

## EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

### Message #66

### Genesis 29:1-29

When Jesus Christ was here on earth He set forth in very simple language what we call the “golden rule” which says, “Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them ...” (Matthew 7:12). In other words “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” As we come to Genesis 29, we come to an actual sovereign outworking of a negative example of the golden rule. Dr. Allen Ross writes: “The Bible demonstrates repeatedly the principle that people reap what they sow. This truth has been called poetic justice, or irony. It is, furthermore, a form of divine retribution, a talionic justice in which there is a measure-for-measure turn of affairs, where the punishment fits the crime ... Genesis 29 provides us with an example of this divine ordering” (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 496).

Jacob had deceptively tricked Isaac and Esau and now Laban would deceptively trick him in an episode that would rob him of 20 years of his life (Genesis 31:41). Jacob had outwitted his father, so his father-in-law would outwit him.

**GOD BLESSES THOSE COVENANTALLY RELATED TO HIM, BUT HE DISCIPLINES THOSE WHO DO NOT DEAL WITH SIN BY PERMITTING THE SAME KIND OF THING TO HAPPEN TO THEM THAT THEY DID TO OTHERS.**

**PART #1** - God gives success to His people who have failed. 29:1-14

There are two main reasons Jacob was to go to Haran: 1) To save his own life (27:42-44); 2) To find a proper wife (28:1-12). God appeared to Jacob in Bethel and informed him He would be with him and bless him and Jacob worshipped God and after that he “went on his journey” (29:1). The Hebrew text literally reads, “Jacob lifted up his feet and went to the land of the people of the east” (George Ricker Berry, *Hebrew/English Old Testament*, pp. 108-109). As soon as Jacob realized God was with him, he lit out for Mesopotamia, he walked with a quicker step, looking to discover God’s will. John Calvin said he walked cheerfully, deceitfully, briskly, refreshed in spirit (*Genesis*, vol. 2, p. 127). But **he did not return to Beersheba to make things right with Esau and his dad.** He set out with a new spring in his step, thinking “I’m free at last.”

**Observation #1** - Once a fallen servant realizes God still loves them and cares for them - there ought to be a new zest for life to get on with life and serve God.

**Observation #2** - If the fallen servant doesn’t try to make restitution for the wrong, God has His ways of tracking the servant down.

**(Action #1)** - The action at the well. 29:2-12a

It is very obvious from 29:2, 3, 7-8, 10 that the “well” is a critical part of this story. At this well Jacob met the citizens of Haran (29:2-4), he learned about Laban and Rachel (29:5-8), he saw Rachel (29:9-10a), he removed the stone from the well (20:10b), he kissed Rachel and wept (29:11) and he told her that he was her father’s relative, literally the son of Rebekah, Laban’s sister.

What is the significance of all of this? Jacob came to this well and found shepherds, who were all from Haran (29:4), the place where Laban lived. It is quite clear from verse 6 that these shepherds were waiting for Rachel, Laban's daughter, before removing the stone from the well (29:6-8). It is safe to assume that Laban owned this well, which explains why Jacob had the nerve to remove the stone from the well himself (29:10) and explains why his action eventually caused Laban to say "you are my bone and my flesh" (29:14). **In other words, the fact that Jacob dared to remove the stone at the well proves he was Laban's relative, a relative of Abraham.**

Moving that stone typically took more than one guy (29:2-3). But in a burst of emotion and strength, Jacob demonstrated great manly power and moved it himself. He moves the stone, kisses Rachel and starts crying (29:10-11). The fact that he dared move this stone was somewhat of a cocky move. But God was soon going to remove some of that cockiness from him would knock him down to size.

There is a N.T. application to this O.T. revelation. Jesus refers to Himself as a well capable of giving an everlasting drink that can produce everlasting life (John 4:10-15; 7:37-38). The N.T. application is that the blessings of God come to one who has received Jesus Christ, who gives us a spiritual connection to the family of Abraham.

**(Action #2)** - The response of Rachel. 29:12b

Some-stranger named Jacob had opened the well for Rachel, watered her flock, kissed wept and then told her he was related to Laban, which prompted her to run and tell her father. This man was either someone very special, or somewhat of a nut. It seems to me that Jacob's emotions are ruling. He must have been glad to find someone who cared about him, someone he could call his family.

**(Action #3)** - The response of Laban. 29:13-14

When Laban heard, he ran to Jacob, hugged him, kissed him and brought him to his home and honored him. God had blessed Jacob in spite of the fact he had failed. But something still had not been resolved - he had wronged his brother and had not made it right.

**PART #2** - God gives discipline to His people who fail and do not make restitution. 29:15-29

Jacob lived with and worked for Laban for a month (29:14). Laban seemed to be a fair business man and he decided he should pay Jacob some form of wages. The truth is Laban was a cheap businessman who was not too generous for in 20 years of service he will change Jacob's salary 10 times in a negative way (31:7-8; 41-42), and it will be God who will eventually take Jacob away from Laban for it. **Laban is a deceitful, manipulative trickster and God will use him to discipline Jacob.**

There has been discovered an ancient Nuzi text that says a typical dowry price for a bride was 30-40 shekels. A shepherd earned about 10 shekels a year, so the normal rate for a wife was 3-4 years (Dr. Kent Hughes, *Genesis*, p. 656).

Laban had two daughters, Leah - the oldest - who had delicate, tender, weak eyes and Rachel - the younger - who was gorgeous (29:18-20). Jacob wanted Rachel for his wife and he promised to work seven years for her and did (29:18-20). This was about double the going rate; At the end of the seven years, Jacob expected to marry Rachel (29:22), but Laban orchestrated things through a marriage feast so that Jacob ended up consummating the marriage with the wrong girl (29:22-25). Laban said it was the cultural norm to marry the oldest girl first (29:26). God is rebuking Jacob here. **He had deceitfully taken the place of the elder and now Leah had deceitfully taken the place of the younger.** Laban proposed that Jacob work another seven years for Rachel, to which he agreed (29:27-28). It appears that after the seven day feast period (Judges 14:12), Jacob married Rachel.

Sometimes God will put difficult people in our own private world. They may be harsh, judgmental, deceitful, arrogant, untruthful. In these moments a wise thing to do is first look to our self. Perhaps God has brought this person into our life to teach us a lesson about ourselves. That is what God did with Jacob by the tricks of Laban;

- A. Jacob deceives father, father-in-law deceives him
- B. Jacob deceives by pretending to be older, he is deceived by Leah pretending to be younger
- C. Jacob tricks Esau for soup, Laban tricks Jacob for wages
- D. Jacob deceived Isaac in regard to his favorite son (Esau), Jacob would be deceived in regard to his favorite son (Joseph)
- E. Jacob deceitfully used skin of goat to trick Isaac, Jacob would be deceived by goat blood in regard to Joseph (Genesis 27:16; 37:31)

### **Lessons:**

1. God will bless, guide, protect and prosper those properly related to him, in spite of failures.  
God's blessings do not mean we are immune setbacks, difficulties and hurts.
2. God does not forget about wrongs if the one doing the wrong does not make restitution.  
God in His grace will always forgive our sin, but God in His government may track it down.
3. God does not discipline one properly related to Him immediately, but always eventually.  
We can save ourselves many tough times by making our choices submitting to God's Word.
4. God's disciplinary activity takes on a close resemblance to the non-restitutionary sin.  
When God is tracking our sin down we will see the resemblance in the way He does it.
5. God eventually greatly blesses one who remains faithful even during times of discipline.  
Those who learn the lessons that discipline is designed to teach reap fabulous blessings.
6. God's disciplinary action has a time beginning and a time ending.