

God's training programme for Jacob

God has a lot of training to do in Jacob's life. This is the way it is with all of us. God saves us by His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but that is only the beginning. Jacob's conversion did not deliver him overnight from all of his bad habits and crooked ways. **He is now a man under the training of God.**

In Genesis 29 we are looking at some of the tough training programme that God had for Jacob.

• *History repeated at a watering place*

For a while everything is made smooth for Jacob. He travels towards Haran and arrives at a well near Haran ^{☞1}; we remember that Abraham's servant had found Rebekah at a spring near Haran. History is repeating itself. It is a place where there is a large stone for protecting the well which was used to water the sheep ^{☞2}. It turns out that the shepherds are from Haran and that they know Laban, Jacob's uncle ^{☞3}. Jacob's cousin Rachel is just about to arrive ^{☞4}. The shepherds are having some difficulty rolling away the large stone covering the water- well ^{☞5}.

☞1 29:1
☞2 29:2–3
☞3 29:4–5
☞4 29:6
☞5 29:7–8

• *Rachel*

Then Rachel appears ^{☞1} – just as her aunt Rebekah had arrived at the spring many years before. Rachel is a very attractive girl ^{☞2} and Jacob is immediately drawn to her. He pretends he has not seen her and does not know who she is (although he been told she is about to arrive and he does know who she is!). *'When Jacob saw Rachel ... Jacob went up, and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well'* ^{☞3}. He wants her to see what a wonderful guy she has in her cousin Jacob! What a dashing, strong, helpful man he is – when Rachel is watching! He removes the stone before he greets Rachel, although it would be normal to greet someone before you do anything else. Then he goes over to greet her and tell her who he is ^{☞4}. He is pretending he was involved in rolling away the stone before she arrived! He is still the crafty Jacob, and is trying to impress her!

☞1 29:9
☞2 see 29:17

☞3 29:10

☞4 29:11–12

• *Jacob tries to impress!*

Rachel is also drawn to Jacob instantly, and runs excitedly to tell her father about the new arrival ^{☞1}. Laban welcomes him warmly ^{☞2} and Jacob stays with these members of his extended family. Soon he has been there for a month. During that time he sees Rachel every day. He is also giving uncle Laban a lot of help, working with the sheep.

☞1 29:13
☞2 29:14

• *Jacob is meeting someone as deceitful as he is*

Laban is a crafty, greedy man. We have already noticed how he was attracted to the gold that Abraham's servant brought (*'When he saw the ring and the bracelets ... he said "Come in, blessed of the Lord..."'*, Genesis 24:30–31). He is even more deceitful than Jacob! Jacob does not know it but he is meeting someone who is even more of a trickster than he is!

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God often disciplines us through a very intense need in our lives. Sometimes it happens when we fall in love! We find ourselves in a position where there is something and someone we want more than anything in the world. And that kind of situation produces in us an intense desire to get God to help us. We start praying as we have never prayed before. It might not be falling in love; it might be something else. It could be that we live in a country where education is not easily available and more than anything else in the world we want to go to school (Westerners might find that hard to understand!)

• *People who are desperate discover that God is real*

God trains Jacob by letting him meet his own sins in someone else

• *The deceiver is deceived!*

• *Soon he will know what Esau felt – God’s training programme*

It might be that we are desperately poor and that we want to increase our social status. We see people who are wealthier than we are and we desperately want to pull ourselves up to their level. At such a time we would do anything to get God to help. There is no atheism in poor countries! People who are desperate discover that God is real.

God trains Jacob by letting him meet his own sins in someone else. If we do not deal with the way we are making others suffer, God is likely to let someone start treating us the way we have been treating others. Jacob has been tricking Esau out of his inheritance. He is known for his grabbing ways. Now, more than anything in the world, he wants Rachel – and now Laban starts outwitting him! Jacob, ‘the Grabber’, gets grabbed. The trickster gets tricked. Jacob has met his match and is now dealing with someone who is even more crafty than he is!

Laban knows a good catch when he sees one, and starts exploiting Jacob. ‘I ought to pay you,’ he says. ‘Tell me what you would like for your wages’ ^{□1}. Poor gullible Jacob! The deceiver is being deceived. Laban has two daughters but the one Jacob loves is the good-looking one, Rachel ^{□2}. ‘Well’, says Jacob, ‘I love your daughter Rachel and want to marry her. You give me my basic living, and agree to let me have your daughter as my wife without any further dowry having to be paid, and I will agree to a contract of seven years’ work’ [□]. Laban is getting a good bargain – and he has plans to make it even better. But he acts quite half-heartedly. He does not want Jacob to know what he really thinks. ‘Better she marries you than someone else,’ he says casually ^{□4}.

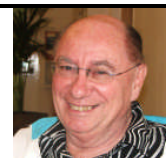
The fact is Jacob is meeting up with his own sinful ways by having to face them in someone else! Soon he will know what Esau felt like when he was tricked out of something that was precious to him. It is almost ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’. Jacob is being made to see how despicable his tricky ways are. It is all part of the training of God for his life.

□1 see 29:15
 □2 29:16–18
 □3 29:19
 □4 29:20



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