even attempting experiments as to what the best reaction is in any particular situation. Like the animals, in many ways, these instincts are necessary to our physical existence. However, humans were not created to live only by the instincts of our flesh. When we do not use our mind to guide and control our actions, and especially when we allow our instincts to determine our desires and direction in life, they cause us big problems. (Gal. 5:16-26)

The flesh can cause us a lot of trouble if left to its own devices, because, again, we were not made to live like animals. Humans were not built to be a part of the balanced system of nature; and thus, human flesh wants to do more than just what satisfies its basic desire to survive, and do our part in the world. Even our instincts, far more than any animal's, include a desire for comfort and stimulation. If we allow our choices to be dictated by the flesh's desires and instincts, there is no end to the wrong we will end up doing to ourselves, others, and even the environment we all live in! The fact we need to keep our flesh under submission to the mind is what Jesus was showing us in the fact He always submitted Himself to The Father's will, even telling us directly, He came not to do His will, but that of His Father. (John 5:30)

Jesus came to do a work which was His to do, but He came because of choices made by The Father. This is probably best seen in the night before Jesus' crucifixion

as Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, being the part of God which would have to suffer on the cross, did not want to. Thus, the request made of The Father, by Jesus, was, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:..." There is no reason to believe there was any other way, but for just a moment we have to stop and think about the fact, even if there had been, this may still have been the best way! Jesus knew this fact as well, and that is why He went on to pray, "...nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Matthew 26:39 The Father was The One Who could make the right and balanced choice.

Our flesh, as well as our spirit, will continually tell the mind what they desire and will seek especially those things they need. However, it's always up to the mind to allow or disallow any action. One of the most basic of these is seen in the simple fact our flesh gets hungry, but we do not have to stop what we are doing and feed it. This is even true in spite of physical ailments which do not allow certain people to go very long without food before they faint or experience even more life threatening conditions. The mind can control the flesh in spite of the flesh's instincts. If the flesh gets sick or begins to break down in its ability to operate, the mind may not be able to do much to control, especially, certain aspects of the flesh's behavior. However, all this just makes it obvious the mind needs to be conscious of the flesh's true needs, and the fact the flesh can and will eventually cease to operate altogether.

This brings us back to the fact, it's not just what is on the inside that counts, and the flesh is indeed a part of us. The flesh has obvious capabilities that are needed, and which are at our mind's disposal. One of the most basic of these is the fact we can be mobile, which directly relates to our earlier discussion about why we are similar to the plants and animals in our flesh's design. This universe is the space we were meant to be mobile in. We can also verbally communicate using the flesh, and in turn we can intake communication from others while experiencing all kinds of physical sights, sounds, tastes, and touches. Ultimately losing all these abilities to death is at the heart of the question we're dealing with here. The flesh is not just a shell we live in, it's necessary for our ability to live in the way God created us to live!

In our next segment we will continue talking about how we were created to live, and operate as a triune being. We will also get into more detail about the work Jesus came to do, and why. This will take us further down the road to understanding what it means to be "born again," which is something very important to our understanding about what happens upon Jesus' return. Until then, I pray you will grow in His assurance and comfort, as you prepare your life to meet The Lord at His return!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

The Bible As A Book continued from pg. 4
ings having someone such as Jacob around brought. Laban, once again, wants to make a deal with Jacob, which would keep him right where he was. However, this time Jacob did not choose an agreement that committed him to a certain time period in order to receive his wage or pay for one already granted. Instead, Jacob makes an agreement for wages that would be more typical for a herdsman.

