

Adam Clarke Commentary Genesis 31

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Laban and his sons envy Jacob, Genesis 31:1, Genesis 31:2; on which he is commanded by the Lord to return to his own country, Genesis 31:3. Having called his wives together, he lays before them a detailed statement of his situation in reference to their father, Genesis 31:4-5; the services he had rendered him, Genesis 31:6; the various attempts made by Laban to defraud him of his hire, Genesis 31:7; how, by God's providence, his evil designs had been counteracted, Genesis 31:8-12; and then informs them that he is now called to return to his own country, Genesis 31:13. To the proposal of an immediate departure, Leah and Rachel agree; and strengthen the propriety of the measure by additional reasons, Genesis 31:14-16; on which Jacob collects all his family, his flocks and his goods, and prepares for his departure, Genesis 31:17, Genesis 31:18. Laban having gone to shear his sheep, Rachel secretes his images, Genesis 31:19. Jacob and his family, unknown to Laban, take their departure, Genesis 31:20, Genesis 31:21. On the third day Laban is informed of their flight, Genesis 31:22; and pursues them to Mount Gilead, Genesis 31:23. God appears to Laban in a dream, and warns him not to molest Jacob, Genesis 31:24. He comes up with Jacob at Mount Gilead, Genesis 31:25; reproaches him with his clandestine departure, Genesis 31:26-29; and charges him with having stolen his gods, Genesis 31:30. Jacob vindicates himself, and protests his innocence in the matter of the theft, Genesis 31:31, Genesis 31:32. Laban makes a general search for his images in Jacob's, Leah's, Bilhah's, and Zilpah's tents; and not finding them, proceeds to examine Rachel's, Genesis 31:33. Rachel, having hidden them among the camel's furniture, sat upon them, Genesis 31:34; and making a delicate excuse for not rising up, Laban desists from farther search, Genesis 31:35. Jacob, ignorant of Rachel's theft, reproaches Laban for his suspicions, Genesis 31:36, Genesis 31:37; enumerates his long and faithful services, his fatigues, and Laban's injustice, Genesis 31:38-41; and shows that it was owing to God's goodness alone that he had any property, Genesis 31:42. Laban is moderated, and proposes a covenant, Genesis 31:43, Genesis 31:44. Jacob sets up a stone, and the rest bring stones and make a heap, which Laban calleth Jegar-Sahadutha, and Jacob Galeed, Genesis 31:45-47. They make a covenant, and confirm it by an oath, Genesis 31:48-53. Jacob offers a sacrifice; they eat together; and Laban and his companions, having lodged in the mount all night, take a friendly leave of Jacob and his family next morning, and depart. Genesis 31:54, Genesis 31:55.

Verse 1

And he heard the words of Laban's sons - The multiplication of Jacob's cattle, and the decrease and degeneracy of those of Laban, were sufficient to arouse the jealousy of Laban's sons. This, with Laban's unfair treatment, and the direction he received from God, determined him to return to his own country.

Hath he gotten all this glory - All these riches, this wealth, or property. The original word כָּבֵד “signifies both to be rich and to be heavy; and perhaps for this simple reason, that riches ever bring with them heavy weight and burden of cares and anxieties.

Verse 3

And the Lord said unto Jacob, Return - and I will be with thee - I will take the same care of thee in thy return, as I took of thee on thy way to this place. The Targum reads, My Word shall be for thy help, see Genesis 15:1. A promise of this kind was essentially necessary for the encouragement of Jacob, especially at this time; and no doubt it was a powerful means of support to him through the whole journey; and it was particularly so when he heard that his brother was coming to meet him, with four hundred men in his retinue, Genesis 32:6. At that time he went and pleaded the very words of this promise with God, Genesis 32:9.

