

The Biblical Mystery of the Well – Awkward

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

To not be around anyone else because I was exposed, but we also have multiple families and households in the community that have tested positive. So please keep us in your prayers. It wasn't due to a fellowship event, which is, thank goodness, but all the same, please keep them in your prayers in that regard.

The Power of Awkwardness

As you know, the past few weeks in this series, we have been discovering the power of awkwardness. Thus the series name: awkward. And we've been taking a look at some of the stories in the Bible that are really cringe-worthy, if we can be honest. We've likely become so used to reading them that we've become desensitized to the reality of what the ancient readers actually saw or felt when they read them.

We discussed how if [Genesis 3](#) was a movie, it would have been a bit awkward for Adam and Eve to realize, "Oh, hey, look, we're not wearing any clothes." Or that cringe-worthy moment when it was revealed to Judah that, "Hey, man, she wasn't a temple prostitute. That was your daughter-in-law, right?" And now he has to face the fact that he was not this patriarch that pursued justice and righteousness. How about that moment when David hears about that jerk

who took another man's lamb for himself even though he had a field full of them, only to be told that that person was him?

The Bible is trying to teach us that with the awkward exposure of our sin and iniquities in our own lives. And if we can be honest, it's true. How many times do those awkward moments we find ourselves in turn out to be merely the moments where we see ourselves the same way the world sees us? We spoke in the first message of this series how cringeworthy it is when—the first time we see ourselves on camera or the first time we hear our voice being recorded and played back to us.

The reason it's cringeworthy for most of us is because we're not used to hearing or seeing ourselves the same way everyone else does. And when our sin or iniquity or transgressions in our little world have become justified, or in our little world we've done a good job putting it away in that closet, when that sin or those secrets are brought out into public, we are now seen in a light that we are not comfortable with.

Judah and Tamar's Awkward Truth

This is exactly what happened with Judah and Tamar. Judah thought he was the righteous patriarch doing what was best for his family, but the reality was he was neglecting, intentionally neglecting, the most vulnerable people in his society: the widows. And not just any widow, but his own daughter-in-law. Sometimes we have to face the awkward in order to evolve to the place where God wants us to be. Sometimes we have to face the awkward to get to the place where God is inviting us to be, where God is calling us to be.

And so today we're going to take a look at the familiar story of Jacob. What a complicated soap opera of a story. Like seriously, chapter 33. Has anyone ever read that and cringed like it was a season finale of *Days of Our Lives* or something? I don't know. I've never seen that show, but I'm just saying soap opera.

Jacob in the Bible is a pretty neat character. His parents showed favoritism towards two different sons. And in Jacob's story, he shows favoritism between two wives. Jacob was the younger brother of two, and he favored the younger sister of two. And of course we also see God's reversal of the birthright in some cases, which shows God himself does not show favoritism based on birth order and lineage, but that's another message.

Meeting Rachel

The story follows Jacob as he comes across a well, and there he met a girl named Rachel. Seems to kick off quite a love story here, right? We're expecting a lovely romantic journey of struggles and ultimate fulfillment in marriage, like the Notebook. Not so fast.

Jacob falls head over heels for this girl, and he goes to speak to her father Laban, who was also his uncle, which would make her his... Anyway, so he asked Laban, "Hey Laban, what do I need to do to marry Rachel?" He told Laban, "Listen, I'll work for you for seven years to marry Rachel." Seven years. Most of us only date for a year or two. Seven years.

So here's what the Bible actually says, and I wanted to point this verse out because this is one of those verses where the author of the Bible really spins the narrative up a little bit by adding these details. It's not a video camera recording. He's telling a story, and it is found in [Genesis 29](#), verse 20. It says this:

"So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her."

I love that. I like to point that out because it's that little detail in the text that helps you see the fingerprints of the biblical authors. The author here breaks from the first-person view of the story to explain how much Jacob loved Rachel. And there's no way the author knew that detail for a fact, but he goes above and beyond to tell the story. And I just think that's kind of neat. I observe those things.