In ancient times, money, as we know it today, was not the typical way to pay a workman. Just as with the agreements for Rachel and Leah, labor was bought in exchange for some kind of goods or service whether provided before, after, or during the employment. For a herdsman the typical wage was a share in the increase of the herd. This is what Jacob asked for. However, he did not ask for a percentage, but something that would be visually obvious as to what was his and what was Laban's. By this time, Jacob had learned that Laban could not be trusted to simply be a man of his word. Now, traditionally, eastern sheep are white and the goats are black. Those with mixed colors, whether by spots, strips, etc., as well as brown sheep are breeding anomalies, and to keep them rare they are not desired for further breeding. These are the animals Jacob asked for. Because of this, Laban believed he was getting a significant bargain, if not an all out steal. To ensure he could not be accused of intentionally breeding these animals into

the desired flock, Jacob would remove all multicolored animals and brown sheep from the herds of Laban. He would also put three days travel between his and Laban's herds. Jacob would only keep the increase of what was now his very small herd and any further anomalies like them, which came forth in Laban's herd.

After this agreement, we see another story that many people think of as magical, but once again was not. Jacob would lay bundles of rods made from tree branches before the cattle, when it came time to water them. These bundles were prepared by stripping the bark from the branches of differing species of trees so the bundles appeared to have a striped look in color. Jacob would lay these before the eyes of those animals he felt were healthy and strong, as they came up to drink; but when an animal was not to his satisfaction, he would not put the bundles of rods before them. This was a way for Jacob to signify to God which cattle he hoped to have offspring from and those he did not. It was a little like a visual prayer request, and it was one God answered, as more and more of what was a deviation became the norm for the most desirable among the herds!

This caused Jacob to increase greatly, while Laban did not see the blessings he had hoped to have. Thus, the sons of Laban became very jealous. They even began to accuse Jacob of taking away what was their father's, and that Jacob

only had what he had because of their father, as if he did not deserve the fruits of the agreement Jacob and Laban had made. This murmuring, and the fact Laban was not prospering like he wanted, caused Laban to show his true colors. Laban no longer favored Jacob as he once had, because it no longer brought Laban what he wanted. After six years of this, Jacob knew it was time to go, and God appeared to Jacob again in a dream to affirm the time had come to return to the promised land. God also confirmed that it was He who had intentionally transferred the wealth Laban had gotten under Jacob's labor, into Jacob's hands, by way of the agreement with the animals.

Jacob called Rachel and Leah out to where he was working so as not to be overheard or interrupted by a family visit or others in the household. There he tells them his intent to return to the land he came from, in spite of the fact Jacob knew Laban would still not be happy, especially in allowing him to take all of what was rightfully his. Jacob makes it clear to them that God had shown him it was God who had given them their wealth, and now it was not just Jacob's choice to return to his land, but the commandment of God to do so. The two sisters agreed that God had done great things in giving all this to Jacob, and there was nothing left for them in the house of their father. They would will-

ingly go and assist their husband in this endeavor.

Jacob would immediately begin to pack up their stuff, which being a herdsman would not take long to mobilize! He would leave without telling Laban because he knew Laban would simply try to stop him or confiscate what was rightfully Jacob's. The only thing among Jacob's stuff that did not belong to him were graven images, which for reasons that do not speak well of Rachel's character, Rachel had stolen from her father. It would be three days before it would come to Laban's attention that Jacob had left, and Laban, even being in the middle of the very important job of sheep shearing, would gather up his men to chase after Jacob. Jacob would not take the traditional path, which would have taken him straight down to the area of Bethel and Hebron. Instead, he would go to the east of the Jordan river, likely in anticipation of what lay ahead of him in confronting his brother Esau, as well as what he knew was surely coming behind him in the pursuit of Laban. With all his cattle and family, it would take Jacob ten days to get to Mount Gilead. This would be seven days since Laban had learned Jacob was gone and began his attempt to catch him. At this point in time, Mount Gilead would be very neutral territory. Not quite the land of Jacob's family, but certainly outside the range of Laban's territory.