Verse 4

Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah - He had probably been at some considerable distance with the flocks; and for the greater secrecy, he rather sends for them to the field, to consult them on this most momentous affair, than visit them in their tents, where probably some of the family of Laban might overhear their conversation, though Laban himself was at the time three days's journey off. It is possible that Jacob shored his sheep at the same time; and that he sent for his wives and household furniture to erect tents on the spot, that they might partake of the festivities usual on such occasions. Thus they might all depart without being suspected.

Verse 7

Changed my wages ten times - There is a strange diversity among the ancient versions, and ancient and modern interpreters, on the meaning of these words. The Hebrew is אֶסֶר עֶשְׂרִים אֶשְׂרֵי אֶשְׂרֵי אֶשְׂרֵי (asereth monim), which Aquila translates ἑκατὸν δέκα, ten numbers; Symmachus, ἑκατὸν δέκα, ten times in number; the Septuagint ἑκατὸν δέκα, ten lambs, with which Origen appears to agree. St. Augustine thinks that by

ten lambs five yearsâ€™ wages is meant: that Laban had withheld from him all the party-coloured lambs which had been brought forth for five years, and because the ewes brought forth lambs twice in the year, bis gravidæ pecudes, therefore the number ten is used, Jacob having been defrauded of his part of the produce of ten births. It is supposed that the Septuagint use lambs for years, as Virgil does aristas.

En unquam patrios longo post tempore fines,
Pauperis et tuguri congestum cespite culmen,
Post aliquot mea regna videns mirabor aristas?
Virg. Ec. i., ver. 68.

Thus inadequately translated by Dryden:
O must the wretched exiles ever mourn;
Nor, after length of rolling years, return?
Are we condemnâ€™d by Fateâ€™s unjust decree,
No more our harvests and our homes to see?
Or shall we mount again the rural throng,
And rule the country, kingdoms once our own?

Here aristas, which signifies ears of corn, is put for harvest, harvest for autumn, and autumn for years. After all, it is most natural to suppose that Jacob uses the word ten times for an indefinite number, which we might safely translate frequently; and that it means an indefinite number in other parts of the sacred writings, is evident from Leviticus 26:26: Ten women shall bake your bread in one oven. Ecclesiastes 7:19: Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than Ten mighty men the city. Numbers 14:22: Because all these men have tempted me now these Ten times. Job 19:3: These Ten times have ye reproached me. Zechariah 8:23: In those days - Ten men shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew. Revelation 2:10: Ye shall have tribulation Ten days.

Verse 11

The angel of God spake unto me in a dream - It is strange that we had not heard of this dream before; and yet it seems to have taken place before the cattle brought forth, immediately after the bargain between him and Laban. If we follow the Samaritan the difficulty is at once removed, for it gives us the whole of this dream after Genesis 30:36 of the preceding chapter,

Verse 12

Grisled - גְּרִסְלָהּ (beruddim); גְּרִסְלָהּ (barad) signifies hail, and the meaning must be, they had white spots on them similar to hail. Our word grisled comes from the old French, gresl, hail, now written grâ le; hence greslâ©, grisled, spotted with white upon a dark ground.

Verse 15

Are we not counted of him strangers? - Rachel and Leah, who well knew the disposition of their father, gave him here his true character. He has treated us as strangers - as slaves whom he had a right to dispose of as he pleased; in consequence, he hath sold us - disposed of us on the mere principle of gaining by the sale.

And hath quite devoured also our money - Has applied to his own use the profits of the sale, and has allowed us neither portion nor inheritance.

Verse 19

Laban went to shear his sheep - Laban had gone; and this was a favorable time not only to take his images, but to return to Canaan without being perceived.

Rachel had stolen the images - גְּזָלָהּ (teraphim). What the teraphim were is utterly unknown. In Genesis 31:30 they are termed גְּזָלָהּ (elohai), gods; and to some it appears very likely that they were a sort of images devoted to superstitious purposes, not considered as gods, but as representatives of certain Divine attributes, Dr. Shuckford supposes them to be a sort of tiles, on which the names or figures of their ancestors were engraven. Theodoret, in his 89th question, calls them idols; and says that Rachel, who was a type of the true Church, stole them from her father that he might be delivered from idolatry. R. S. Jarchi gives nearly the same reason.

