

Genesis Chapter 29

Verses 1-4: Conveniently meeting at his destination, shepherds who knew both Laban and Rachel reflected the directing hand of God upon his life, just as promised (28:15).

Genesis 29:1 "Then Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east."

"Then Jacob went on his journey": After the above vow at Bethel, and having had some intimation that what he desired would be granted him; or "he lift up his feet", which not only shows that he walked afoot, but that he went on his journey with great cheerfulness.

For having such gracious promises made him, that God would be with him. And keep him, and supply him with all necessaries, and return him again to the land of Canaan, which made his heart glad. His heart, as the Jewish writers say: lifted up his legs and he walked swiftly, and with great eagerness.

"And came into the land of the people of the east": The land of Mesopotamia or Syria, which lay to the east of the land of Canaan (see Isaiah 9:11). So, he came by several days journey.

Verse 2-3: "Great stone": Perhaps due to the fact that this well of precious stored water could evaporate rapidly in the sun, or be filled with blowing dust, or used indiscriminately, it had been covered and its use regulated (verses 7-8).

Genesis 29:2 "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 he looked, and behold a well in the field": Near Haran; he might purposely look out for a well, as knowing that there, people frequently came for water for their families, or shepherds to water their flocks. Of whom he might get intelligence concerning Laban's family, and where they dwelt.

Or he might lookout for this particular well, where his grandfather's servant had met with his mother Rebekah. Of which he had been informed, and very probably had some directions how to find it. Of this well (see Genesis 24:11).

To which may be added what another traveler says, there is in this city (Orpha, the same with Haran), a fountain, which both Jews, Armenians, and Turks, reported unto us was Jacob's well, and that here he served his uncle Laban. Near Alexandretta is a fine well, called Jacob's well, and its water is excellent; not far from which the Greeks say are the remains of Laban's house.

"And, lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it": In order to be watered, when it should be opened.

"For out of that well they watered the flocks": The shepherds.

"And a great stone was upon the well's mouth": So that until that was rolled off, they could not be watered, which was the reason of their lying by it. This stone was laid upon it, partly to keep the water from flowing out, and being wasted, that there might be a sufficiency for the flocks.

And partly to keep the water pure and clean, that it might be wholesome for the flocks, as well as entire for the use of those that had a property in it.

Genesis 29:3 "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 thither were all the flocks gathered": The three above mentioned (Genesis 29:2).

"And they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep": That is, when they watered the sheep, they would roll away the stone from the mouth of the well in order to do it; for as yet the flocks, now lying by it, had not been watered, as appears from (Genesis 29:7).

"And put a stone upon the well's mouth in this place;" This they were accustomed to do every time they watered the flocks.

In this dry barren land, the gathering place was at the well of water. The well was a valuable commodity. The sheep would die without the water. They were careful to put the stone back to keep filth from filtering into the well.

Genesis 29:4 "And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence [be] ye? And they said, Of Haran [are] we."

"And Jacob said unto them": To the shepherds, though not expressly mentioned; it cannot be imagined he spoke to the flocks, but to the keepers of them.

"My brethren, whence be ye?" A kind and friendly way of speaking, used even to strangers, since all men are brethren by nature. Or might be used by Jacob, because they were of the same occupation with himself. Shepherds asking them of what city they were and from and whence they came? And which being answered, would lead on to a conversation, which was what he wanted.

"And they said, of Haran are we": The very place he was bound, and was sent unto (Gen. 27:43).

Genesis 29:5 "And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? And they said, We know [him]."

“Laban the son of Nahor”: Genealogical fluidity in the use of “son,” meaning male descendant, occurred in Jacob’s inquiry after Laban, for he was actually Nahor’s grandson (22:20-23).

Jacob had found the right place and his mother's people, as well. God had truly been with him.

Verses 6-8: It appears that Jacob was trying to get these men to water their sheep immediately and leave, so he could be alone with Rachel for the meeting.

Genesis 29:6 "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 unto them, is he well": In good health, he and his family, or "is peace unto him". Does he enjoy prosperity and happiness? For this word was used in the eastern nations, and still is, for all kind of contentedness.

"And they said, he is well": Or has peace; he and his family are in good health, enjoying all the comforts and blessings of life.

"And, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep": At that very instant she was coming out of the city with her father's flock of sheep, to water them at the well; an instance of great humility, diligence, and simplicity. This was very well-timed to Jacob.

