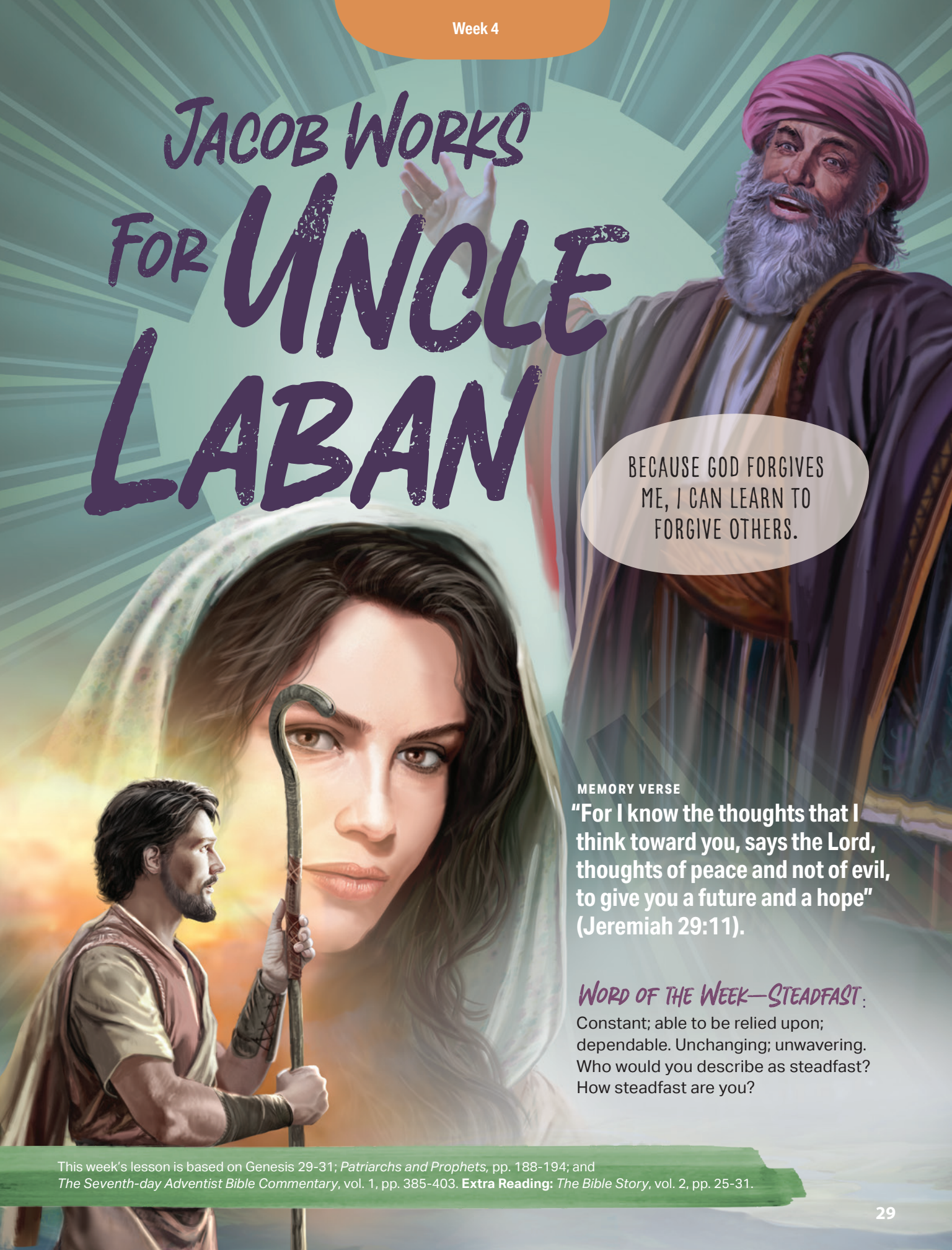
Jacob Works for Uncle Laban



MEMORY VERSE

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Word of the Week—Steadfast:

Constant; able to be relied upon; dependable. Unchanging; unwavering. Who would you describe as steadfast? How steadfast are you?