The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel gives a strange turn to the whole passage. â€œAnd Rachel stole the images of her father: for they had murdered a man, who was a first-born son; and having cut off his head, they embalmed it with salt and spices, and they wrote divinations upon a plate of gold, and put it under his tongue; and placed it against the wall, and it conversed with them, and Laban worshipped it. And Jacob stole the science of Laban the Syrian, that it might not discover his departure.â€ If the word be derived from גְּזָלָהּ mo

(rapha), to heal or restore, then the teraphim may be considered as a sort of talismans, kept for the purpose of averting and curing diseases; and probably were kept by Laban for the same purpose that the Romans kept their lares and penates. It is however possible that תְּרָפִים (teraphim) is the same as סֵרָפִים (seraphim), the ט (tau) and ס (sin) being changed, which is very frequent in the Syrian or Chaldee language; and we know that Laban was an Aramean or Syrian. Fire has been considered from the earliest ages as a symbol of the Deity; and as the word seraphim comes from סָרַף (saraph), to burn, it has been conjectured that the teraphim of Laban were luminous forms, prepared of burnished brass, etc., which he might imagine a proper medium of communication between God and his worshippers. Mr. Parkhurst has observed that the teraphim were in use among believers and unbelievers. Among the former, see this chapter; for he denies that Laban was an idolater. See also Judges 17:5; Judges 18:14, Judges 18:18, Judges 18:20; 1 Samuel 19:13, 1 Samuel 19:16. Among the latter, see 2 Kings 23:24; Ezekiel 21:21; Zechariah 10:2. Compare 1 Samuel 15:23, and Hosea 3:4. These are all the places in which the original word is found.

The Persian translator seems to have considered these teraphim as tables or instruments that served for purposes of judicial astrology, and hence translates the word (asterlabha<translit> astrolabes). As the astrolabe was an instrument with which they took the altitude of the pole-star, the sun, etc., it might, in the notion of the Persian translator, imply tables, etc., by which the culminating of particular stars might be determined, and the whole serve for purposes of judicial astrology. Now as many who have professed themselves to be believers in Christianity, have nevertheless addicted themselves to judicial astrology, we might suppose such a thing in this case, and still consider Laban as no idolater. If the Persian translator has not hit on the true meaning, he has formed the most likely conjecture.

Verse 21

Passed over the river - The Euphrates, as the Targum properly notices. But how could he pass such a river with his flocks, etc.? This difficulty does not seem to have struck critics in general. The rabbins felt it, and assert that God wrought a miracle for Jacob on this occasion, and that he passed over dry shod. As we know not in what other way he could pass, it is prudent to refer it to the power of God, which accompanied him through the whole of his journey. There might, however, have been fords well known to both Jacob and Laban, by which they might readily pass.

The mount Gilead - What the ancient name of this mountain was, we know not; but it is likely that it had not the name of Gilead till after the transaction mentioned Genesis 31:47. The mountains of Gilead were eastward of the country possessed by the tribes of Reuben and Gad; and extended from Mount Hermon to the mountains of Moab - Calmet. It is joined to Mount Libanus, and includes the mountainous region called in the New Testament Trachonitis - Dodd.

Verse 24

And God came to Laban - God's caution to Laban was of high importance to Jacob - Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad; or rather, as is the literal meaning of the Hebrew, מִטּוֹב אֶדְרָא (mittob ad ra), from good to evil; for had he neither spoken good nor evil to Jacob, they could have had no intercourse at all. The original is, therefore, peculiarly appropriate; for when people meet, the language at first is the language of friendship; the command therefore implies, "Do not begin with Peace be unto thee, and then proceed to injurious language and acts of violence." If this Divine direction were attended to, how many of those affairs of honor, so termed, which commence with, "hope you are well" - "am infinitely glad to see you" - "am happy to see you well," etc., and end with small swords and pistol bullets, would be prevented! Where God and true religion act, all is fair, kind, honest, and upright; but where these are not consulted, all is hollow, deceitful, or malicious. Beware of unmeaning compliments, and particularly of saying what thy heart feels not. God hates a hypocrite and a deceiver.