It would be here that Laban would catch up with Jacob, and aside from all other facts, Laban would specifically be warned by God in a dream that he could do nothing one way or another to Jacob. Laban and Jacob would meet, and one of the first claims of Laban would be that if Jacob had told him he was going instead of sneaking away, Laban would have sent him off with celebration. Then Jacob is justified in his actions as Laban makes it clear he is a man of force, as he would be willing to hurt Jacob for leaving, if it were not for God warning him not to. However, Laban still wants his gods back; and Jacob tells Laban he is free to look for them among his stuff, and even kill the person he finds responsible for taking them. Laban searches everywhere, but when he comes to Rachel's tent, she claims "...the custom of women is upon..." her and she can't rise up. Rachel says this because she had hidden the gods by putting them in her furniture and sitting on them. Thus, Laban did not find his gods, and this brings it around to Jacob's chance to be upset. Jacob points out all he had done for Laban only to have Laban attempt to change their agreements every time it seemed to favor Jacob, and even at that, Laban now throwing accusations of theft and dishonesty, which Laban has no proof of.

This incident would end the ties Abraham's family had with the family he had left behind to come into the land of Canaan. In Mount Gilead, Jacob and Laban

would make a pact that neither would pass over that spot to do the other harm. Because displeasure was about all that was left between the direction the two families were going, they would call on God to be witness between them that Jacob would take care of Laban's daughters and grandchildren, and Laban would not pass over into Jacob's territory to lay claim to anything which was Jacob's. This pretty much solidified that they would not, as family, cross back and forth anymore to be with or receive anything from one another ever again. The task of breaking away from one side of his family, to do God's will, was not an easy nor pleasant one for Jacob, but he had made the break. Now, he would have to fulfill his promise to God that he would return to Bethel, and he knew his brother Esau was waiting on the other side of the Jordan!

Jacob had been gone for twenty years, and he did not know for sure what Esau's attitude would be. However, he suspected he would still be very angry. As Jacob traveled from Gilead, he was met at one point by a host of angels, which confirmed to Jacob that God was in this place and still with Jacob! After this, Jacob would not wait to be found by Esau, he would send messengers to Esau in order to announce his return with humility, and the request for mercy. However, Jacob would be greatly troubled by the return news that Esau was coming to meet him accompanied by a band of four hundred men. This would cause Jacob to

split his company into two groups, in the hope if Esau destroyed one the other would be able to escape. Jacob would turn to God and plead for God's protection from Esau, reminding God of the promise that He had said Jacob would be a great nation. Then Jacob took a multitude of his animals, everything from camels to goats, and sent them as a present to appease Esau. He would also separate this drove of animals in an attempt to slow Esau's progress as he came to each group of gifts ahead of the main groups that contained Jacob's family itself.

That night, as Jacob remained with his family, he rose up and began to send them over the river Jabbok, which is a tributary to the Jordan. He sent all his family and remaining goods over, leaving him alone on the other side. In that night, there by himself, Jacob would get into a wrestling match with an angel. In spite of everything Jacob had just been through, he refused to give up on the fight; but as the day began to break, the angel touched Jacob's thigh, shrinking the sinew, and threw out the joint. This pretty much ended Jacob's ability to truly wrestle with the angel, but like a child who is hopelessly outmatched by an adult may refuse to let go of their leg or arm, so to, Jacob refused to let the angel go until he received a blessing from him. The angel asks for Jacob's name, and Jacob responds. Then Jacob is told he

would no longer be called by this name, which means "supplanter," but by the newly descriptive name of Israel, which denotes that he stood in a very special place, having power with both God and men. This is the name that would go on to be the name of the chosen nation of God. Its meaning was to be true, not just of the person Jacob as he walked among men, but of the nation as a whole as it stood among the world!

Before the angel leaves, Jacob asks of his name; and in a move which showed Jacob he had power because of God and not over God in anyway, Jacob is flatly denied this request. Jacob would also move forward from this incident with a reminder of it embedded in his flesh. This would be much like what Paul talks about in II Corinthians 12:6-10, where he says, he (Paul) was given a thorn in the flesh so he and all others would always know his success and abilities come from God, and not himself. Jacob would pass from this place with a limp because of his thigh, and if anything confirmed to Jacob that he was no physical match for his brother Esau in the confrontation Jacob believed lay ahead, there was no doubt now. Jacob would have to depend on God alone to fulfill His word, and work all things out in His timing and will!

Let's stay in God's Word!