This was Jacob's first glimpse of Rachel. Rachel herded the family's sheep.

Genesis 29:7 "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]."

"And he said, lo, it is yet high day": Noonday, when the sun is highest; at which time in those hot countries flocks used to be made to lie down in shady places, and by still waters, to which the allusion is (in Psalm 23:2). Or the sun was still up very high, and there was a great deal of the day yet to come; for so the phrase is, "yet the day is great" or "much", a long time still till tonight.

"Neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together": Off of the pastures, to be had home, and put into folds, which was usually done in the evening.

"Water ye the sheep, and go and feed them": Give them water out of the well to drink, and then lead them out to the pastures, and let them feed until the night which is coming on. This he said not in an authoritative way, or in a surly ill-natured manner, and as reproving them for their slothfulness.

But kindly and gently giving his advice, who being a shepherd himself, and knew what was proper to be done. This appears by the shepherds taking in good part what he said, and returning a civil answer.

Genesis 29:8 "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 they said, we cannot": That is, water the sheep; either because the stone was a great one, as Jarchi observes, and therefore used to be removed by the joint strength of all the shepherds when they came together, though Jacob rolled it away of himself afterwards.

But this is imputed to his great strength: or rather it was a custom that obtained among them, or an agreement made between them, that the stone should not be removed from the mouth of the well.

"Until all the flocks be gathered together": And therefore, they could not fairly and rightly do it, without violating the law and custom among them.

"And till they roll the stone from the well's mouth": That is, the shepherds of the several flocks. Then we water the sheep; and not till then.

It seems at a certain time of day, they rolled back the stone and everyone watered their stock at that time. This seemed to be about noontime when she came, and watering time, was usually much later in the day.

Genesis 29:9 "And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep: for she kept them."

"While he yet spake with them": The language of Haran was Aramaic or Chaldee and evidently was known by Abraham and his sons. There is no comment on how these patriarchs spoke with the Canaanites and Egyptians in their travels, but it is reasonable to assume they had become skilled linguists, knowing more than Hebrew and Aramaic.

Verses 10-14: Customary greetings and personal introductions ended 97 years of absence since Rebekah had left (see notes on 25:21; 27:1), and Laban's nephew was welcomed home.

Genesis 29:10 "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."

"And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of Laban his mother's brother": Coming with her flock towards the well, and for whom and whose flock only the shepherds might be waiting.

"And the sheep of Laban his mother's brother": Wherefore out of respect to him and his, he being so nearly allied to him, it was:

“That Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth”: Either with the help of the shepherds, or of himself by his own strength.

Which the Jewish writers say amazed the shepherds, that he should do that himself, which required their united strength. The Targum of Jonathan says, he did it with one of his arms. Jarchi, that he removed it as easily as a man takes off the lid cover of a pot.

"And watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother": This he did partly out of respect to his relations, and partly that he might be taken notice of by Rachel.

Genesis 29:11 "And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept."

"And Jacob kissed Rachel": Which he did in a way of courtesy and civility; this was done after he had acquainted her with his relation to her; he saluted her upon that.

"And lifted up his voice, and wept": For joy at the providence of God that had brought him at such a suitable time to the place and at the sight of a person so nearly related to him; and who he hoped would be his wife, and was the person designed of God for him.

Jacob, suddenly, became the gentleman of the hour, and rolled back the stone, and watered the sheep for Rachel. He even kissed her. He was so happy, that he wept.

Genesis 29:12 "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."

"And Jacob told Rachel": Or "had told" her; before he kissed her, and lift up his voice and wept, as Aben Ezra observes.

"That he was her father's brother": His nephew by his sister, for such was sometimes called brethren, as Lot, Abraham's brother's son, is called his brother (Genesis 14:12).

"And that he was Rebekah's son": Sister to her father, and aunt to her, and whose name and relation she doubtless knew full well.

"And she ran and told her father": Leaving the care of her flock with Jacob. Rebekah, in a like case, ran and told her mother (Genesis 24:28). Which is most usual for daughters to do; but here Rachel runs and tells her father, her mother very probably being dead, as say the Jewish writers.

This statement did not mean that Jacob was Laban's brother, it meant, near kinsman. He was actually Laban's nephew. This was the only account of any contact between Rebekah and her family, since she left to marry Isaac. The excitement had to be great.