Verse 27

I might have sent thee away with mirth - מְשִׁחָה (besimchah), with rejoicing, making a feast or entertainment on the occasion; and with songs, בְּשִׁירִים (beshirim), odes either in the praise of God, or to commemorate the splendid acts of their ancestors; with tabret, תַּבְרֵת (bethoph), the tympanum used in the east to the present day, and there called (diff), a thin broad wooden hoop, with parchment extended over one end of it, to which are attached small pieces of brass, tin, etc., which make a jingling noise; it is held in the air with one hand, and beat on with the fingers of the other. It appears to have been precisely the same with that which is called the tambourine and which is frequently to be met with in our streets. And with harp, כִּנּוּרָה (bekinnor), a sort of stringed instrument, a lute or harp; probably the same as the Greek κίθαρα (kinura), a harp; the name being evidently borrowed from the Hebrew. These four things seem to include all that was used in those primitive times, as expressive of gladness and satisfaction on the most joyous occasions.

Verse 29

It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt - Literally, My hand is unto God to do you evil, i.e., I have vowed to God that I will punish thee for thy flight, and the stealing of my teraphim; but the God of Your father has prevented me from doing it. It is a singular instance that the plural pronoun, when addressing an individual, should be twice used in this place - the God of your father, x•x'xTMx•x• (abichem), for x•x'xTMxš (abicha), thy father.

Verse 32

Let him not live - It appears that anciently theft was punished by death; and we know that the patriarchs had the power of life and death in their hands. But previously to the law, the punishment of death was scarcely ever inflicted but for murder. The rabbins consider that this was an imprecation used by Jacob, as if he had said, Let God take away the life of the person who has stolen them! And that this was answered shortly after in the death of Rachel. Genesis 35:16-19.

Verse 35

The custom of women is upon me - This she knew must be a satisfactory reason to her father; for if the teraphim were used to any religious purpose, and they seem to have been used in this way, as Laban calls them his gods, he therefore could not suspect that a woman in such a situation, whose touch was considered as defiling, would have sat upon articles that were either the objects of his adoration, or used for any sacred purpose. The stratagem succeeded to her wish, and Laban departed without suspicion. It seems very natural to suppose that Rachel did believe that by the use of these teraphim Laban could find out their flight, and the direction they took, and therefore she stole them; and having stolen them she was afraid to acknowledge the theft, and probably might think that they might be of some use to herself. Therefore, for these reasons, she brought them away.

Verse 36

And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban - The expostulation of Jacob with Laban, and their consequent agreement, are told in this place with great spirit and dignity. Jacob was conscious that though he had made use of cunning to increase his flocks, yet Laban had been on the whole a great gainer by his services. He had served him at least twenty years, fourteen for Rachel and Leah, and six for the cattle; and some suppose he had served him twenty years besides the above, which is not unlikely: see the remarks at the conclusion of this chapter. (See Clarke at Genesis 31:55 (note)) Forty or even twenty years of a man's life, devoted to incessant labor and constantly exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, (see Genesis 31:40), deserve more than an ordinary reward. Laban's constitutional sin was covetousness, and it was an easily besetting sin; for it appears to have governed all his conduct, and to have rendered him regardless of the interests of his children, so long as he could secure his own. That he had frequently falsified his agreement with Jacob, though the particulars are not specified, we have already had reason to conjecture from Genesis 31:7, and with this Jacob charges his father-in-law, in the most positive manner, Genesis 31:41. Perhaps some previous unfair transactions of this kind were the cause why Jacob was led to adopt the expedient of outwitting Laban in the case of the spotted, spangled, ring-streaked, and grised cattle. This if it did take place, though it cannot justify the measure, is some palliation of it; and almost the whole of Jacob's conduct, as far as relates to Laban, can be better excused than his injuring Laban's breed, by leaving him none but the weak, unhealthy, and degenerated cattle.

