

such as Shakespeare and Malamud found in Laban's intertextual presence a source that enhances and deepens their own non biblical tales.

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IV. Visual Arts

In visual arts Laban is portrayed as a protagonist of the history of Jacob, the third Hebrew patriarch. Jacob was commanded by his father Isaac to find a wife among his mother's people at Haran in Mesopotamia. At the end of this journey Jacob encountered his uncle Laban, who had two daughters: Leah and Rachel (Gen 29: 16). Jacob was smitten with Rachel and agreed to work for Laban for seven years in return for Rachel's hand. Once the period of seven years elapsed, Jacob demanded his bride, only to be tricked by Laban into marrying his elder daughter Leah. The 5th-century mosaics on the left side of the nave in Santa Maria Maggiore show one of the most detailed depictions of the account: from the arrival of Jacob (Gen 29:1–14), through marriage of Jacob and Rachel (Gen 29:16–30) performed by Laban, to the division of the flocks, which marked the amicable parting of the ways between Laban and his son-in-law (39:25–45). The pure white animals remained with Laban, whilst the speckled, spotted, or black ones were taken by Jacob. Laban's impressive physique, which is additionally emphasized by the white chiton he is wearing, dominates eight scenes from the Roman church.

Bernard van Orley, the celebrated Flemish designer of tapestries of the first half of the 16th century, organized his Division of the Flocks in a decidedly more complex way. In this intricately directed scene Laban is no longer larger and thus visually more important than Jacob. The tapestry encompasses details from everyday life – a shepherdess who is casually taking food from the basket and a bagpiper, whose figure is based on Durer's 1514 print, but also Rachel giving birth to Joseph.

The story of Jacob and Laban remained popular in 17th-century Dutch art. It resonated with Dutch audiences primarily because it offered insights into courtship and marriage. In this vein it was discussed by Jacob Cats, arguably the most popular moralizing author of this period.

Hendrick Terbrugghen painted two versions of *Jacob Reproaching Laban*. Laban is shown defending himself by saying that it was not the custom in his country for the younger daughter to marry first. Jacob then agreed to work for Laban for yet another seven years in order to win Rachel's hand. In both the ca. 1627 version from the National Gallery in London (see → plate 8a) and the ca. 1628 picture, now in Cologne, Terbrugghen focused on Leah's dull eyes that made her particularly unattractive (Gen 29:17).

In a ca. 1660 ensemble Murillo included Laban only in the fifth and final composition. After having discovered that Jacob has stealthily left him and stolen his household gods, Laban is engaged in angry dialogue with Jacob (Gen 31:37). Laban's violent nature is underscored by a dagger strapped to his waist, whilst Jacob's supposed innocence is indicated by his perplexed frown.

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V. Music

Although Laban rarely features as a character in his own right in music, his character enjoyed an afterlife in one 18th century oratorio. *Jacob a Labano fugiens* ("Jacob's Flight from Laban") (1791) for soloists, chorus and orchestra by Simon Mayr (1763–1845). Written to a libretto by Giuseppe Maria Foppa (1760–1845), it was originally sung by the daughters of the choir of the Mendicants of St. Lazarus in 1791, which explains the scoring for female voices. It is inspired by the account of Jacob's Flight from his uncle Laban (Gen 31) following Laban's deception of Jacob (Gen 29:9–30) and Jacob's subsequent deception of Laban (Gen 30:25–43). Scored for five principal characters, Laban (Soprano), Leah (Soprano), Rachel (Soprano), Jacob (Mezzo-Soprano), an extra-biblical personage, a Shepherd (Soprano), and a small chorus, the story highlights the tension between Jacob and Laban; Laban's ferocious anger and revenge, as expressed in the aria *Nil a vindicta extrema* (Nothing will keep me from extreme revenge); Leah's loyalty and obedience to her husband; Rachel's conflict over her love for her husband Jacob and her father Laban in her arias, *Pater amans, pater chare* (Loving father, dear father) and *Per loca incerta obscura* (Through uncertain and dark places); and the ensuing extra-biblical conflict between Rachel and Jacob (*Vade, a me fuge infida; Go, flee from me, faithless woman*). Part One concludes with the flight of Jacob and his family as recounted by the chorus *Confusi fugiunt – hostes errantes; Fremunt delirant – perditum a spe* (In confusion they flee – the scattered enemy; They weep, they rave – their hope is gone).