

Community Bible Church

The Book of Genesis

Chapters 31-33

The story of the **Patriarch Jacob** is told in **eleven chapters** in **Genesis 27-37**. The theme of this week's lesson is the return of Jacob from Haran to his home-land of Canaan, four-hundred miles to the south. He had been gone for twenty years and had acquired two wives, two female-servants, twelve children, and large herds of livestock. The narrative of this return is characterized by conflict with his uncle **Laban** on departure and conflict with his twin-brother **Esau** upon his arrival. This drama is described in three chapters (**Genesis 31-33**). The highlight of these three chapters is the frequent appearance and encouraging words of God during their journey home. An **outline** of these three chapters is as follows:

Jacob departs for Canaan with Laban in pursuit.	31:1-42	Absconds
Jacob establishes a covenant with Laban.	31:43-55	Agreement
Jacob prepares to meet Esau.	32:1-21	Anticipation
Jacob contends with God and is renamed Israel.	32:22-32	Action
Jacob and Esau reunite and reconcile.	33:1-20	Arrival

1. Read **Genesis 31:1-19**. In what ways did God direct Jacob in **31:3** and **31:11-13**? How did Jacob and Rachel respond in **31:17-21**?
2. What did Laban do in **31:22-23**? Do you sense tension and conflict on the horizon?
3. Once again, God directly intervenes in the narrative. What occurs in **31:24**?
4. This lengthy passage in **31:25-42** is filled with drama and tension, and is worth reading in one sitting. In one or two sentences write a brief summary of this story.

5. The passage in **31:43-55** describes an agreement (covenant) negotiated between Laban and Jacob. Laban termed this the Mizpah Covenant (**31:49**) as Mizpah means a “watchtower.” In other words, “*may God keep His watch on both parties for violations!*” (**verse 49**). Briefly describe the details of this agreement and how it was ratified or formalized.

6. Not only did Jacob experience opposition from Laban after his departure for Canaan, he feared problems from his brother, Esau, on arrival. Read **32:1-8** and describe the situation as he approached his home-land.

7. Read Jacob’s heart-felt prayer in **32:9-12**. What most impressed you in this passage?

8. Even after his prayer what was Jacob’s strategy for encountering Esau in **32:13-21**?

9. Read the narrative in **32:24-32** and write a description of this encounter. Note that Israel, Jacob’s new name, means “*God struggles*”, or “*God prevails.*”

10. Read **33:1-20** and write a summary of how Jacob’s return home with his family concluded. What most impressed you about God from these three chapters.