Verse 39

That which was torn - of my hand didst thou require it - This more particularly marks the covetous and rigorous disposition of Laban; for the law of God required that what had been torn by beasts the shepherd should not be obliged to make good, Exodus 22:10, Exodus 22:13. And it is very likely that this law was in force from the earliest times.

Verse 40

In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night - The being exposed to the heat by day, and frost by night, is made part of the heaviest punishment of Prometheus by Aeschylus.

[illegible]

Aeschyl. Prom. Vinc., v. 22.

**Opposed to the sun's most fervid beam, The hue of beauty changed; till parch'd by heat The night with
spangled stole shall hide its light From thee rejoicing, but again the sun Chases the hoar frost from thy
harass'd form - J. B. B. C.**

Verse 41

Twenty years - See the remarks at the end, Genesis 31:55 (note).

Verse 42

The fear of Isaac - It is strange that Jacob should say, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, when both words are meant of the same Being. The reason perhaps was this; Abraham was long since dead, and God was his unalienable portion for ever. Isaac was yet alive in a state of probation, living in the fear of God, not exempt from the danger of falling; therefore God is said to be his fear, not only the object of his religious worship in a general way, but that holy and just God before whom he was still working out his salvation with fear and trembling, fear lest he should fall, and trembling lest he should offend.

Verse 46

Made a heap - גל (gal), translated heap, signifies properly a round heap; and this heap was probably made for the double purpose of an altar and a table, and Jacob's stone or pillar was set on it for the purpose of a memorial.

sa40

Verse 47

Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha - ג'ג'ר ס'הד'ת' (yegar sahadutha), the heap or round heap of witness; but Jacob called it ג'ל'ע'ד' (galed), which signifies the same thing. The first is pure Chaldee, the second pure Hebrew. ג'ר' (agar) signifies to collect, hence ג'ג'ר' (yegar) and ג'ר'ג'ר' (ogar), a collection or heap made up of gathered stones; and hence also ג'ר'ג'ר' (egora), an altar, used frequently by the Chaldee (paraphrast). See 1 Kings 12:33; Judges 6:31; 2 Kings 21:3; Jeremiah 17:1. See Castell's Lexicon. From this example we may infer that the Chaldee language was nearly coequal with the Hebrew. A gloss made by St. Jerome, and which was probably only entered by him in his margin as a note, has crept into the text of the Vulgate. It is found in every copy of this version, and is as follows: Uterque juxta proprietatem linguae suae, Each according to the idiom of his own tongue.

Verse 48-49

I think these two verses are badly divided, and should be read thus:

Genesis 31:48 - And Laban said, This heap is a witness between me and thee this day.

Genesis 31:49 - Therefore was the name of it called Galeed and Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

Mizpah - מ'צ'פ'ה' (mitspah) signifies a watch-tower; and Laban supposes that in consequence of the consecration of the place, and the covenant now solemnly made and ratified, that God would take possession of this heap, and stand on it as on a watch-tower, to prevent either of them from trenching on the conditions of their covenant.

Verse 50

No man is with us - Though all were present at the sacrifice offered, yet it appears that in making the contract Jacob and Laban withdrew, and transacted the business in private, calling on God to witness it.

Jacob had already four wives; but Laban feared that he might take others, whose children would naturally come in for a share of the inheritance to the prejudice of his daughters and grandchildren. Though the Koran allows a man to have four wives if he can maintain them, yet we learn that in many cases where a man takes a wife, the parents or relatives of the woman stipulate that the man is not to take another during the lifetime of that one whom he now espouses; and notwithstanding the permission of the Koran, he is obliged to fulfill this agreement.

