

### Jacob Met Rachel at a Well

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the importance of spending time alone in fellowship with the Lord. That is a key in the development of their spiritual lives. In this topic, we will see that the Lord led Jacob as he went to the city of Haran.

Genesis 29:1-3 says, “So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well’s mouth. Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well’s mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well’s mouth.” Jacob continued on his way after he set up the pillar where God had spoken to him. As he traveled, he came to the land of the people of the East. He was not sure where the city of Haran was located and so he had to ask questions as he went. One day, as he traveled, he saw a well in the field with three flocks of sheep lying near the well. This was the place where those sheep would be watered. However, they had to wait until all of the flocks were gathered around the well and then they would move the stone that covered the top of the well. After the sheep were watered, the stone would then be placed back on top of the well. This cover was to protect the well from blowing sand.

Jacob saw that there were people with the three flocks that were already there, so he saw this as a possible place to find out what direction he needed to travel to reach the city of Haran. Genesis 29:4-8 says, “And Jacob said to them, ‘My brethren, where *are* you from?’ And they said, ‘We *are* from Haran.’ Then he said to them, ‘Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?’ And they said, ‘We know him.’ So he said to them, ‘Is he well?’ And they said, ‘*He is* well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.’ Then he said, ‘Look, *it is* still high day; *it is* not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed *them*.’ But they said, ‘We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well’s mouth; then we water the sheep.’” As a result, Jacob walked to the well and asked the men with the flocks in what city they lived. They said they were from the city of Haran.

This must have been an encouragement to Jacob because he realized they were from the city for which he was looking. Jacob then asked if they knew Laban the son of Nahor. The shepherds responded that they knew Laban. They also said that he was well. Then, they gave what would become one of the most important pieces of information they would give Jacob when they said, “And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.” Suddenly, Jacob had to realize that God was guiding his life. The Lord had told him, in Genesis 28:15, “Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.” Jacob had probably given much thought to the dream in which God had spoken to him at Bethel. Now, Jacob received a clear indication that the Lord was with him, and had guided him both to Haran, and even to the family of Laban. However, that was just the start of what the Lord was going to do in his life to show him what it meant to have the Lord with him to guide him.

Jacob then reminded the shepherds that it was still the middle of the day and that the cattle would not gather at the well until the evening. He suggested that the shepherds water the sheep and then take them back into the fields so they could eat. The shepherds replied that they had to wait until all of the flocks were gathered at the well and then the stone would be rolled from the top of the well. Then, they would be able to water the sheep. Jacob was still talking with the other shepherds when Rachel arrived at the well with the sheep of her father. Genesis 29:9-12 says, “Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father’s relative and that he *was* Rebekah’s son. So she ran and told her father.”

Rachel had been given the job of being a shepherdess, so she was the one who cared for the sheep of her father. This shows us that her father did not have a large flock of sheep at the time Jacob arrived at Haran. Jacob suddenly became a man of action when Rachel arrived at the well with the flock of her father. We see that Jacob went to the well and removed the covering from the well and began to water the flock of Laban. It was probably a shock to Rachel to have a stranger she had never seen before take the stone off the well and begin to water her flock. In contrast, Jacob was very excited because he saw how God had brought him to the very family to whom his parents had told him to go and get a wife. As we will see in a future topic, it was almost like love at first sight when he saw Rachel. This is a good passage to help young people see that God will lead them, if they will seek the guidance of the Lord as they look for a future husband or wife. The Lord is even more concerned about who they marry than they are because the plan of God is for a marriage that will bring joy to their lives.

Once Jacob had watered the flock of Laban, we see that Jacob gave Rachel a kiss and then began to cry. That probably came as a second shock to Rachel since he was a stranger, and she did not know who he was. However, Jacob quickly explained to Rachel who he was and how he was related. She had probably heard the story many times about the servant of Abraham who had come to get a wife for the Isaac, the son of Abraham. Genesis 24:15-16 says, “And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up.” Rebekah had also met that servant at a well and then the next day had left to go and become the bride of Isaac. Jacob told Rachel that he was her father’s relative and that he was the son of Rebekah. We do not know if the family had ever heard about the fact that Isaac and Rebekah had a set of twins born to them. Suddenly, Rachel had now met one of those twins and learned that he was the son of Rebekah, the sister of her own father. This news probably filled Rachel with surprise or even amazement, especially since she met him at a well just as the servant of Abraham had met Rebekah. As a result, she immediately ran to tell her father about this meeting so he could meet this son of Rebekah.

Genesis 29:13-14 says, “Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister’s son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, ‘Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh.’ And he stayed with him for a month.” Here, we see that Laban was very happy to

meet the son of his sister, Rebekah. However, he may have had a little different thought than his daughter. When the servant had come to get a bride for Isaac, Genesis 24:50-53 says, “Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, ‘The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the LORD has spoken.’ And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth. Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.” Laban and his mother had received gifts of great value from the servant and heard about the way the Lord had blessed Abraham and his son Isaac.

As a result, Laban may have been thinking about his trip to the well many years earlier when he had met the servant of Abraham as he ran to the well to meet Jacob. Of course, he also wanted to learn more about the family of his sister and learn what had happened to her since she had gone to marry Isaac. We see that Laban gave Jacob a very warm welcome as he embraced Jacob and kissed him when he met him at the well. Then, Laban brought Jacob into his house. That day they had much to talk about since it had been many years earlier that Rebekah had left to become the bride of Isaac. Genesis 25:20 says, “Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.” We see that Isaac had been forty years old when he married Rebekah. Then, Genesis 25:26 says, “Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them.” As a result, Rebekah had been married to Isaac for twenty years before they had any children. In addition, if you add the age of Jacob at the time he came to Haran, many years had passed and so, there was much to learn about what had happened in their families. Laban showed that he recognized Jacob as a part of his family as he said, “Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh.”

We go on to read that Jacob stayed with Laban for a month. Usually, the tradition of that culture was for a person to stay three days and then begin working if they could agree on an acceptable wage. However, we see that Laban waited a month before he talked to Jacob about wages for the work he was doing. Jacob was ready when Laban asked wages he wanted, as Genesis 29:18 says, “Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.’” Jacob had been sent to find a wife and he knew which daughter he wanted for a wife because he had already developed a love for Rachel. We want to help our physical and spiritual children realize how God works to lead us as we learn to follow Him. God had led Jacob to the place where he was going. The Lord had caused him to meet the family of Laban through Rachel. Now, God had developed a love in Jacob for Rachel. We want to help our children learn to explain how God leads us as we yield to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.