

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Anatomy Of A Divine Appointment”

Genesis 29:1-35

2003

Introduction

Over the years I have come to believe that there is no such thing as “coincidence” for the man or woman who is surrendered and yielded to God. Every conversation, every “chance” meeting, every opportunity to serve is divinely orchestrated by God (Ephesians 2:10). I call them “divine appointments.”

Last week we found that Jacob was a man in transition. Before his encounter with God in Genesis 28, he could only refer to his father’s God as “your God” (27:20). But now, Yahweh was Jacob’s God (28:21). He had seen the vision of the stairway from heaven and heard the amazing covenant promises of God. There was a new sense of direction, a new hope, and a new meaning to his life. And for the first time in his life, he was working in cooperation with the purposes of God. As a result, he was about to experience the incredible joy of his first “Divine Appointment.”

I Jacob’s Divine Appointment

A. He **obeyed** the instruction of his parents

1. He went to the land of Paddan Aram

Paddan Aram was in Mesopotamia – it was the city of Nahor, Laban’s grandfather.

Gen 28:1-2 “So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman. Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother.”

Gen 28:7 “.. Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and [went] to Paddan Aram.”

Application:

Ex 20:12 “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

Matt 25:21 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.’”

B. He had a new **awareness** of God’s presence in His life

Illustration:

Over the years I have experienced a definite increase in God’s activity in my life. I seem to be having more “Divine appointments” than ever before. Why?

1. Obedience; my goal is to “run in the path of God’s commands” (Ps 119:32).
2. Availability; yielding my life and each day to God’s agenda
3. Observation; watching carefully for leading of the Holy Spirit

C. He made some **observations** [Verse 1]

1. He saw a well in the field
2. He saw three flocks of sheep lying near it
3. He saw a large stone over the mouth of the well

Wells in the Middle East were often covered by a large stone to keep the water from being polluted or filled with sand. The large stones also serve to restrict the use of that well to particular times and only to authorized persons. The owner of the well determined how and when the well was to be used, and at what price.

4. He saw some shepherds there

These were probably teenage boys waiting for the owner of the well to open the well.

D. He made some inquiries about Laban [Verse 2-7]

In a time without clearly marked roads and signs, Jacob asked several questions to find out if he was in the right place.

E. He recognized a **need** [Verse 7-8]

1. The sheep were gathered too early and needed water

As Jacob was discussing his views on the proper care of sheep, Rachel arrived!!
Suddenly, Jacob had little interest in his discussion with these shepherd boys.

F. He met his future **wife**, Rachel [Verse 9-12]

1. He **rolled** the stone away from the well

So much for the idea that Jacob was an effeminate momma's boy.
To do this single handedly was a feat of great strength!

2. He watered his uncle's sheep

Illustration: Moses fleeing from Egypt

Ex 2:15-17 "When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian, where he sat down by a well. Now a priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came to draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock. Some shepherds came along and drove them away, but Moses got up and came to their rescue and watered their flock."

3. He kissed Rachel and began to **weep** - Gen 33:4

Rachel must have been impressed with Jacob's chivalrous act of service, but she must have been caught off guard when he suddenly kissed her.

By the way, this is the first recorded instance of "kissing cousins."

But then he began to weep! Not exactly your normal pickup strategy!

Jacob was emotionally spent, physically exhausted and spiritually overwhelmed as he recognized that he was experiencing a "Divine Appointment" firsthand.

Rachel, I'm sure, began to tally up Jacob's score as a potential husband:

1. He is knowledgeable about sheep: Check!
2. He is chivalrous and willing to serve others: Check!
3. He is a hunk – he moved the stone all by himself: Check!
3. He is a hopeless romantic – kissing her on their first encounter: Check!
4. He is willing to show emotion – he weeps on their first encounter: Check!

4. He told Rachel he was a relative - Gen 24:12-16

Undoubtedly, Rachel was well acquainted with the stories of her aunt Rebekah, uncle Isaac, and her two cousins, Esau and Jacob and their amazing call by God to the Promised Land. But, for the first time, she was face to face with her cousin, Jacob.

G. He was **received** by his uncle, Laban - Gen 24:28-31 [Verse 13-14]

Jacob undoubtedly brought Laban up to speed on:

1. His family, including news about Laban's sister, Rebekah.
2. The events that inspired his journey to Haran.
3. His amazing encounter with God and the stairway from heaven.
4. His father's wish that he find a wife from among Laban's daughters.

