



Genesis 29-30

Jacob has been guilty of a very common mistake that we often make and that is of trying to help God out. Believing in the purposes of God, knowing that God is desiring to accomplish certain things, we somehow develop a complex that God can not do His work unless we help Him out. Surely the work of God will fail unless we step in and take charge.

It was God's will that Jacob receive the blessing of Isaac. Before he was born, Rebekah was praying about her problem pregnancy and God told her that there were two nations within her womb that were diverse from each other and that the elder would serve the younger. Isaac was seeking to reverse that and give the blessing to Esau.

Rebekah, knowing that Isaac was planning to bless Esau, had Jacob disguise himself and take in goat meat prepared to taste like the venison that Isaac loved. So, Jacob disguised as Esau deceived his father and claimed to be Esau. Isaac ate of the meat and blessed Jacob with the blessing he had prepared to bless Esau. When Esau came in with the venison afterward, Isaac, trembling, knew that his plan to cross the plan of God had been thwarted.

Although Esau wept, it was for the blessing and not out of repentance. He comforted himself with thinking Isaac would die soon and then he would kill Jacob. Evidently he had voiced his intentions to some of the servants who told Rebekah and she called Jacob and told him to go to her brothers house in Haran until she notified him to come back home, because, Esau was planning to kill him. Jacob fled from that place, near Beer-sheba, five hundred miles to the area of Babylon. In Chapter 29, we find Jacob at the conclusion of his journey and arriving in Haran.

"Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks; and a great stone was upon the well's mouth. And thither were all the flocks gathered; and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place. And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? And they said, of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know him. And he said unto them, Is he well? And they said, He is well; and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep. And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water ye the sheep, and go and feed them." (Gen.29:1-7).

Evidently, Jacob wanted to get rid of these little guys, with their sheep, so that when Rachel arrived he would be alone with her. It is interesting that God led Jacob to the well, even as Abraham's servant earlier had been led by the LORD and had come to the place where Rebekah came out to get water.

It was a different type of well and not the usual type where you are dipping a bucket in for the water. It was closed by a rock and when the rock was rolled back the water would flow out and water the sheep. The stone was probably too heavy for these small boys to roll so they would wait until a group would arrive and then the stronger ones would roll the stone back. They were gathering early, probably to get in line for the water.

Rachel was a shepherdess which wasn't unusual for girls in that culture. Even today in Israel you will see small girls tending the sheep.

"And they said, 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. And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. 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." (Gen.29:8-10). Jacob was probably

showing off a bit for Rachel as it usually took several men to roll the stone from the mouth of the well.

"And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father." (Gen.29:11-12).

It may not have happened in that order, but Rachel was taken aback by the whole scene. No doubt, she had heard the story of her Aunt Rebekah, who was taken, by the servant of Abraham, to be the wife of Abraham's son. How the story had involved the well and how Rebekah had been prosperous as the wife of Isaac. There were already some romantic connotations in regards to the family of Nahor and the family of Abraham. Now here is Jacob kissing his cousin, overcome with emotion and thanksgiving to God.

"And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things." (Gen. 29:13). This was a typical oriental greeting.

"And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh, And he abode with him the space of a month. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?" (Gen.29:14-15).

Jacob, during the month he was there, had pitched in and helped with the chores. He was a very industrious person. So, Laban offered to pay him wages and asked him what he wanted.

"And Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured." (Gen.29:16-17). Tender eyed or delicate means weak-eyed. Some say it meant that they were blue and that blue eyes were a sign of weakness in that culture. Of course, we don't know this to be true as the scripture doesn't say. Rachel, the youngest daughter, was beautiful of form and appearance.

"And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man; abide with me." (Gen.29:18-19). And so, the deal was made between Laban and Jacob.

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." (Gen.29:20).

Not to take away from the romance of this passage, but Jacob, at this time, was over seventy years old. He lived to be a hundred and sixty-five; so, he is really still a kid. Considering the virility and longevity of those days, he was not too old to be romantic. Jacob had such a great love for Rachel that seven years seemed but a few days to him.

"And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her." (Gen.29:21-23).

"And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for an handmaid. And it came to pass, that in the morning, behold, it was Leah; and he said to Laban, What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?" (Gen.29:24-25).

