

Additional notes for teachers:

Many of the notes comprise deeper matters which have arisen in the course of preparation of the Students Notes. Other material has been appended for the purpose of providing background, explanations or interesting detail.

LESSON 13

1. “SPEAK NOT TO JACOB EITHER GOOD OR BAD” - Gen. 31:24

This rather curious expression seems to mean, “be careful how you speak to Jacob because I am watching over him to preserve him”. A similar expression occurs in Gen. 24:50.

2. THE “IMAGES” - Gen 31:30,34

One suggestion is that the household images were the ancient equivalent of the title deeds to the family property. Laban was concerned that someone else now held the title deeds to his estate and his sons would be equally upset. This also explains Rachel’s intense desire to possess the images and the risk she took to obtain them. Another possibility is that these images were used for worship. If that had been their object however, they could have been replaced.

Laban’s and Jacob’s agreement is worth quoting - Gen. 31:44-53. See also I Sam. 20:42

3. “THERE WRESTLED A MAN WITH HIM” - Gen. 32:22-32

Gen. 32:22-32 is best read from the R.V. It is not easy to reconstruct this scene. This was to be a turning point in Jacob’s life - he would be delivered from his fear of Esau, to learn the lesson of complete dependence upon God. His faith would be perfected and his name changed from “supplanter” to “Prince with God”. With these things in mind Bro. Whittaker’s reconstruction (Wrestling Jacob p.69) postulates that Jacob actually passed on ahead of the others and set a man (cf. Josh. 5:13) whom he took to be Esau.

Only with the coming of morning did he realise that he had prevailed not against mortal flesh as Esau, but against an angel of God. The Douai rendering of Gen. 32:28 is “Thy name shall not be called Jacob, but Israel: for if thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail again men?”

Dr. Rendle Short – “The Bible and Modern Medicine”, p.60 – has some interesting comments on Gen. 32:32. He diagnoses Jacob’s affliction as a “ruptured and prolapsed intervertebral disc producing severe and intractable sciatica from pressure on the nerve roots. (in common language – a “slipped disc”). The Hebrews, therefore, would not eat the sciatic nerve of any animal in respect for their ancestor’s memory. Jewish butchers always do, or did, pull out the sciatic nerve as a ‘gid’.”

4. SHECHEM

Shechem is a place of importance, where Abraham received the first real indication of the Land of Promise (Gen. 12:6-7). Shechem is the Sychem of Acts 7:16, not the same as Sychar (John 4:5). There seems a contradiction between Gen. 33:19 and Acts 7:16 – See J. Carter, Oracles of God p.99 for explanation.

TEACHING METHODS

1. Show in the lesson how God, from the time Jacob practised guile on Isaac to the events of Peniel, was with Jacob developing him to spiritual maturity.
2. Recount graphically Jacob's two meetings – one with his brother-in-law and the other with his brother.
3. Describe the remarkable and far-reaching import of Jacob's struggle with the angel at this tense time in his life.
4. Connect these “shadows” with the nation of Israel and the lives of individuals aspiring to be God's children.