II Jacob's Wives

A. Jacob worked **free** for Laban for a month [Verse 15]

Jacob's month-long stay with Laban accomplished two things:

1. It allowed Jacob and Rachel to fall in love.
2. It gave Laban an opportunity to see what kind of worker Jacob was.

B. Jacob was offered compensation for his work [Verse 16-17]

Jacob was a good worker and very reliable. Having another man around the house must have been a great help to Laban, who only had two daughters. So Laban approached Jacob with a proposition: "Stay on and you can name your price."

1. Leah, who was older and had **weak** eyes

Weak eyes = Rak = "Tender" or "weak"

Frankly, no one really knows what this term means, but it is safe to say, that Leah is being contrasted with her younger sister, Rachel.

2. Rachel, who was younger and **beautiful**

Beautiful = Yaphēh To'ar = "Physically attractive"

There is nothing wrong with being beautiful. Sarah was beautiful (Gen 12:11), and so was Rebekah (Gen 24:15-16). But outward beauty must not be the sole basis upon which a person's worth is measured.

Application:

One of the dangers that beautiful people face is that there is the constant

temptation to further cultivate what is already being praised – outward beauty, and give short shrift to the important issues of character and godliness.

1 Peter 3:3-5 “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.”

C. Jacob offered to work 7 years for Rachel [Verse 18-20]

Though Jacob came from a family with great wealth, he left home penniless, and before he could take a woman in marriage, he had to provide a dowry.

So he offered to work for seven years as a dowry to receive Rachel in marriage.

Hos 12:12 “Jacob served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep.”

Application:

Here was a man willing to work seven years to marry Rachel. He placed unusually high value on Rachel.

If a man wants to have a truly beautiful wife – begin by treating her like one!

However, if Jacob hadn’t stolen Esau’s blessing and had patiently waited for God’s intervention and timing, he would have had the financial resources to acquire Rachel immediately, rather than having to invest 14 years of his life labor for Rachel.

Lesson: Taking short cuts and failing to trust God is costly! It can often cost years of a person’s life. What a heavy price sin requires!

1. The years seemed like only a few days

a. Because he loved Rachel

This is a great love story! Day after day Jacob works hard but lies down at night with a smile on his face because he is one day closer to the day when he will have his beloved Rachel as his wife.

Application:

James 1:12 “Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.”

D. Jacob was **deceived** by Laban at the end of 7 years [Verse 21-25a]

1. Jacob unknowingly married Leah

A number of people had to cooperate for this deception to work:

Leah: Possible reasons that Leah agreed to deceive Jacob:

- She may have secretly loved Jacob
- She may have wanted to get even with her beautiful sister, Rachel
- She was under the absolute authority of her father, Laban
- She may have feared never being married

Rachel: Possible reasons that Rachel agreed to deceive Jacob:

- She was under the absolute authority of her father, Laban
Imagine the impact her father's decision would have on Rachel. She had been looking forward to this day for 7 years.
How would you feel if, on your wedding day, someone else took your place? (In hindsight, some of you might wish that had happened!)

Why would any father do such a cruel thing? Greed! Laban was motivated by his greed to keep Jacob working for him for nothing.

1 Tim 6:9-10 "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

2. Jacob slept with Leah

Jacob: Possible reasons that Jacob fell prey to this deception:

- His senses were dulled by too much wine.
- Leah was dressed with a traditional thick veil over her face.
- It was nighttime and probably pitch black outside.
- Laban made sure that everything was prepared to ensure success.

3. Jacob woke up to Leah

What a beautiful day! What a wonderful night! What an exciting future! Things seem to finally be turning around for Jacob!!

What a shock to discover that the woman in his arms was not Rachel, but Leah!

E. Jacob was **furious** with Laban [Verse 25b-27]

1. "What have you done to me?"

It's no coincidence that Jacob repeats the identical words of Pharaoh to Abraham (12:18) and almost the same expression of Abimelech to Abraham (20:9) and Abimelech to Isaac (26:10): "What is this you have done to me?"

Deception and its consequences seemed to run in this family's heritage.

2. "Why have you deceived me?"

Deceived = Ramah = "To delude or betray"

Laban's deception of Jacob is similar to Jacob's deception of his father, Isaac.