This week's lesson is based on Genesis 29-31; *Patriarchs and Prophets,* pp. 188-194; and *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 385-403. **Extra Reading:** *The Bible Story*, vol. 2, pp. 25-31.

SUNDAY

Journey's End

With God's heavenly angels as his guardians, Jacob hiked toward Haran with his chin up and peace deep down in his heart. He was forgiven!

He had lied and cheated, but God had forgiven him! His feelings of guilt and hopelessness had gone. The Bible tells us, "Happy is the person whose sins are forgiven" (Psalm 32:1, ICB).

About three weeks after leaving Bethel, Jacob was nearing the end of his long and dangerous 500-mile (804-kilometer) journey. With only the clothes on his back and a shepherd's staff in his hand, he arrived at a well surrounded by shepherds and their flocks of resting sheep. Jacob asked, "My brothers, where are you from?"

They replied, "We are from Haran" (Genesis 29:4, ICB).

What wonderful news! He had made it! Jacob then asked about his uncle, Laban—did the shepherds know him? Yes! The shepherds pointed to a young woman on her way to the well. "Look, his daughter Rachel is coming now with his sheep" they said (Genesis 29:6, ICB).

Jacob rushed to the well and moved the heavy stone from on top. With new energy he fetched water for all of Laban's sheep. Then he turned his attention to his cousin. Greeting her for the very first time, what did he do? **Read Genesis 29:9-12.**

Imagine Jacob's happiness and relief to be with family, after such a long, lonely journey. With a smile he wiped away his happy tears. He was safe. He was forgiven. God had led him to his family.

DO: Using a map or online tool, have an adult help you plot a 500-mile (804-kilometer) journey from your home. How would you feel to finish such a big trek?

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How different might Jacob's arrival have been if he had not experienced God's forgiveness?*

PRAY: Thank God that His forgiveness changes us and makes us happy.

Mission Challenge: Make time to listen and talk with your friends this week—and maybe make new ones!



MONDAY

A Steadfast Nephew

Rachel raced home to Father Laban, her heart pounding. Quickly she told the surprising news. Aunt Rebekah's son was at the well! Laban leaped to his feet and sprinted off to find Jacob. He "embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house" (Genesis 29:13). Poor and alone, Jacob was welcomed as family and urged to stay. It had been 97 years since Rebekah had left this very place to marry Isaac. Imagine all the news they had to share!

Jacob started helping Laban right away. Laban soon noticed that his nephew was a skillful and hard worker. After a month together, Laban asked him to become one of his paid workers. "What would you like me to pay you?" he asked Jacob (Genesis 29:15, ICB).

Jacob knew exactly what he wanted! He had fallen in love with beautiful Rachel and dreamed of one day marrying her. But he didn't have any money, cattle, or land to pay the bride-price for her, as the custom required in those days. Instead, he came up with another way to show he could provide for a wife and family. What was his plan? *Read Genesis 29:18.*

Laban accepted this great idea, so the seven years began. God blessed Jacob with the ability to be a steadfast worker, and his uncle came to rely upon him more and more. Jacob cared for Laban's sheep and lambs in the searing daytime sun and during the frosty nights.

Despite the long hours of constant hard work, the seven years seemed like only a few days to Jacob, for he was steadfast in his deep love for Rachel. One day soon she would be his beautiful bride!

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *What advice does the Bible give about work? Read* ***Ecclesiastes 9:10*** *and* ***1 Corinthians 15:58****.*
- *How well have you taken this advice when doing chores at home or school?*

Pray: Ask God to help you do your very best when you work.

Do: Ask several adults to imagine they are looking for someone to work for them. What qualities would they want their worker to have? Why? Record responses and use them to create a poster entitled "Worker Wanted." Display it as a reminder to be that kind of worker.



TUESDAY

Wedding Trickery

Parent Faith Talk: If appropriate, share your wedding story and photos or those of a couple your child knows (for example, grandparents).

The seven years were finally over! Guests were invited to Jacob's wedding feast, and the celebrations began. Late in the evening Laban brought the heavily veiled bride to Jacob, for it was custom that a groom shouldn't see his bride's face. A happy Jacob led her through the darkness to his tent.

