

Laban

Brother of Rebekah

We're all selfish, but some of us have a real corner on the weakness. Laban's whole life was stamped by self-centeredness. His chief goal was to look out for himself. The way he treated others was controlled by that goal. He made profitable arrangements for his sister Rebekah's marriage to Isaac and used his daughters' lives as bargaining chips. Jacob eventually outmaneuvered Laban, but the older man was unwilling to admit defeat. His hold on Jacob was broken, but he still tried to maintain some kind of control by getting Jacob to promise to be gone for good. He realized that Jacob and Jacob's God were more than he could handle.

On the surface, we may find it difficult to identify with Laban. But his selfishness is one point we have in common. Like him, we often have a strong tendency to control people and events to our benefit. Our "good" reasons for treating others the way we do may simply be a thin cover on our self-centered motives. We may not even recognize our own selfishness. One way to discover it is to examine our willingness to admit we're wrong. Laban could not bring himself to do this. If you ever amaze yourself by what you say and do to avoid facing up to wrong actions, you are getting a glimpse of your selfishness in action. Recognizing selfishness is painful, but it is the first step on the road back to God.

Strengths and Accomplishments

- Controlled two generations of marriages in the Abrahamic family (Rebekah, Rachel, Leah)
- Quick-witted

Weaknesses and Mistakes

- Manipulated others for his own benefit
- Unwilling to admit wrongdoing
- Benefited financially by using Jacob, but never fully benefited spiritually by knowing and worshiping Jacob's God

Lessons From His Life

- Those who set out to use people will eventually find themselves used
- God's plan cannot be blocked

Vital Statistics

- Where: Haran
- Occupation: Wealthy sheep breeder
- Relatives: Father: Bethuel. Sister: Rebekah. Brother-in-law: Isaac. Daughters: Rachel and Leah. Son-in-law: Jacob

Key Verse

“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you” (Genesis 31:42).

Laban’s story is told in Genesis 24:1 - 31:55