Verse 51

And Laban said to Jacob - behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee - But this pillar, not cast but set up, was certainly set up by Jacob; for in Genesis 31:45 we read, And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar: it is therefore for the honor of one Hebrew and one Samaritan MS. that they have preserved the true reading in Genesis 31:51, ג'ר'ת' (yaritha), Thou hast set up - Kennicott. Instead of either of the above readings the Samaritan text has (yarata), The pillar which thou seest betwixt me and thee.

Verse 53

The God of their father - As Laban certainly speaks of the true God here, with what propriety can he say that this God was the God of Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor? It is certain that Terah was an idolater; of this

we have the most positive proof, Joshua 24:2. Because the clause is not in the Septuagint, and is besides wanting in some MSS., Dr. Kennicott considers it an interpolation. But there is no need of having recourse to this expedient if we adopt the reading $\times\bullet\mathbf{x}^{\text{TM}}\mathbf{x}\bullet$ (abichem), Your father, for $\times\bullet\mathbf{x}^{\text{TM}}\mathbf{x}''\mathbf{x}\bullet$ (abihem), Their father, which is supported by several of Kennicott's and De Rossi's MSS., and is precisely the same form made use of by Laban, Genesis 31:29, when addressing Jacob, and appears to me to be used here in the same way; for he there most manifestly uses the plural pronoun, when speaking only to Jacob himself.

It is therefore to be considered as a form of speech peculiar to Laban; at least we have two instances of his use of it in this chapter.

Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac - See Clarke on Genesis 31:42 (note).

Verse 54

Offered sacrifice upon the mount - It is very likely that Laban joined in this solemn religious rite, and that, having offered the blood and fat to God, they feasted upon the sacrifice.

Verse 55

Kissed his sons and his daughters - That is, his grandchildren, Jacob's eleven sons with Dinah their sister, and their mothers Leah and Rachel. All these he calls his children, Genesis 31:43. And blessed them - prayed heartily for their prosperity, though we find from Genesis 31:29 that he came having bound himself by a vow to God to do them some injury. Thus God turned his intended curse into a blessing.

The most important topics in this chapter have already been considered in the notes, and to those the reader is referred. Jacob's character we have already seen, and hitherto have met in it little to admire; but we shall soon find a blessed change both in his mind and in his conduct. Laban's character appears in almost every instance to disadvantage; he does not seem to be what we commonly term a wicked man, but he was certainly both weak and covetous; and covetousness extinguished in him, as it does in all its votaries, the principles of righteousness and benevolence, and the very charities of human life. Provided he could get an increase of property, he regarded not who was wronged or who suffered. In this case he hid himself even from his own bowels, and cared not that his own children should lack even the necessities of life, provided he could increase his own store! How watchful should we be against this destructive, unnatural, and degrading vice! It is impossible for a man who loves money to love either God or man; and consequently he must be in the broad way that leads to destruction.

For the difficulties in the chronology of Jacob's sojourning in Padan-aram, I beg leave to refer to the following remarks.

Remarks upon Genesis 31:38, etc., relative to the time spent by Jacob in the service of his father-in-law Laban, in Mesopotamia; from Dr. Kennicott. - Every reading which introduces but a single difficulty demands our attention, much greater must that demand be when several difficulties are caused by any one mistake, or any one mistranslation. Of this nature is the passage before us, which therefore shall be here considered more fully, especially as I have not already submitted to the learned any remarks upon this subject. Jacob's age at the time of his going to Laban, has (till very lately) been fixed, perhaps universally, at seventy-seven years. But I think it has been shown by the learned Mr. Skinner, in an excellent dissertation, (4th. 1765), that the number seventy-seven cannot here be right.