In the morning Jacob gasped in surprise. It wasn't Rachel lying beside him; it was her older sister, Leah! Jacob realized he had been cruelly tricked into marrying the wrong woman. He stormed from the tent to find Laban. "I worked for you so that I could marry Rachel! Why did you trick me?" he demanded (Genesis 29:25, ICB).

How did Laban answer? **Read Genesis 29:26.**

What a cruel trick! If this was a local custom, Laban should have told Jacob about it long ago. But no—selfish Laban liked having a hard worker he didn't have to pay. Laban now laid out a new mean plan to Jacob: Jacob should complete the weeklong marriage celebrations with Leah, after which he could have Rachel too—*if* he would agree to work for another seven years. It wasn't fair at all, but Jacob "did this and completed the week with Leah" (Genesis 29:28, ICB). He then married Rachel.

Laban had tricked Jacob, just as Jacob had used lies and trickery to get what he wanted from his father and his brother, Esau. He now knew what it felt like . . . and it felt dreadful.

God is with us when we are unfairly treated and when we are sorry that we have treated others badly. He blesses us with peace, a future, and a hope. Read your memory verse and think about the comfort and hope it brings.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *What could you do when you see someone being tricked cruelly?*
- *Read **1 Corinthians 4:12**. Talk about how this verse applies to Jacob. How could it apply to you?*

Pray: Thank God that He will give you "a future and a hope," even when things don't seem to be going well.

Fast Fact: There are approximately 115,000 weddings in the world each day.

WEDNESDAY

Hard Work

DO: On a whiteboard, chalkboard, or in the dirt outside, write some things you have done wrong. Then wipe or wash them away while you think about how God has forgiven you. Then write ways others have hurt you. As you erase them thank God that He helps you forgive others.

Jacob picked up the wobbly lamb and carried it carefully to its mother. It was a new day, with many new jobs for him to do. Even though he had been lied to and tricked, Jacob began working hard for Laban for another seven years.

He could have angrily stamped his feet and refused to do anything for his mean and selfish uncle. He could have run away in the dead of night with Rachel. But he didn't. He understood that God had forgiven him for deceiving his family, and God was teaching him to forgive others in the same way.

Is there a lesson here for you too? Read Ephesians 4:32.

God never asked Jacob to be the judge of his selfish uncle. God asked Jacob to trust Him and be like Him. Jacob chose to be honest, forgiving, and a steadfast worker. He could even work happily with God's help, for "God wants everyone . . . to be happy in his work" (Ecclesiastes 3:13, ICB).

Sadly Jacob's life at home wasn't as happy. His two wives, Rachel and Leah, jealously fought for his love. In the Garden of Eden, God had given Adam only one wife, and He never intended for men to ever have more than one. Nevertheless God worked with the custom of the times and still blessed Jacob with 12 children. God was faithfully fulfilling His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: "I will give you many descendants" (Genesis 26:4, ICB). God *always* keeps His promises, even when His children make sad choices.

PRAY: Read **Ephesians 4:32** again. Ask God to put this kind of forgiveness toward others in your heart. Is there someone in particular you need to forgive?

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *How do you think you might have responded if Laban had tricked you?*
- *How happy would you have been about working for another seven years?*

When we have been hurt and unfairly treated, God can help us to forgive as we have been forgiven. Sometimes it isn't wise to trust those who have hurt us. But God can help us let go of the anger and hurt.





THURSDAY

More Trickery

Jacob looked at the hills in the distance and sighed. He was homesick. He had worked steadfastly for 14 years to pay for his wives. He didn't want to work for his sneaky uncle anymore. He wanted to go home.

There was no way Laban wanted his best worker to leave! He had become very rich thanks to Jacob and God's blessings. "Name me your wages, and I will give it," he told Jacob (Genesis 30:28). What did Jacob ask for? *Read Genesis 30:31-33.*

Laban smiled and agreed. Then he snuck off and took most of the speckled and spotted animals from his flock and hid them. He changed the rules of their agreement 10 times during the next six years!

But while Laban was busy cheating, God was busy blessing Jacob with strong speckled goats and sheep. Pretty soon, Jacob had become a rich man with large flocks and lots of servants. Jacob's steadfast faith helped him remain hardworking and honest when Laban was so unfair.