Genesis 29:13 "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."

"And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son": That there was such a man at the well, thus related to him, and what he had done there, that he had rolled away the stone, and watered his flock. The Jewish writers make this report chiefly to respect his great strength showed in the above instance, with other things.

"That he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house": Jarchi and other interpreters represent this as done with greedy views, and that he expected Jacob had brought presents with him, as pieces of gold, pearls and jewels, and such like precious things Abraham's servant brought and gave him when he came for Rebekah (Genesis 24:53).

But I don't see why we may not take all this to be a hearty, sincere, and affectionate greeting, arising from nearness of relation, and a sense of it.

"And he told Laban all these things": How he was sent by his parents on account of the hatred of his brother Esau, because he had got the birthright and blessing from him. And how God had appeared to him at Luz, and the promises he had made him; how providentially he had met with Rachel at the well. And perhaps, if he did not declare before, his coming there for a wife.

There was a great deal of catching up to do. Laban was excited to hear from his sister. He was anxious to meet her son. He showed great emotion by running to meet him, hugging him, kissing him, and taking him home with him.

Genesis 29:14 "And Laban said to him, Surely thou [art] my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month."

"A month": Tradition in that ancient area allowed a stranger to be cared for 3 days. On the fourth he was to tell his name and mission. After that he could remain, if he worked in some agreed upon way (verse 15).

Genesis 29:15 "And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou [art] my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what [shall] thy wages [be]?"

"And Laban said unto Jacob, because thou art my brother": Or nephew, his sister's son (see Genesis 29:12).

"Shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought?" Nearness of kin was no reason why he should serve him freely, or for nothing, but rather why he should be more kind to him than to a stranger, and give him better wages.

"Tell me, what shall thy wages be?" By the day, or month, or year; signifying he was willing to give him anything that was just and reasonable, which was very well spoken. This gave Jacob a fair opportunity of opening his mind more freely to him, and for answering a principal end for which he came.

From this Scripture, above, it seems Jacob had been working and helping Laban, his uncle. Laban realized he cannot work forever without wages, and asked Jacob what he would work for.

Genesis 29:16 "And Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder [was] Leah, and the name of the younger [was] Rachel."

“Leah” and “Rachel” were the daughters of Laban. Both of them were married to Jacob at Haran. They and their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, were the mothers of the 12 tribes of Israel. Leah was the mother of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah.

Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin, who were Jacob’s favorite sons. She was also the ancestral mother of Ephraim and Manasseh. Rachel was Jacob’s favorite wife. She died while delivering Benjamin at Ramah, near Bethlehem.

Jacob lived most of his life with Leah, who was eventually buried with him at Machpelah in Hebron (49:31). She was the mother of Judah, the fourth son of Jacob, the ancestral mother of the Davidic line, and ultimately the ancestress of Christ Himself. (Gen 29:9-18; 29:31-35; 30:22-24; Ruth 4:11).

"Leah" means weary. "Rachel" means ewe, a female sheep.

Genesis 29:17 "Leah [was] tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favored."

“Tender eyed”: Probably means that they were a pale color rather than the dark and sparkling eyes most common. Such paleness was viewed as a blemish.

Verses 18-30: Love and working to provide his service as a dowry (verses 18-20), combined to make Jacob happily remain during the first 7 years in Laban’s household, almost as an adopted son rather than a mere employee.

But Jacob, the deceiver (27:1-29), was about to be deceived (verses 22-25). Local marriage customs (verse 26), love for Rachel, and more dowry desired by Laban (verses 27-30), all conspired to give Jacob, not only 7 more years of labor under Laban, but two wives who were to become caught up in jealous childbearing competition (30:1-21).

Genesis 29:18 "And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter."

"And Jacob loved Rachel": As he seems to have done from the moment he saw her at the well, being beautiful, modest, humble, friendly/good natured, diligent, and industrious.

"And he said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter": Signifying, that he desired no other wages for his service than that, that he might have her for his wife, at the end of seven years' servitude. Which he was very willing to oblige himself to, on that condition; for having no money to give as a dowry, as was customary in those times, he proposed servitude instead of it.

Though Schmidt thinks this was contrary to custom, and that Laban treated his daughters like bondmaids, and such as are taken captives or strangers, and sold them, of which they complained (Genesis 31:15).