- Jacob was one hundred and thirty when he went down (with sixty-six persons) into Egypt. Joseph had then been governor ten years; and when made governor was thirty; therefore Jacob could not be more than ninety at the birth of Joseph. Now, upon supposition that Jacob was seventy-seven at going to Laban, and that he had no son till he was eighty-five, and that he, with eleven sons, left Laban at ninety-seven, there will follow these amongst other strange consequences which are enumerated by Mr. Skinner page 11, etc.:

1. Though Isaac and Esau married at forty, Jacob goes at seventy-seven to look for a wife, and agrees to marry her seven years after.

2. Issachar is born after the affair of the mandrakes, which Reuben finds and brings home when he (Reuben) was about four years old; that is, if Issachar was born before Joseph, agreeably to Genesis 30:18, Genesis 30:25.

3. Judah begets Er at thirteen; for in the first of the following tables Judah is born in Jacob's year eighty-eight, and Er in one hundred and two.

4. Er marries at nine, and is destroyed for profligacy. Er, born one hundred and two, marries in one hundred and eleven. See also Genesis 38:7.

5. Onan marries at eight; for Onan, born in one hundred and three, marries in one hundred and eleven.

6. Shelah, being grown at ten, ought to be married; for Shelah, born in one hundred and four, is marriageable, but not married to Tamar in one hundred and fourteen. See Genesis 38:14.

7. Pharez kept from marrying while young, yet has a son at thirteen; for Pharez, born in one hundred and fifteen,

had two sons at going to Egypt in one hundred and thirty.

8. Esau goes to Ishmael and marries his daughter, after Jacob went to Laban at seventy-seven; though Ishmael died when Jacob was sixty-three.

9. If Jacob had no son till he was eighty-five, and if Joseph was born when his father was ninety, then the eleven sons and Dinah were born in five years.

Lastly, if Jacob had no son till eighty-five, and he went to Egypt at one hundred and thirty, with sixty-six persons, only forty-five years are allowed for his family; whereas the larger sum of sixty-five years seems necessary for the births of so many children and grandchildren. On this subject Le Clerc has pronounced, *Hisce in rebus occurrunt nodi, quos nemo hactenus solvit; neque porro, ut opinor, solvet.* There are difficulties here which have never been explained, and in my opinion never can be explained. But upon the single principle of Mr. Skinner, that Jacob went to Laban at fifty-seven, (instead of seventy-seven), these difficulties are solved. And it only remains to wish that some authority may be found to support this conjecture, thus strongly founded on the exigentia loci. The common opinion is formed by reckoning back from the age of Joseph, when governor of Egypt, to the time of his birth, and from the twenty years which Jacob was with Laban. This number, Mr. Skinner thinks, was originally forty; and I think that the Hebrew text as it now stands confirms the conjecture, and furnishes the very authority which is so much wanted.

After Jacob had served Laban fourteen years for his two wives, where was Jacob to reside? Esau was still living; and Jacob might well be afraid of returning to him, till more years of absence had disarmed his resentment; and had the death of Esau happened, Jacob would then have been secure. But let us also remember that Isaac was still alive, and that Esau had determined to kill Jacob whenever their father should die. It would therefore be no wonder if Jacob should have desired to continue longer in Haran. And to carry this point more effectually, he might offer to take care of Laban's cattle, and to live in his neighborhood, upon such terms of advantage to Laban as could not easily be withstood. Lastly, when the good effects to Laban from this connection had been experienced, without profit, nay with some losses, to Jacob, for twenty years, Jacob might naturally grow tired of thus assisting Laban without providing for his own growing family. Accordingly we find that Jacob covenants with Laban for six years of more close attendance and service in Laban's own house, for which the wages were expressly settled. Agreeable to the preceding possibilities seems to have been the fact, Jacob living in Haran forty years, and in this manner: -

d 14

d years in Laban's house, a covenant servant for his wives.

d

d 20

d in Laban's neighborhood, as a friend.

d

d 6

d in Laban's house, a covenant servant for cattle.

