



Meditation— Genesis 31.^{43–55}

⁴³And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, “These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine: and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born? ⁴⁴Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.”

⁴⁵And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. ⁴⁶And Jacob said unto his brethren, “Gather stones.”

And they took stones, and made an heap: and they did eat there upon the heap. ⁴⁷And Laban called it ‘Jegar-sahadutha:’ but Jacob called it ‘Galeed.’ ⁴⁸And Laban said, “This heap is a witness between me and thee this day.”

Therefore was the name of it called ‘Galeed;’ ⁴⁹and ‘Mizpah;’ for he said, “The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another. ⁵⁰If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives beside my daughters, no man is with us; see, God is witness betwixt me and thee.” ⁵¹And Laban said to Jacob,

“Behold this heap, and behold this pillar,
which I have cast betwixt me and thee;
⁵²this heap be witness, and this pillar be witness,
that I will not pass over this heap to thee,
and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.
⁵³The God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, the God of their father,
judge betwixt us.”

And Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

⁵⁵And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

When we talk about an infinite God, we are necessarily limited by our finite human experience and language. We are reduced to searching for finite human experiences that we can utilize as analogies for the things of God. We resort, for example, to words and images such as “redemption”—a word taken from the marketplace in reference to the buying back of captives—or “justification”—a word taken from the courtroom in reference to decisions of guilt or innocence.

When referencing the relationship and degree of cooperation between ourselves and God, one of the words we use is “covenant” (or treaty)—a word taken from intergroup and international relations such as we find in this reading. In that realm, a covenant establishes peace between two groups or nations who were, often, previously at enmity with each other. With the covenant, there are commitments for the avoidance of hostilities, an assumption of common values and goals, and agreement of cooperation in accomplishing those goals.

While God could never feel hostility toward us, we sometimes believe He does. So, He chose the language of covenant to assure us that He is at peace with us and works for our welfare and betterment. At the same time, the covenant encourages us to loyally adopt His values and to work cooperatively with Him in advancing His interests. A covenant people, then, is a people who know firsthand of God's peaceful disposition and intentions toward them and respond in kind to Him and to all those with who He feels attachment. Such a people join Him in working toward His goal of expanding peaceful and cooperative relations with as many people and nations as possible. The word covenant speaks—imperfectly and finitely, it is true—to this grand divine disposition for eternal and cosmic peace and cooperation—a disposition we might be excused for referring to as at-one-ment.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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