Jacob had found what he wanted. This beautiful girl had won his heart. We know, of course, "seven" means spiritually complete.

Genesis 29:19 "And Laban said, [It is] better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man: abide with me."

"And Laban said": Deceitfully, as the Targum of Jonathan adds, pretending great respect for Jacob, and that what he had proposed was very agreeable to him, when he meant to impose upon him.

"It is better that I should give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man": By which he not only intimates that he preferred him, a relation, to another man, a stranger. But as if he did not insist upon the servitude for her, but would give her to him; unless he means upon the terms proposed, and so it should seem by what follows.

"Abide with me": The term of seven years, and serve me; suggesting, that then he agreed Rachel should be his wife; and so Jacob, a plain hearted man, understood him. But he designed no such thing.

Laban struck a deal with Jacob. Laban did not want Jacob to leave. He said he preferred for her to marry Jacob over any other man. It was, also, the custom for the father to choose the groom for his daughter. It also is a custom of the groom to pay the father.

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

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel": The whole term of time, diligently, faithfully, and patiently. Reference to this (is in Hosea 11:12).

"And they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her": For though to lovers, time seems long as they enjoy the object beloved. Yet Jacob here respects not so much the time as the toil and labor of service he endured in it. He thought that seven years' service was a trifle, like the service of so many days, in comparison of the lovely and worthy person he obtained thereby.

All that he endured was nothing in comparison of her, and through the love he bore to her. Besides, the many pleasant hours he spent in conversation with her made the time fly by very fast, so that it seemed to be quickly gone; which shows that his love was pure and constant.

Genesis 29:21 "And Jacob said unto Laban, Give [me] my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her."

"And Jacob said unto Laban, give me my wife": Meaning Rachel, who was his wife by contract; the conditions of her being his wife were now fulfilled by him, and therefore he might demand her as his wife.

"For my days are now fulfilled": The seven years were up he agreed to serve him for his daughter; and therefore, it was but just and right she should be given him.

"That I may go in unto her": as his lawful wife, and it was high time Jacob had her. For he was now, as the Jewish writers generally say, eighty four years of age; and from him were to spring twelve princes, the heads of twelve tribes, which should inhabit the land of Canaan.

Jacob's love for Rachel is great. He fulfilled his agreement with Laban. Now, he wanted his wife. Seven years is a long time to wait for someone you love.

Genesis 29:22 "And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast."

"And Laban gathered together all the men of the place": Of the city of Haran, which may be understood of the chief and principal of them, to make the marriage of his daughter public and authentic.

"And made a feast": A marriage or marriage feast, as the Septuagint version (see Matthew 22:2). Which was usual; when a marriage was performed expressing joy on that account.

Genesis 29:23 "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."

The deception was possible because of the custom of veiling the bride and the dark of the night (verse 24).

"Went unto her": This is a euphemism for consummating marriage in this 23rd verse and also in verse 30 below.

Jacob, the trickster, had been tricked himself. Whatever we reap we sow. This was not Rachel, but Leah who was brought to him. He was unaware of the change of girls. Jacob slept with Leah.

Genesis 29:24 "And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid [for] a handmaid."

"And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid, for a handmaid": It was usual to have many given them at this time, as Rebekah seems to have had (Genesis 24:59). But Leah had but one, and this was all the portion Jacob had with her.

The Targum of Jonathan is, "and Laban gave her Zilpah his daughter, whom his concubine bore unto him." Hence the Jews say, that the daughters of a man by his concubines are called maids.

The servant girl, Zilpah, was given to Leah for a wedding present.

Genesis 29:25 "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?"

"And it came to pass, that, in the morning, behold, it was Leah": The morning light discovered her, and her veil being off, her tender eyes showed who she was. It is that her voice had not betrayed her; as perhaps there might be a likeness of voice in her and her sister; or she might have kept silence, and so not be discovered.

But to excuse her from sin is not easy, even the sin of adultery and incest. Many things may be said indeed in her favor, as obedience to her father, and, being the eldest daughter, might be desirous of having a husband first. And especially of having the promised seed, which God promised to Abraham, and was to be in the line of Jacob.

