

### Jacob Meets Rachel, His Future Wife

#### Genesis 29:1-14

Genesis 29:1-14 - *"So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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.*

*<sup>4</sup> And Jacob said to them, "My brethren, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." <sup>5</sup> Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." <sup>6</sup> So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."*

*<sup>7</sup> 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." <sup>8</sup> 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."*

*<sup>9</sup> Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>12</sup> 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.*

*<sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month."*

#### Background Notes

After Jacob's dream, he continued on his journey to the northeast. His destination was Haran, about 500 miles from BeerSheba. This area today is approximately where Turkey, Syria, and Iraq come together at the top of the Fertile Crescent. Kurdish people live there today. Here Jacob would be safe from Esau's wrath, and here Jacob was to find a wife. Isaac had instructed Jacob to find a wife in Rebekah's homeland: *"You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother"* (Genesis 28:1-2).

Jacob arrived in the area of Haran, and he "just happened" to stop by a well where some shepherds "just happened" to know Laban, Jacob's uncle. Then Rachel, a shepherdess, "just happened" to arrive with Laban's sheep, and she "just

happened” to be a very nice- looking single young woman! “Wow!” thought Jacob, “Everything is going great! God is making good on those promises that He made to me in the dream back at Bethel.” Seriously speaking, God really **was** making good on His promises. These events weren’t “just happening”! God was working behind the scenes to accomplish His purposes.

This account reminds us of Genesis 24, when Abraham’s servant came to this same area to find a wife for Isaac. Divine providence was at work there, and God was at work here as well.

It appears that Jacob tried to get the other shepherds to water their sheep and move on (v7). Why? Jacob saw Rachel coming, and he wanted to meet and talk with her alone. When Rachel arrived, Jacob single-handedly removed the stone from the well’s mouth - showing that Jacob was no weakling! Then he watered all of Rachel’s sheep. He certainly wanted to make a good impression on this beautiful young woman! After this, he went over and kissed Rachel, and he began to weep, *“Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept”* (v11).

Ladies - if your husband kissed you on your first date and then began to cry, would you have married him? Well, presumably Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative before he kissed her and started to cry! It’s clear that Jacob was crying for joy: he was a long way from home, and he was happy to be with family. Rachel ran to tell her father, and *“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... And Laban said to him, “Surely you are my bone and my flesh.” And he stayed with him for a month”* (v13-14).

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. God’s guidance was working for good in spite of spiritual immaturity.

That truth is taught here in the life of Jacob. Jacob was a believer, but at this point he was not a spiritually mature believer. In fact, at this point Jacob was a selfish, deceitful, cunning and crafty believer. He had just deceived his father Isaac so he could take the blessing from his brother Esau. And the vow he made before God in chapter 28 was a somewhat self-centered bargain with God. Genesis 28:20-21: *“Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.””*

Jacob was certainly no spiritual giant at this point in his life! But here’s the point: in spite of all his shortcomings and spiritual immaturity, God was working for good in Jacob’s life. In this chapter God’s guidance was working behind the scenes to provide for and to protect Jacob. God was working behind the scenes to make Jacob the man of faith God intended him to be. God’s guidance was working for good in spite of Jacob’s spiritual immaturity.

That was true in Jacob's life, and it is true in our lives as well. Recently Margie and I heard some great news about a young man who was in our church youth group over 20 years ago. He was a believer, but after high school he drifted away from the Lord and did his own thing. His interests were all self-centered, and he had very little time for God. But in spite of his spiritual immaturity, God was working behind the scenes, and he guided him to the right wife. Then He guided him in his travels so that his eyes were opened once again to the things of God. To make a long story short, he and his wife are now joyfully serving the Lord full time as missionaries in Eastern Europe! The guidance of God was working for good in spite of spiritual immaturity!

## **2. The guidance of God is working for good in spite of spiritual ignorance.**

At this stage of the game, Jacob was not only spiritually immature - he was spiritually ignorant. He was not aware that through all these mundane events, God was accomplishing his purpose of bringing about a nation through which the Redeemer for all mankind would come. At this point in his life, Jacob was only interested in his own safety and his own needs. He was spiritually ignorant of all that God was doing through him, and all that God would do through him in the future.

We, too, are often spiritually ignorant of all the good God wants to do for us and through us. Over 25 years ago, when I was working as a research engineer, I made a job change to a corporation in Pittsburgh. We hunted for a house in the Pittsburgh area, but we couldn't seem to find just the "right" house. Finally, almost in desperation (and a little frustration), we decided to rent a small house temporarily, by the month. The house wasn't at all adequate for our family's needs, but it provided a base from which to hunt for a house to buy.

Well, it was through that rather run-down rental house, which "just happened" to be near the local high school, that we became very heavily involved with the evangelistic ministry there. We gradually came to realize that God was calling us into a full time ministry with high school kids. Within 10 months of renting that house, I left secular employment and we were working in ministry full time! All that time we were ignorant of what God was doing as He guided us through the events of those days!

We continue to be amazed at the way God works behind the scenes, without our knowing it, to accomplish **His** purposes. This is true in your life as well, and I'm sure many of you could share stories from your own lives along this line. The guidance of God is working for good in spite of spiritual ignorance.

## Practical Application

### Do you really believe Romans 8:28?

Do we really believe Romans 8:28? “*And we know that in all things God is working for good for those who love Him, who are the called according to His purpose.*” There is no way we can study this chapter in Jacob’s life and not be reminded of Romans 8:28.

Notice - Romans 8:28 **does not say that all things are good**. It says that God is working all things together for good in the believer’s life. All things were **not** good in Jacob’s life. Jacob deceiving his father was not good. Jacob’s selfishness was not good. Jacob’s spiritual immaturity was not good. And Jacob marrying four wives was not good, as we will see.

But Scripture teaches that God can take all things - including our shortcomings and sin - and work them together to accomplish His good plans for us. Those plans will certainly include discipline to correct us, as we’ll see in Jacob’s life. But God can take all things and work them together for our good.

Do you really believe Romans 8:28? You may think, “Well, maybe for Jacob, but I have a hard time believing it for my own life.” Listen - if you are a believer, Romans 8:28 is addressed to you. **All** things work together for good to those who love God - all our ups and downs, all our pleasures and hurts, all our joys and disappointments, all our triumphs and all our tragedies. Our loving God is even working our shortcomings and sins together for good. Of course He doesn’t condone our shortcomings and sins, and we must be disciplined, but God is able to take all these things and work them out for our ultimate good – to make us more like Christ.

That is what the Bible teaches, and believing it will make a tremendous difference in your life as a believer! Do we really believe Romans 8:28?