It is interesting that Jacob asked Laban why he had deceived him; when "he" was there running from his brother Esau, because he had deceived Isaac, his father. Now Jacob is being deceived by his father-in-law. It says in Galatians 6:7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Adoni-bezek, when he was captured and they cut off his thumbs and his great toes, said, "Three score and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table; as I have done, so God hath requited me..." (Judges 1:7). This is a law that God has established within nature. Whatever a man sows, that he also reaps. It is a necessary law in order to keep order in nature.

Life would be almost impossible, chaotic at the least, if this were not a law of nature. If you did not reap what you sowed, the whole agriculture industry would be chaotic. The law of sowing and reaping is not just valid in the physical universe, but the bible declares it is also valid in the spiritual realm. Watch what you sow into your mind, because you become what you have planted in your mind!

Jacob has deceived and so he is being deceived by Laban. "And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years." (Gen.29:26-27). What a rip-off!

Laban is a crook. Later on, in the story, Jacob accuses Laban of changing his wages ten different times in the years he worked for him. Laban is a despicable kind of a person, but Jacob always got the best of him on every turn.

It was the custom of the time when you got married to spend the first week with your wife. "And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also." (Gen.29:28).

"And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years." (Gen.29:29-30).

Here is a case of polygamy. There could be advantages to having many wives, but there would also be many disadvantages. I think the disadvantages would far outweigh the advantages. There was a rivalry and jealousy between Jacob's wives and it must have caused him grief at times. When God saw that Leah was hated, He made her very fruitful in bearing children; while, Rachel, not able to have children became envious and sort of hateful. It became a very trying circumstance as we will see as we read on.

"And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me." (Gen.29:31-32). Leah named her firstborn Reuben which means, "Look a son." She hoped that this birth would bring to her Jacob's love.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also; and she called his name Simeon." (Gen.29:33). The first son was called, "look" and the second son was called "heard." The LORD had seen and had heard Leah's grief in that she was not loved.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons; therefore was his name called Levi." (Gen.29:34).

Leah said, Surely, this time my husband will come live with me and she called her third born son Levi which means "joined."

She was expressing again that yearning for the love of her husband.

"And she conceived again, and bare a son; and she said, Now will I praise the LORD; therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing." (Gen.29:35). Leah called the name of her fourth son, "praise."

Leah had four sons in rapid succession and then quit bearing; while, Rachel remains barren. In that culture, the greatest thing a woman can do is bare a son for her husband. If you are unable to give your husband a son, he can divorce you. Major Hadad, in Lebanon, had four beautiful daughters and his wife was about to give birth to her fifth child. He asked for prayer that God would give him a son. He was about to lose the respect of his army, because he had all girls. When the fifth child was a girl, it was a great disappointment. The culture today is the same and if it is a boy, they make merry and have a good time; but, if a girl, there is no celebration.

"And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die." (Gen.30:1). Rachel became bitter over not having children and she began to have a bad attitude toward Leah and Jacob.

"And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" (Gen.30:2). Basically, Jacob was saying it wasn't his fault, that she was not able to produce.

"And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife; and Jacob went in unto her. And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son; therefore called she his name Dan." (Gen.30:3-6). The name Dan means "judged."

"And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed; and she called his name Naphtali." (Gen.30:7-8). Naphtali means "wrestling." It is interesting how the children were named after hope, aspirations or circumstances of their birth.

"When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife." (Gen.30:9). The sisters were competing against each other, but you don't hear of Jacob complaining.

"And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. And Leah said, A troop cometh; and she called his name Gad." (Gen.30:10-11). Leah called Zilpah's son Gad or "troop." She probably believed that a lot more would follow.

"And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son. And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed; and she called his name Asher." (Gen.30:12-13). The second son of Zilpah was called Asher which means "happy." It's beginning to sound a little like the seven dwarfs: happy, judgment, wrestlings, praise, etc.

"And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah..." Now Reuben was about seven years old at this time. "Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also?..." (Gen.30:14-15a).

There seems to be a lot of bitterness between the two sisters. It's sad and tragic and was probably not a very happy home.

