

## Genesis 29:1-30 When God's Providence Is Discipline

NOTE: Notice the differences and similarities between Jacob finding his wife at the well and the servant Abraham sent to find Isaac's wife at the well in Gen. 24

### I. Jacob is Led To His Future Wife (1-12)

#### A. Jacob Reaches His Destination (1-6a)

1. Jacob's Journey Continues (1)
  - a. Jacob has a renewed purpose as he sets out from Bethel
  - b. The text literally says he "lifted up his feet" and came into the land of the sons of the east
2. Jacob Comes To The Well At Haran (2-3)
  - a. Three Flocks of Sheep Lay By The Well (2a)
    - i. The well was a source of water for many flocks of the city
    - ii. This may be the same well that Abraham's servant came to and found Rebecca (we cannot be sure)
    - iii. There are three different flocks with their shepherds camped around the well
  - b. The Process of Watering the Flocks is Described (2b-3)
    - i. The narrator tells us how the process went
    - ii. There was a stone over the well
      - Probably to prevent contamination or animals from falling into the well
    - iii. The flocks gathered together and the stone was rolled away from the well
    - iv. After they watered the flocks (probably taking turns) the stone was put back
      - So it looks like these three flocks had begun forming "a line" at the well to have their sheep watered
3. Jacob Has Come To The Right Place (4-6a)
  - a. The Shepherds are from Haran (4)
  - b. The Shepherds know of Laban (5-6a)
    - i. God has indeed been faithful to Jacob and led him to the home of his ancestors
    - ii. God's word to Jacob at Bethel and His providence have led Jacob exactly where he needs to be

#### B. Jacob Makes An Impression On Rachel (6b-12)

1. Jacob Questions The Shepherd's Waiting (6b-9)
  - a. The Shepherds mention Rachel as she comes (6b)
    - i. While confirming that they know Laban, the shepherds mention that his daughter is heading this way
    - ii. She is probably still a good ways off, but she catches Jacob's eye

- b. Jacob tells the Shepherds to get to work (7)
    - i. Jacob is looking for a way to impress Rachel and water her sheep
    - ii. He tells the shepherds to go ahead and water their sheep and then put them back out to pasture
    - iii. He doesn't really care about their sheep or their work ethic, he just wants them out of the way
    - iv. Jacob has found something that has captured his heart
  - c. The Shepherds explain the procedure to Jacob (8)
    - i. The Shepherds explain that they cannot roll the stone away from the well until the other flocks arrive
      - There are two possibilities as to why they must wait for the other flocks and shepherds to remove the stone
      - Many commentators think the stone was too heavy for only a few men to move – so the shepherds would wait for all the others to come and help move it. If this is the case then it means God endowed Jacob with superhuman strength to move the stone
      - Others think that there was a traditional system of “first come – first served” at the time of watering, and it was monitored by the city of Haran. It isn't that they couldn't budge the stone, it was that they weren't allowed until the proper time.
      - Notice the pronouns the shepherds use. “**We** cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and till **they** roll the stone from the well's mouth; then **we** water the sheep.” – It almost seems like someone other than the shepherds would come and roll away the stone.
  - d. Rachel arrives as Jacob is speaking (9)
    - i. As Jacob is speaking to the Shepherds and they are telling him the proper procedure for watering the sheep – Rachel arrives in the midst of them
    - ii. Jacob is smitten with Rachel immediately and seeks to impress her
2. Jacob Acts To Water Rachel's Sheep (10-12)
- a. Jacob removes the stone and waters her sheep (10)
    - i. No doubt, Jacob knows the story of Abraham's servant being sent to get Rebecca (His mother). His mother probably told him of how she watered the camels and that is how the servant knew that she was God's choice for Isaac's wife

- ii. Jacob takes the initiative and immediately takes away the stone and waters only Rachel's sheep
    - It seems more like Jacob has taken it upon himself to defy the tradition to show affection to Rachel than he has been given superhuman strength (although it is possible)
    - Notice the difference between Jacob and Abraham's servant who found Rebecca. Jacob does not pray at all. He does not seek the Lord's will. There is no mention of God in this entire section. Jacob is merely acting according to his own thoughts and desires.
- b. Jacob kisses Rachel and weeps (11)
  - i. This seems a little weird for anyone
  - ii. He kisses her before saying a word and introducing himself
  - iii. He "lifts up his voice and weeps" – this is almost the same phrase used of Esau when he realized Jacob stole his blessing.
  - iv. Why is he weeping?
- c. Jacob reveals his relation to Rachel and Laban (12)
  - i. When Jacob reveals himself to Rachel, she runs back to Laban just like Rebecca did when the servant explained his mission to her
  - ii. But when Abraham's servant found Rebecca, the first thing he did was worship God – there is no mention of Jacob doing that here.