- Jacob pretended to be his brother, Esau, to get the blessing.

Gen 27:35-36 "But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!"

- Leah pretended to be her sister, Rachel, to get a husband.

Application: Adultery, greed, etc.

Prov 26:27 “If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.”

F. Jacob was given Rachel as well [Verse 28-30]

1. Jacob **served** another 7 years for Rachel

That’s 14 years altogether! From Jacob’s perspective he had been ripped off and cheated by Laban. But from God’s perspective, those fourteen years saved Jacob’s life from the murderous intentions of his brother, Esau.

Application:

Prov 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

2. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah

Jacob's rejection had to hurt Leah deeply. No one likes rejection!

How would you feel if after your week-long honeymoon your husband married someone else ... much less your sister?

What should Jacob have done?

1. Gone to Laban and asked him to correct the situation?
2. Made the decision to make the best of it and love his wives equally?

Instead, he favored Rachel over Leah.

Application:

James 2:1-2 “My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism.”

III Jacob’s Children

A. The Lord saw the **inequity** of the situation [Verse 31]

1. He opened Leah’s womb because she wasn’t loved

Wasn’t loved = Sane’ = “To hate (personally)”

What a pathetic predicament Leah is in. She is married to a man who doesn’t want her and who refuses to give her the love that every wife so deeply desires.

Ps 34:18 “The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

But notice what God does. He sees the injustice of Leah’s situation and intervenes on her behalf! He makes Leah’s womb productive and makes Rachel womb barren!

2. He made Rachel barren because she was loved

Application:

Maybe you feel like Leah. Unattractive. Unappreciated. Unloved. Be encouraged!

The world may not appreciate your great value yet, but just remember, God loves you and has the power to balance the scales in life.

Ps 145:18-19 “The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.”

B. The Lord **blessed** Leah with children [Verse 32-35a]

Jacob, even though he did not love Leah, he was still obligated to fulfill his marital duties as a husband to produce offspring through Leah.

1. She named her 1st son, Reuben

Reuben = “Behold, a son.”

Ps 127:3 “Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.”

Leah’s hopes of being loved by Jacob were undoubtedly raised at the birth of Reuben.

But they were soon crushed when she discovered that even the birth of a much-coveted son wasn’t enough to turn Jacob’s heart toward her.

2. She named her 2nd son, Simeon

Simeon = “He hears”

Leah is aware that God’s grace is upon her. He is answering her prayers for children.

3. She named her 3rd son, Levi

Levi = “Attachment”

It seems that Leah is no longer hoping for love from Jacob, but now would be satisfied to simply to create an attachment of appreciation for the third son she has produced for Jacob.

4. She named her 4th son, Judah

Judah = “Praise”

Leah finally recognized that to be loved by God was a far greater thing than to be loved by any man. While Jacob’s affection was still something she greatly desired, she now was able to be content to praise God. And so the name Judah, which means, “Praise the Lord,” was given to her fourth son.

C. Then the Lord **stopped** Leah from having children [Verse 35b]

Though Leah was neglected by Jacob and despised by Rachel, she had a great purpose in God’s eternal plan. The two greatest tribes came from Leah, not Rachel: Levi (the priestly tribe) and Judah (the royal tribe). And most importantly, the Messiah came from Leah, the uglier sister, who was neglected and despised, but learned to look to the Lord and praise Him.

Conclusion

Divine appointments! For the man or woman who is obedient, available and observant to the leading of the Holy Spirit, they are a daily occurrence.

Every conversation, every “chance” meeting, every opportunity to serve is divinely orchestrated by God.

Eph 2:10 “For [you] are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for [you] to do.”

Maybe you need a new beginning in your walk with God. If it's possible for a guy like Jacob, it's possible for you! That's the amazing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

God knows everything about you. The good, the bad and the ugly. And knowing all this, He still sent Christ to die on the cross for you. If God can love Jacob, Rachel, and Leah . . . then God can and will love you.

We deserve to be cast from God's presence. We deserve to spend eternity facing the horror of Hell. That's what we deserve! But Christ came to offer us a way out of the mess that we have made of our lives. He offered to take our place; to suffer our penalty; to make us new. He is offering you the chance of a lifetime – the chance to start again. Today may be the most important “Divine Appointment” of your life – the appointment for a new beginning!

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