"And he said to Laban": When he arose in the morning, and at first meeting with him. What is this that thou hast done unto me? What a wicked thing is it? As it was, to put another woman to bed to him that was not his wife, and in the room of his lawful wife; or why hast thou done this to me? What reason was there for it? What have I done, that could induce thee to do me such an injury?

For Jacob knew what he had done, of that he does not inquire, but of the reason of it, and to take issue against him about the crime, as it was a sin against God, and an injury to him.

"Did I not serve thee, for Rachel?" Even seven years, according to agreement? Was not this the covenant I made with thee, that she should be my wife at the end of them?

"Wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?" By giving Leah instead of her: Though Laban is not to be justified in this action, yet here appears in Providence a righteous retaliation of Jacob. He beguiled his own father, pretending he was his brother Esau; and now his father-in-law deceives him, giving him blear (dim, dull, or filmy), eyed Leah instead of beautiful Rachel.

You see, Leah was wearing a veil, and it was dark in the tent. Much drinking at these weddings left them not fully aware of their behavior. It was easy to have been given the wrong girl. Jacob felt as if he had been wronged.

Genesis 29:26 "And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn."

"And Laban said, it must not be so done in, our country": Or "in our place", in this our city it is not usual and customary to do so. He does not deny what he had done in tricking him, nor the agreement he had made with him, but pleads the custom of the place as contrary to it.

"To give the younger": That is, in marriage.

"Before the firstborn": But it does not appear there was any such custom, and it was a mere evasion; or otherwise, why did not he inform him of this when he asked for Rachel? And why

did he enter into a contract with him, contrary to such a known custom? And besides; how could he have the nerve to call the men of the city, and make a feast for the marriage of his younger daughter, if this was the case?

Verses 27 and 30: It appears that Laban agreed to give Jacob Rachel after the week of wedding celebration for Leah's marriage to him, and before the 7 years of labor.

Genesis 29:27 "Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years."

"Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also": Indicates that Jacob had to complete the wedding week with Leah (Judges 14:12, 17) so he could then marry Rachel for whom he would have to serve another seven years.

Thus, he accepts both wives without asking God's direction in the matter. Jacob was now being treated as he had treated his own brother and father. The deceiver had been out-deceived at last!

Genesis 29:28 "And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also."

"Rachel his daughter to wife" Such sharing of common ancestors was not God's will (see note on Gen. 2:24), and the Mosaic code later forbade it (Lev. 18:18). Polygamy always brought grief, as in the life of Jacob.

This too, was the custom of the land. Seven days the groom would take the bride away and return after seven days. (Many think this is symbolic of the seven years the Christians will be with Christ in heaven, before he comes back to set up His reign on the earth for 1000 years).

Now, Jacob had two wives. He had to work seven more years, but he now had his beloved Rachel with him.

Genesis 29:29 "And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid."

"And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid": As he had given Leah a handmaid he gave Rachel another; and this in the Targum of Jonathan is said to be a daughter of Laban by a concubine also, as the former.

These women were from a family of some affluence, and both girls had a maid for a wedding gift.

Genesis 29:30 "And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years."

“And he loved also Rachel more than Leah”: His parents had made this mistake, they had played favorites. This is part of the reason that Jacob was in this dreadful position now.

He not only had two wives (bigamy), which was practiced by Cain’s descendants, and marrying two sisters concurrently, which was later forbidden by Mosaic Law (in Lev. 18:18). But he reaped the many years of agony this situation produced.

Rachel was his choice from the beginning. Leah was his wife, but not by choice. It was circumstances beyond his control that made her his wife. He was a husband to her in every way, as we will see in the next verse.

Genesis 29:31 "And when the LORD saw that Leah [was] hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel [was] barren."

“Leah was hated ... Rachel was barren”: There was quite a contrast when the one dearly beloved (verses 18, 20, 30), had no children, whereas the one rejected did.

Jacob might have demoted Leah, but God took action of her behalf. Leah had also prayed about her husband’s rejection (verse 33), and had been troubled by it, as seen in the names given to her first 4 sons (verse 32-35).

Genesis 29:32 "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."

"And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben": That is, "see the son", as if she by this name called upon her husband, her friends, and all about her, to look at him, and view him. Perhaps hoping and imagining he might be the famous son, the promised seed, the Messiah that was to spring to Abraham, in the line of Jacob.

But if she so thought, she was greatly mistaken; for this son of hers proved unstable, and did not excel. Or rather God hath seen or provided a son, as Hillerus gives the significance of the name, which seems better to agree with what follows.

