

"Anticipation of Better Things"

[For those online, there is the text of Scripture at the end]

**Introduction**

Hanukkah is almost over, but for many in this room and perhaps many reading online, this is a time of anticipation. We may be looking forward to the summer holidays. You may be looking forward to the celebration of Messiah's birth and some events surrounding that. You may be getting married or having children, you may await a friend coming to visit on her holiday or some new work project that really 'rings your bell.' Hope for something to come is a key element in good mental health and in our Bible portion today we read of our father Jacob and his anticipation of better things. Perhaps as a result of our time together in the Scriptures, we will increase our own mental health today, and develop true hope for what's really ahead.

**1. Hope at all**

Chesterton wrote, "Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all...As long as matters are really hopeful, hope is mere flattery or platitude; it is only when everything is hopeless that hope begins to be a strength." G.K. Chesterton, *Signs of the Times*, April 1993, p. 6.

My best guess is that Jacob had heard the stories from his grandfather about life in Canaan. He had heard about his own father having his wife chosen for him by Eliezer Abraham's servant. He had longed for a wife and when Rebekkah, Jacob's mother, sent him away last week, along with Isaac, it seemed right to go to Paddan Aram and find a similar story to tell and a wife to have. What luck then or was it answer to prayer, that Jacob should encounter Rebecca!

*Rachel*

But let's read verse one. It's huge in our context of hope today.

וַיָּשֶׂא יַעֲקֹב רַגְלָיו Vayisa ya'akov raglav. Literally this means Jacob

lifted up his feet. Of course, he lifted his feet. He put one foot in front of each other and made his way on the long journey from Bethel to Syria. This however is not functional anatomical discussion. This is evidence of a man who is skipping like a calf and who is in merriment. It rings to me of the phrase "lift up your eyes" or "lift up your head to the Coming King" as we sang earlier.

Jacob here is lifting his feet, it's as if he is dancing! He is skipping in happiness and filled with hope. Of course, we could also read that he is 'high tailing' it out of the area as the last encounter he had with anyone personally was with Esau and the trickery launched him fast away from his house, but this is a misread. The very last encounter he had was with Yahweh and the reaffirmation of the covenant was a matter of joy to Jacob.

We saw last week Jacob's prayer was a bit weak, and built around Jacob's own personal ambitions, but deep within the encounter was a hope that was going to be strong and guide Jacob for a good long time.

No wonder he lifted his feet. Compare the opposite expression. Do you know what that is? What if he were down in the dumps, disbelieving and not anticipating what lay ahead. What expression would we use of his feet? He was dragging his feet. Quite vivid, don't you think? Here he lifts his feet, with anticipation.

Hope is a powerful motivator. The story is told of Alexander the Great. As Alexander was setting out on his conquest of Asia, he inquired into the finances of his followers. To ensure that they would not be troubled over the welfare of their dependents during their absence, he distributed crown estates and revenues among them. When he had thus disposed of nearly all the royal resources, his friend General Perdiccas asked Alexander what he had reserved for himself. "Hope," answered the king.

"In that case," said Perdiccas, "we who share in your labors will also take part in your hopes." He then refused the estate allotted to him, and several other of the king's friends did the same.

The Scriptures give us who know Messiah great reason to hope. Listen to these sacred texts.

Prov. 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Job 13:15 "Though He slay me, I will hope in Him.

Psa. 39:7 "And now, Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in Thee.

The Apostle says concerning death and resurrection, 1Th. 4:13 ¶ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

Jer. 14:22 Are there any among the idols of the nations who give rain? Or can the heavens grant showers? Is it not Thou, O LORD our God? Therefore we hope in Thee, For Thou art the one who hast done all these things.

Lam. 3:24 "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him."

Regarding Abraham, we read from Paul: Rom. 4:18 In hope against hope he believed, in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be."

Paul also comments on the idea of hope not being visible and if you will always future tense. Rom. 8:24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?

## **2. Hope for a wife**

Now we return to our portion today, Genesis 29. Jacob pours his hope into the idea of a wife. Isaac had charged him last week to go find a wife. He also reminded Jacob of the Abrahamic blessing, which included land, blessing and what else? That's right, seed. So to get a seed, that is a little Jacob, he had to have a wife. Isaac told him to find a nice Jewish girl in the land of Abraham. So we see

a deep connection with the Abrahamic story and thus I believe this prompted Jacob to go to the well to find a woman. Remember that's what Eliezer did. The story was legend.

There is a major difference in the stories, though. Anyone know what the difference is? Both are chosen lads. Both are coming to find a wife. Jacob personally is hopeful of finding just the right one. So was Eliezer. But the difference is what attends them. Eliezer had 10 camels filled with goods and bounty of Abraham's wealth. Jacob had two sticks. He was the poor relative who comes for a visit. Why would Laban look after him, then?

The incident at the well occupies a large portion of holy writ. 8 verses is no little matter when we deal with thousands of years of history.

So why would Laban welcome him to his home and give him his daughter? It was the incident at the well. It was the massive strength and leadership ability Jacob displayed. The encounter with the men, the shepherds was no accident. It was part of God's plan. We don't usually know or even come close to understanding God's plans, but here we see it develop and displayed.

Jacob runs into the boys in the neighbourhood and they tell him they usually wait until all the flocks are in. He doesn't wait when he sees ~~Rebecca~~ <sup>Rachel</sup>. He jumps on the plan and makes it happen. He rolls away the stone before the well, which is massive. He kisses her abruptly and voilá, a meeting of historic proportions occurs.

