Main Thought  God enrolls Jacob in the school of hard knocks for 20 years to prepare him for his future (1 Cor. 9:25).

INTRODUCTION – It was time for Jacob to graduate from the school of hard knocks by fleeing Laban and reflecting on the lessons he learned.

TIME TO MOVE (1-3). God uses (1) our DESIRES (30:25; Psa. 37:4), (2) CIRCUMSTANCES (he felt unwelcome), (3) and his WORD (Psa. 119:105) to reveal his will for our lives. God had spoken to him at every juncture of life (leaving home, returning to home, meeting Esau, visiting Bethel, and moving to Egypt). He will lead us in paths of righteousness (Psa. 23:3).

TIME TO PLAN (4-16). Jacob got his family on board: (1) God is WITH ME (5); (2) God PROTECTS ME (7); (3) God BLESSES ME (9); (4) God SEES ME (12); (5) God SPEAKS TO ME (13). Rachel and Leah agree to the plan.

TIME TO FLEE (17-24). Jacob’s family leave while Laban was away shearing sheep. But Rachel jeopardizes everything by stealing Laban’s idols for she was not yet free of foreign gods (35:2). Laban finds out three days later and pursues them. In the nick of time – the night before – God warns Laban in a dream not to harm Jacob.

TIME TO CONFRONT (25-42). Laban expresses his grievances to Jacob and how he could have harmed him except for God. But he is mad about his idols being stolen. Jacob rashly pledges death to anyone who has them. Laban searches Leah, Bilhah, Zilpah, and finally Rachel who is seated on a camel with the idols beneath her. Because she was “having her period” she was not searched. It implies the worthlessness of the idols (Lev. 15:20; Isa. 64:6). Jacob now vents his 20 years of anger over his mistreatment and proves himself Laban’s superior.

TIME TO AGREE AND PART (43-55). Laban, now the inferior, sues for peace seeing that God was with Jacob (26:28-29).

TIME TO REFLECT. PROVIDENCE: It is God who blesses and protects. TYPOLOGY: Jacob leaves his servitude just as his children would leave Egypt after their servitude. JUSTICE: Laban is left with nothing after exploiting Jacob for 20 years (Prov. 16:7; Gal. 6:7). SIN: Laban is a deluded scoundrel repeatedly cheating Jacob while blaming him (Jer. 17:9).