"For she said, surely the Lord hath looked on my affliction": Being deceived by her father, not so much loved by her husband as her sister was, and perhaps slighted by her.

“Now therefore my husband will love me”: More than he has done, and equally as my sister, having bore him a son.

It seems Leah, as well as Rachel, loved Jacob. When Leah had this child, she thought the child would pull Jacob closer to her than Rachel. God had pitied her and blessed her with a child. As we have said already, it was a curse not to have a child in those days. "Reuben" means, behold a son.

Genesis 29:33 "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."

"And she conceived again, and bare a son": As soon as she well could.

"And said, because the Lord hath heard that I was hated": or less loved than her sister.

"He hath therefore given me this son also": To comfort her under the trial and exercise, and engage her husband's love the more unto her.

"And she called his name Simeon": Which signifies "hearing", and answers to the reason of her having him as she concluded.

Genesis 29:34 "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."

"And she conceived again, and bare a son": A third time, as soon as she well could after the former birth.

"And said, now this time will my husband be joined to me": In greater affection and stronger ties of love, and cleave unto her.

"Because I have born him three sons": Which she considered as a threefold cord, binding his affections to her, which could not be easily broke.

"And therefore was his name called Levi": Which signifies "joined"; from him the Levites sprung, and had their name.

Leah believed if she had children for Jacob, that he would love her more than Rachel. Jacob fulfilled all the husbandly duties, or else she would not have had children. He didn't hate her; he just loved Rachel more. "Simeon" means hearing. "Levi" means joining.

Genesis 29:35 "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."

"And she conceived again, and bare a son": A fourth son, a son in whose line, and from whose tribe, the Messiah was to spring.

"And she said, now will I praise the Lord": She had praised him before for looking on her affliction, and hearing her cries, and giving her one son after another. But now she determines to praise him more than ever, having a fresh instance of his goodness to her.

The Targum of Jonathan adds this as a reason, "because from this my son shall come forth kings, and from him shall come forth David the king, who shall praise the Lord". And why may it not

be as well supposed that she had knowledge of the Messiah springing from him, which would greatly heighten and increase her joy and praise?

"And therefore she called his name Judah": Which signifies "praise". A further improvement is made of this name, and the signification of it (in Genesis 49:8).

According to the Jewish writers, these four sons of Jacob were born, Reuben on the fourteenth day of Chisleu, or November, and lived one hundred and twenty four years; Simeon on the twenty first of Tebeth, or December, and lived one hundred and twenty years; Levi on the sixteenth of Nisan, or March, and lived one hundred and thirty seven years.

And Judah on the fifteenth of Sivan, or May; and lived one hundred and nineteen years. And all these names being of the Hebrew language, and derived from words in it, show that this language or what was much the same with it, was spoken in Laban's family, and had been continued from Nahor, as it had been in Isaac's family from Abraham.

"And left bearing": That is, for a while, for after this she bore two sons and a daughter (see Genesis 30:17).

These sons were four of the twelve who would be fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. "Judah" means God be praised. The Hebrew of Judah is Yehudah. We will see these sons turn against the children of Rachel in a later lesson. Remember, these are the beginning of tribes by these names.

Genesis Chapter 29 Questions

1. What two things did Jacob see in the land of the east?
2. What covered the well?
3. Where was the gathering place? Why?
4. What did Jacob call these strangers?
5. What place were these men from?
6. Who did Jacob ask these men at the well about?
7. What was Laban's daughter's name?
8. What was she doing?
9. Why could they not water the sheep?
10. What did Jacob do to help?
11. How did he greet Rachel?

12. What did Rachel do when Jacob told her who he was?
13. What did Laban do when he heard his relative was there?
14. How long had Jacob been with them, before he had an agreement for wages?
15. What were the names of Laban's daughters?
16. How was the older described?
17. How was the younger described?
18. What was the deal that Jacob made?
19. What happened after Jacob fulfilled his end of the bargain?
20. Who was Jacob's first wife?
21. What was her maid's name?
22. What do many people think the seven day honeymoon is symbolic of?
23. How long will Jesus reign on this earth?
24. What blessings did Leah get from God?
25. Name her four sons.
26. What do the names mean?
27. These four sons are part of a larger group? What is it named?