

~TERAPHIM (235)

- **Family gods or idols.**
- **Then they pulled away from Terah and went camping in Mithkah. (Numbers 33:28)**
- **Now Rachel had taken the **teraphim**, and she resorted to putting them in the woman's saddle basket of the camel, and she kept sitting upon them. So Laban went feeling through the whole tent, but did not find them. (Genesis 31:34)**
- **Although in the plural, the designation **teraphim** can also apply to a single idol. At least some of these idols may have been the size and shape of a man.**
- **Now Rachel had taken the **teraphim**, and she resorted to putting them in the woman's saddle basket of the camel, and she kept sitting upon them. So Laban went feeling through the whole tent, but did not find them. (Genesis 31:34)**
- **When the messengers came in, why, there was the **teraphim** image on the couch and a net of goats hair at the place of his head. (1 Samuel 19:16)**
- **Others must have been much smaller, able to fit inside a woman's saddle basket.**
- **Now Rachel had taken the **teraphim**, and she resorted to putting them in the woman's saddle basket of the camel, and she kept sitting upon them. So Laban went feeling through the whole tent, but did not find them. (Genesis 31:34)**
- **The **teraphim** were, on occasion, consulted for omens.**
- **For the king of Babylon stood still at the crossroads, at the head of the two ways, in order to resort to divination. He has shaken the arrows. He has asked by means of the **teraphim**, he has looked into the liver. (Ezekiel 21:21)**
- **For the **teraphim** themselves have spoken what is uncanny, and the practicers of divination, for their part, have visioned**

falsehood, and valueless dreams are what they keep speaking, and in vain they try to comfort. That is why they will certainly depart like a flock, they will become afflicted, because there is no shepherd. (**Zechariah 10:2**)

- The findings of archaeologists in Mesopotamia and adjacent areas indicate that the possession of the **teraphim** images had a bearing on who would receive the family inheritance.
- According to one tablet found at Nuzi, the possession of the household gods could under certain circumstances entitle a son-in-law to appear in court and claim the estate of his deceased father-in-law. [Ancient Near Eastern Texts, edited by J. Pritchard, 1974, pp. 219,220, and ftn 51]
- Perhaps Rachel, with this in mind, reasoned that she was justified in taking the teraphim because of her fathers deceptive dealings with her husband Jacob.
- At this Rachel and Leah answered and said to him; Is there a share of inheritance for us anymore in the house of our father? (**Genesis 31:14**)
- Are we not really considered as foreigners to him since he has sold us, so that he keeps eating continually even from the money given for us? (**Genesis 31:15**)
- For all the riches that God has taken away from our father are ours and our childrens. So now everything God has said to you do. (**Genesis 31:16**)
- The importance of the **teraphim** with respect to inheritance rights would also explain why Laban was so anxious to recover them, even to the point of taking his brothers with him and pursuing Jacob for a distance of seven days journey.
- Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep. Meantime Rachel stole the **teraphim** that belonged to her father. (**Genesis 31:19**)
- So Jacob outwitted Laban the Syrian, because he had not told him that he was running away. (**Genesis 31:20**)
- And he proceeded to run away and to get up and cross the River, he and all he had. After that he directed his face to the mountainous region of Gilead. (**Genesis 31:21**)

- **Later, on the third day, it was told to Laban that Jacob had run away. (Genesis 31:22)**
- **With that he took his brothers with him and went chasing after him for a distance of seven days journey and caught up with him in the mountainous region of Gilead. (Genesis 31:23)**
- **Then God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night and said to him; Watch yourself that you do not go speaking either good or bad with Jacob. (Genesis 31:24)**
- **So Laban approached Jacob, as Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountain and Laban had encamped his brothers in the mountainous region of Gilead. (Genesis 31:25)**
- **Then Laban said to Jacob; What have you done, in that you resorted to outwitting me and driving my daughters off like captives taken by the sword? (Genesis 31:26)**
- **Why did you have to run away secretly and outwit me and not tell me, that I might send you away with rejoicing and with songs, with tambourine and with harp? (Genesis 31:27)**
- **And you did not give me a chance to kiss my children and my daughters. Now you have acted foolishly. (Genesis 31:28)**
- **It is in the power of my hand to do harm to you people, but the God of your father talked to me last night, saying; Watch yourself against speaking either good or bad with Jacob. (Genesis 31:29)**
- **While you have actually gone now because you have been yearning intensely for the house of your father, why, though, have you stolen my gods? (Genesis 31:3)**
- **Of course, what Rachel had done was completely unknown to Jacob**
- **Whoever it is with whom you may find your gods, let him not live. Before our brothers, examine for yourself what is with me and take them for yourself. But Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. (Genesis 31:32)**

- And there is no indication that he ever attempted to use the **teraphim** to gain the inheritance from Laban's sons. Jacob had nothing to do with idols.
- At the latest, the **teraphim** would have been disposed of when Jacob hid all the foreign gods turned over to him by his household under the big tree that was close to Shechem.
- After that God said to Jacob; Rise, go up to Bethel and dwell there, and make an altar there to the true God who appeared to you when you were running away from Esau your brother. (**Genesis 35:1**)
- Then Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him; Put away the foreign gods that are in the midst of you and cleanse yourselves and change your mantles. (**Genesis 35:2**)
- And let us rise and go up to Bethel. And there I shall make an altar to the true God who answered me in the day of my distress in that he proved to be with me in the way that I have gone. (**Genesis 35:3**)
- So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods that were in their hands and the earrings that were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the big tree that was close by Shechem. (**Genesis 35:4**)
- In Israel the idolatrous use of **teraphim** existed in the days of the Judges as well as the kings.
- As for the man Micah, he had a house of gods, and he proceeded to make an ephod and **teraphim** and to fill the hand of one of his sons with power, that he might serve as priest for him. (**Judges 17:5**)
- Then the five men that had gone to spy out the land of Laish answered and said to their brothers; Did you know that there are in these houses an ephod and **teraphim** and a carved image and a molten statue? And now have in mind what you ought to do. (**Judges 18:14**)
- The five men that had gone to spy out the land now went on up, that they might enter in there to take the carved image and the ephod and the **teraphim** and the molten image. And the priest was standing at the entrance of the gate with the six hundred

men girded with weapons of war. (**Judges 18:17**)

- At this the heart of the priest was pleased, and he now took the ephod and the **teraphim** and the carved image and came into the midst of the people. (**Judges 18:20**)
- It is because for many days the sons of Israel will dwell without a king and without a prince and without a sacrifice and without a pillar and without an ephod and **teraphim**. (**Hosea 3:4**)
- It is not likely, though, that the **teraphim** served for purposes of inheritance in Israel, in view of God's express command against the making of images.
- You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. (**Exodus 20:4**)
- Also, the prophet Samuel spoke of **teraphim** in parallel with uncanny power, comparing the use of both to pushing ahead presumptuously
- You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. (**Exodus 20:4**)
- And the **teraphim** were among the appendages of idolatry cleared out of Judah and Jerusalem by faithful King Josiah.
- And also the spirit mediums and the professional foretellers of events and the **teraphim** and the dungy idols and all the disgusting things that had appeared in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem Josiah cleared out, in order, that he might actually carry out the words of the Law that were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest had found at the house of Yehowah. (**2 Kings 23:24**)
- Hence, the fact that Michal, the wife of David, had a **teraphim** image among her possessions suggests that her heart was not complete with Yehowah and that David either did not know about her having the teraphim image or else tolerated it because she was the daughter of King Saul.

- **Immediately Michal had David descend through the window, that he might go and run away and escape. (1 Samuel 19:12)**