## II. Jacob, The Trickster, Is Tricked (13-27)

- A. Jacob Begins His Stay With Laban (13-14)
  - 1. Laban Greets and Welcomes Jacob (13-14a)
    - a. Laban reacts to Jacob the same way he did to Abraham's servant – he runs to meet him and embraces him
    - b. Laban may be excited because the last time one of Abraham's men came to his household, he received ten camels and lots of money for Rebecca's bride price – Jacob has absolutely nothing
    - c. Jacob tells Laban everything that has happened
      - i. This probably includes his vision at Bethel and the reason he had to flee his home in such a hurry
    - d. Laban accepts Jacob as his family (his flesh and bone)

2. Jacob Stays With Laban For A Month (14b)
  - a. During this month, Jacob is not idle – he is going out to work just like everyone else
  - b. Remember Jacob didn't JUST come to find a wife, he came to hide out while Esau cooled down – he is just laying low
- B. Laban And Jacob Deal For Rachel (15-19)
  1. Laban Asks What Jacob Desires For A Wage (15)
    - a. Laban sounds like a very generous fellow
    - b. Laban already has it in his mind to make a deal with Jacob for long-term service
  2. Laban's Two Daughters are Described (16-17)
    - a. The elder daughter is Leah
      - i. Leah is described as being "weak-eyed"
      - ii. This means she was not very good looking
    - b. The younger daughter is Rachel
      - i. She is said to be very beautiful
      - ii. She is favorable in form and face
    - c. Notice the terms "elder and younger"
      - i. This should immediately remind us of the brothers
      - ii. Jacob is back in a household with an elder / younger rivalry
      - iii. We will see that strife between elder / younger will plague Jacob's family
  3. Jacob Offers To Serve Seven Years For Rachel (18)
    - a. A bride price must be given to the bride's family
    - b. Jacob arrived in Haran with absolutely nothing – he must work off the payment of the bride price
    - c. Seven years was a hefty sum of money for Laban
  4. Laban Agrees To Jacob's Deal (19)
- C. Jacob Is Deceived By Laban (20-27)
  1. Jacob Fulfills His End Of The Deal (20-21)
    - iii. Jacob Completes His Seven Years (20)
      - The years went by quick because of Jacob's great love for Rachel
      - Jacob has finally found something worthy of his love and desire. He has finally found something he wants more than anything.
    - iv. Jacob Demands His Wife From Laban (21)
  2. Laban Deceives Jacob (22-24)
    - a. Laban throws a wedding feast (22)
      - i. The customary wedding celebration involved feasting and drinking

- ii. No doubt the plan is to get Jacob out of his right mind
  - b. Laban substitutes Leah for Rachel (23)
    - i. The bride is presented by the father with a veil on
    - ii. The veil is not removed until the bride and groom go into the tent to consummate the marriage
    - iii. With Jacob most likely drunk, this was an easy deception
    - iv. What was Leah's role? Did she willingly go along? Where was Rachel when all this was happening?
  - c. Laban gives Zilpah as Leah's maid (24)
    - i. The maids that go along with Jacob's wives will be important
    - ii. Jacob is given a wife and a concubine
- 3. Laban Manipulates Jacob For Another Seven Years (25-27)
  - a. Jacob objects to Laban's trickery (25)
    - i. Jacob gets a dose of his own medicine
    - ii. Just as Jacob deceived Esau and Isaac, now Jacob is deceived
    - iii. God is using this to teach Jacob about his sin
  - b. Laban offers Rachel for another seven years of service (26-27)
    - i. Laban offers to give Rachel to Jacob after the wedding week for Leah
    - ii. Of course Jacob will have to serve another seven years!

### III. Jacob's Love Leads Him To Favor Rachel (28-30)

- A. Jacob is Given Rachel and Bilhah (28-29)
- B. Jacob Loves Rachel More Than Leah (30)
  - 1. Jacob's chickens have come home to roost
  - 2. He has experienced the same deception that he has used on others
  - 3. And now, he is showing the same favoritism in his family that characterized his own family. This favoritism caused all kinds of problems in Isaac's household, and now we will see that it does the same in Jacob's

God, in his providence, has allowed all this to happen to Jacob so that his promise will be fulfilled, and Jacob will be disciplined to learn that his actions have been hurtful and sinful.