The stone of the well, which has appeared in several stories already in Scripture, will continue to occupy ink over the centuries. Y'shua is the Messiah who will be called the Chief Corner Stone. He will be the one over whom many will stumble. He is the Rock who is the rock of our salvation. Tsur y'shuateinu. On Hanukkah we sing "Maoz tsur" and live in memories of strong rocks in our history. No wonder the image of the strong rock, our God Himself, so fills the Bible.

### 3. Hope for a particular wife

The scene unfolds and we see Jacob gain a wife after 7 years of work. They seemed 'like a few days.' Wow, what love is this. But also a reflection of the image Rebekkah had used as Jacob left town in the chapter 27. She told Jacob

“Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you, by planning to kill you. “Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! And stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury subsides, (27.42-44)

This 'few days' imagery kept Jacob going during his 7 year work arrangement with Laban. Who would have thought that after 7 years and a wonderful wedding that Laban would switch the girls on Jacob and he would wake up with .... shock of shocks.... Leah! Ouch! Who would do such a thing? Who wouldn't sort this out the night before? I don't want to go into details about the condition of Jacob during the wedding or the wedding night, but somehow he wakes up with the wrong woman.

His anger is not hidden in the Bible. Laban shrugs his shoulders and says, 'Hey, that's not the way we do things around here.' Basically Laban deceived the deceiver. And hoped to get away with it, but we will see.

So the contract is again reissued, and Jacob signs on to work for another 7 year period. Let's comment on the Hebrew sh'vua. This word is used here for both one week and 7 years. See it in verse 26-28. We have the same difficulty of knowing time in Daniel chapter 9.

**Dan. 9:24 ¶** “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place.

**Dan. 9:25** “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

**Dan. 9:26** "Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.

Here the prophet Daniel who is recorded in the section of Bible known as Ketuvim, or writings, tells us that 69 'weeks' after the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem would come the death of Messiah. These sh'vuim, not sh'vuot, is the same word as here. It's a week of 7 year periods, and thus 483 years after the decree by Artaxerxes...

.....

This understanding is key to understanding how clearly the Bible paints the picture of Messiah and His coming so we shouldn't miss it. Unfortunately many Jewish people are not familiar with this portion or with the reality of Messiah dying and why he dies, which is also clarified here. "For our sins!"

#### **4. Hope for a seed**

Hope continues.

There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them. Clare Boothe Luce.

Compare this with the words of Vonnegut. In the novel, *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., an important book comes to light. It is titled "What Can a Thoughtful Man Hope for Mankind on Earth, Given the Experience of the Past Million Years?" The chief character is anxious to read it. But when he does, he finds that it doesn't take long. The whole book consists of one word: "Nothing."

This is the word of those who don't know Messiah, isn't it?

The chapter ends with the first four sons of Jacob named and all the while we are looking for the next in line. We hope to find the seed of the promise. No problem then to see Judah as the chapter ends.

## Summary

Here are some things I see as we conclude, and you can add your thoughts to your own list.

- 1) You reap what you sow, whether deceit or blessings
- 2) God still honors industry
- 3) God's covenant promises will be fulfilled even through unlikely folks
- 4) Messiah came to die for our sins and to make us alive in God

Dear friends, we have eternal life due to the Saviour Y'shua, due to His love and forgiveness. His Resurrection has proven His new covenant. His teaching is great, and yet it goes well beyond that to His life and death. No amount of good works will give us enough information to help us overcome evil. No amount of information will help us overcome our own evil inclination. Only the messiah can repair our relationship with God, which will in turn give us pleasure with Him.

If you have never experienced this eternal and new life about which we are speaking, if you are yet outside the relationship with God, then pray with me. If you haven't yet been restored into fellowship with Him, maybe God is vindicating you today. Won't you pray this prayer and ask God to forgive you of your sins, whatever they might be, and come home to pleasure with God? Lord forgive me in the name of the Messiah, the Serpent Bruiser, Y'shua himself. Forgive me for all my sins, and make me clean again. Give me eternal life in the name of Y'shua and make me born again. I trust you.

Actual Text

**Gen. 29:1** ¶ Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.

Gen. 29:2 And he looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks. Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large.

Gen. 29:3 When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

Gen. 29:4 And Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran."

Gen. 29:5 And he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him."

Gen. 29:6 And he said to them, "Is it well with him?" And they said, "It is well, and behold, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep."

Gen. 29:7 And he said, "Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them."

Gen. 29:8 But they said, "We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

Gen. 29:9 While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

Gen. 29:10 And it came about, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went up, and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

Gen. 29:11 Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept.

Gen. 29:12 And Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father.

Gen. 29:13 ¶ So it came about, when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things.

Gen. 29:14 And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

Gen. 29:15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

Gen. 29:16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

Gen. 29:17 And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.

Gen. 29:18 Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."



Gen. 29:19 And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me."

Gen. 29:20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

Gen. 29:21 ¶ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her."

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

Gen. 29:23 Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her.

Gen. 29:24 Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

Gen. 29:25 So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"

Gen. 29:26 But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born.

Gen. 29:27 "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."

Gen. 29:28 And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.

Gen. 29:29 Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.

Gen. 29:30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

Gen. 29:31 ¶ Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

Gen. 29:32 And Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me."

Gen. 29:33 Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." So she named him Simeon.

Gen. 29:34 And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi.

Gen. 29:35 And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.