After a while Laban and his sons became very jealous of Jacob's success. They began to whisper about him and treat him unkindly. "Then the Lord said to Jacob, 'Go back to the land where your ancestors lived. I will be with you' " (Genesis 31:3, ICB).

How wonderful to have God speak to him so clearly again! It had been 20 years since he had received God's forgiveness and promises at Bethel. Even through hard times, God had blessed him. Now he would trust God to keep leading him. He was finally going home! Our loving God steadfastly keeps His promises.

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *Read* ***Galatians 6:9****. Talk about how this verse applies to Jacob.*
- *How well does it apply to you?*

Pray: In a quiet place outside pray a silent prayer from your heart to God's.

Do: Hunt for Bible clues. Who does each verse remind you of in today's story:

Psalm 31:19?

1 Corinthians 4:12?

Leviticus 19:11?



☐ FRIDAY

A Quick Escape

There was no time to waste; flocks and herds were gathered, tents packed, donkeys loaded, and wives and children climbed on camels. Then Jacob and his family quickly left for Canaan while Laban was away shearing his sheep.

Three days later Laban found out, and he was furious! He, his sons, and a band of fighting men went on the chase to force them to return. "But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad' " (Genesis 31:24).

When Laban caught up with Jacob, he kept his red-hot anger from bubbling over. He told him about the dream from God. Once again God was keeping His promise to protect Jacob. And Jacob told Laban so. ". . . He saw the trouble I had and the hard work I did. And last night God corrected you" (Genesis 31:42, ICB).

Laban began to cool down. Then he proposed that they make a peace agreement. Jacob set up a stone pillar, and they ate around it together. What did they promise, and how did they say goodbye? *Read Genesis 31:51-55.*

Jacob had come to Haran a lonely and poor runaway. Now he was leaving Haran a rich and successful man. God had indeed blessed Jacob with "a future and a hope."

Think . . . Then Talk About It:

- *What has Jacob learned in this story? What has Laban had an opportunity to learn?*

Friday Night

Share and Praise

- Sing or say your memory verse. Reflect on how God fulfilled His plans for Jacob. As a family discuss God's plans for your future.
- If possible, go outside and look up at the stars and be reminded that God fulfills His promises. How meaningful do you think God's promise about descendants was to Jacob now?

Family Journal

- Flick back through this week's lesson and recall the Bible verses you have read. Which is your favorite? Why?
- Respond: "Remembering this story will help when I . . ."

Pray

Pray a thankful prayer that God's promises never change. Ask Him to continue to work in your heart so you can be steadfast.

For You, Parents

"If the future looks somewhat clouded, hope on, believe on. The clouds will disappear, and light again shine. Praise God, my heart says, praise God for what He has done for you" (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies,* vol. 1, p. 663).



SABBATH SPECIAL

Dindim the Penguin

In 2012, retired 71-year-old Joao Pereira de Souza, who lived near the coast south of Rio de Janeiro, found a Patagonian penguin on the shore. The poor little penguin was covered in oil, and he was very, very hungry. Joao was a kind man, so he carefully took the penguin home, cleaned him up, gave him some sardines, and nursed him back to health. Over these few weeks the man and the penguin became good friends, forming a special bond. Joao named the feisty bird Dindim.

One day, when the man and the penguin were back at the beach, the little penguin swam off into the sunset. Joao told his neighbors that his little friend had gone back to the ocean, and they all said he would probably never see his penguin friend again.

A few months later, a happy Dindim waddled back to Joao's home, honking with delight and wagging its tail like a dog! Biologists say that such penguins are known for traveling thousands of miles each year, feeding and breeding between colonies as they migrate. They had never heard of a Patagonian penguin bonding with a human!

Joao said, "I love the penguin as though it were my own child, and I believe the penguin loves me."

For many years, the penguin came back to visit the man who saved his life. Every year Dindim arrived in June and left again in February to migrate with the other penguins. What a steadfast little friend Dindim was, all prompted by the kind act of Joao, who hoped to give a future to the little penguin.

God tells us, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

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