Mandrakes were thought to be an aphrodisiac. They were considered to have a kind of fertility drug within them, especially the root part. It is possible that Rachel was hoping to take the mandrakes, as an aphrodisiac, and perhaps, create fertility.

"...And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. (Gen.30:15b-16).

"And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband; and she called his name Issachar." (Gen.30:17-18). The name Issachar means "hired."

"And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons; and she called his name Zebulun." (Gen.30:19-20).

Zebulun means "dwelling" and Leah was sure that now her husband would live with her as she had bore him six sons.

"And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah." (Gen.30:21). Imagine being the only girl amidst ten brothers. She was probably loved very much and had a pretty good life.

"And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she

conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach; And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son." (Gen.30:22-24).

In faith and in hope that God would give her another son, Rachel named her first son, Joseph, which means "adding." Rachel, indeed, had another son. Her second son was born on their way back to the land, in the area near Bethlehem. He was the twelfth son born to Jacob. In the child birth, Rachel died. As he was being born and she was having such a difficult time in delivery, she called his name Benoi, "the son of misery." Jacob changed the name to Benjamin, "the son of my right hand."

"And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country." (Gen.30:25).

Jacob now has eleven sons, one daughter, two wives and their two maids and he is asking Laban to send him home. "Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go; for thou knowest my service which I have done thee." (Gen.30:26). He has fulfilled his obligation to Laban.

"And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry; for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake." (Gen.30:27).

The word "experience" is the Hebrew word for enchantments. It is possible that Laban is saying that he has learned by enchantments that the LORD had blessed him for Jacob's sake. He was involved in the worship of false gods. Perhaps he had gone into one who was a diviner to learn the secret of his success and learned that Jacob was the reason for God's blessings.

"And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it." (Gen.30:28). Earlier in the story, he had made that statement to Jacob and he had gotten a good deal. Jacob had promised to work for him for seven years to get Rachel for his wife. He may have thought, that Jacob being a soft touch, would again agree to stay on.

"And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me. For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming; and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?" (Gen.30:29-30).

So, Jacob is saying that when he came there, Laban had very little. The LORD had blessed him through Jacob and now Laban was quite wealthy with cattle and flocks, but, Jacob had none of his own.

"And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing; if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock. I will pass through all thy flock today, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and of such shall be my hire." (Gen.30:31-32). Jacob is naming his price.

"So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face; every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me. And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word." (Gen.30:33-34).

What Jacob was saying was for Laban to go through the flocks and remove all the speckled and spotted and brown lambs among the flock. The solid colors would be Laban's. Take out the speckled and spotted so that they wouldn't breed with the solid colors. Jacob would get all the speckled and spotted that were born from the solid colored animals as his hire.

"And he removed that day the he goats that were speckled and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, and everyone that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons. And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob; and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks." (Gen.30:35-36).

Laban thought that he had it made. He told his sons not to let the spotted and speckled intermingle with the solid color ones. All that Jacob gets is the spotted and speckled that come forth from the solid color

animals from this time on and Laban really thought he had quite a deal. He thought that Jacob had to be a fool to make this kind of bargain.

"And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chestnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle." (Gen.30:37-40).

"And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. But when the cattle were feeble, he put them not in; so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses." (Gen.30:41-43).

Jacob was very skilled in the art of husbandry and began to be very prosperous. There are those who would criticize the account at this point, because Jacob believed in prenatal marking. By putting these striped rods that he thought that he could bring forth striped and speckled offspring. It could be that Jacob did have these thoughts as he was sly and crafty; however, Jacob had approximately eighty years in the observation and workings of husbandry.

Jacob probably knew by experimentation and observation what is now known as The Mendellion Law concerning the dominant and recessive genes. Knowing that in the solid colored animals that there could be the recessive spots and stripes.

In the King James translation, the word "yakham" is conceived, but more literally "yakham" means to be hot. It is more likely, understanding a little about animal's reproduction, Jacob knew as the animals came in for the watering and the striped branches were placed in front of them that it caused them to come into heat and thus reproduce. It was the LORD who blessed and prospered Jacob and gave him the strong speckled and spotted offsprings. Later on Jacob acknowledged that God had granted him the success and wealth.