d

d 40

d

d

Now the twenty concurrent years of neighbourly assistance, and the disjointed twenty of covenant service, seem both of them distinguished in the history itself. For upon Laban's pursuit of Jacob he mentions twenty years twice; which two sets of twenty, if really different, make forty. Each mention of the twenty years is introduced with the word *zeh*, which word, when repeated, is used by way of distinction; as when we say, this and that, the one or the other. Thus, Exodus 14:20: So that the one came not near the other. Ecclesiastes 6:5: This hath more rest than the other. And with the two words at a great distance, Job 21:23: One dieth; Job 21:25; and another dieth, etc. So here, in Genesis 31:38, Jacob says to Laban, *zeh li esrim shanah anochi immach*, during the One set of twenty years I was with thee, etc.; meaning the time in which he lived, not in Laban's house, but in his neighborhood; not as a servant, but a friend; after he had served in Laban's house fourteen years for his daughters, and before he served six years for his cattle. But then, as to the other twenty, he tells Laban, at Genesis 31:41, varying the phrase very remarkably *zeh li esrim shanah bebeithecha abadticha*, during the other twenty years (in thy house) For Myself (for my own benefit) In Thy House; I served thee fourteen years, and six years, etc. And during this last period, though only six years, he charges Laban with changing his wages ten times. So that Jacob insists upon having well earned his wages through the twenty years when he served for hire; but he makes a far greater merit of having, for another twenty years, assisted him without wages, and even with some losses; and therefore, with particular propriety, he reminds Laban of that set of twenty years in the first place.

The following Tables, taken chiefly from Mr. Skinner, will greatly elucidate the true chronology of Jacob:

d
d 108 Joseph, at seventeen, is carried into Egypt. Genesis 37:2.

d
d 109 Shelah, at twenty, not given to Tamar.

d
d 110 Pharez and Zarah born of Tamar, by Judah.

d
d 120 Isaac dies, aged 180 Genesis 35:28.

d
d 121 Joseph, at thirty, governor of Egypt Genesis 41:46.

d
d 123 Beriah, at twenty, marries.

d
d 125 Heber - 127 Malchiel - born to Beriah.

d
d 128 Pharez, at eighteen, marries.

d
d 129 Hezron - 130 Hamul - born to Pharez.

d
d 130 Benjamin, at thirty - two, has ten sons.
Jacob goes to Egypt Genesis 47:9.

d
d 147 and dies Genesis 47:28; Genesis 49:33.

d
d * Not placed in order of time, Genesis 38.
(57-71 = 14 yearsâ€™ service; 72-91 = 20 yearsâ€™ assistance)

d
d
â€œOur translation now is, Genesis 31:38: This Twenty Years Have I Been With Thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. Genesis 31:39. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Genesis 31:40. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Genesis 31:41. Thus Have I Been Twenty Years In Thy House: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

â€œThe alteration here recommended is this, Genesis 31:38: During The One Twenty Years I Was With Thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams, etc., etc. Genesis 31:41. During The Other Twenty Years For Myself, In Thy House, I served, etc. The same distinction is expressed in Genesis 30:29: Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me; i.e., how I behaved during the time I was with thee as thy servant, and how thy cattle fared during the time they were with me as thy friend.

â€œIt must not be omitted that Archbishop Usher and Bishop Lloyd ascribe sons to Jacob very soon after his coming to Laban; nay, assert that he was married almost as soon as he came to Haran, instead of waiting seven years, as he most evidently did. And Mr. Jackson allows that some of the sons of Benjamin, who are expressly numbered as going into Egypt with Jacob, might be born in Egypt! From such distresses, and such contradictions, does the distinction of two sets of twenty years happily deliver us,â€•

Hoc temporis intervallo nemo concipere
poterit tot res contingere potuisse.
Spinosa.

In such a short space of time, it is impossible
that so many transactions could have taken place.

I shall leave this subject with chronologers and critics, and shall not attempt to decide on either opinion. That of Dr. Kennicott I think the most likely, and to it I have adapted the chronology in those cases to which it relates; but there are difficulties in both cases. See Clarke on Genesis 38:1 (note).