The Switcheroo

So seven years goes by, and Jacob goes to Uncle Laban and says, "Hey, it's time. It's been seven years working for you. I want to marry Rachel now." So Laban invites all the neighbors, all the community over. He throws this magnificent feast, right? And then the wedding takes place. And here in [Genesis 29](#), verse 23, this happens:

"But in the evening, he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob, and he went into her."

Stop. Whoa, stop. He took his daughter Leah, gave Leah to Jacob, and Jacob married her. Was Jacob supposed to marry Leah? Supposed to marry Rachel? Feel the drama. If this were a TV show, you would be at the edge of the sofa right now going, "Oh, right?"

Okay, verse 25. There we go. So that one line—look at that exclamation mark. That's an understatement. "Why then have you deceived me?"

Oh man, the old switcheroo, right? At the wedding, Laban takes Leah, Rachel's older sister, and has her marry Jacob instead of Rachel. Now, talk about awkward. You have this huge wedding, and you're waiting for your bride, and here she comes, all decked out, likely has a veil on, beautiful, cultural, oh, just awesome. And then Jacob wakes up in the morning rubbing his eyes, and he looks into the eyes of his new bride and realizes, "Wait, I thought you had blue eyes." And then Leah looks back at him and says, "Nope, I got the green ones," right?

And ah, this is not the Notebook. This is something else completely.

A Matter of Culture

What we have to understand about this aspect of the story, though, is just how out of culture and ahead of its time Jacob was. During this age in culture and time, the primary focus was not on love necessarily. Who marries someone because they have butterflies in their stomach? I mean, love can be a part of marriage. Of course, you want attention in your marriage. You want to be cared for. But you get married for childbearing. Like, this was in the culture—that was it. That was a main focus. Remember Judah and Tamar? That was a huge portion of what marriage was about.

So what happens next? Well, [Genesis 29](#), verse 27 says, Laban says: "Finish this daughter's bridal week. Then we will give you the younger one also in return for another seven years of work." And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Laban gave his servant Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her attendant. Jacob made love to Rachel also, and his love for Rachel was greater than his love for Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

Trapped by Circumstance

So Laban gives Rachel to Jacob to marry as well as Leah, but he has to work for him another seven years. Man, so this is a very odd thing to begin with. Jacob loves her, and he wants to marry her because he loves her. Like I said, the culture's expectation was something much different.

This makes it hard for us to try to even understand why Laban did what he did or thought that it was no big deal. "Marry for love? Who does that?" That's likely, in my opinion, what Laban thought. So in Laban's mind, well, of course, we need to marry off the older daughter first. I mean, it's not going to be that big of a deal, right?

But through no fault of either Rachel or Leah, Jacob now ends up with more than one wife. He ends up with one more wife than he wanted. And there's no going back either. Like, he can't just give Leah back in this culture. This isn't 2020—you just get a divorce and it's no big deal. No, no one's going to marry her now because she's not a virgin. It would be an act of injustice for Jacob to abandon Leah at this point. The plot thickens of the whole story, right?

Jacob is trapped. Who does he favor? Well, he favors Rachel. And that's an understatement. And it's also understandable. Like, that's who he wanted to marry to begin with. He loves Rachel. And he was tricked into marrying Leah. Which is kind of funny because he got a taste of his own medicine there with the whole deception, right?

But now he's stuck. And who is this most painful for? Well, the story says it was most painful for Leah. She kind of got the short end of the stick for this whole thing. This wasn't what her expectations were of having a husband. Her husband really isn't that interested in her at all. Instead, it's her sister that he's really digging into. And so what happens next? Well, in verse 31 it says that Leah cried out because of her affliction.

She was not loved to the core. And she was not only not loved to our standards, but she was not loved to the standards of this time period. She was lonely. She felt forgotten. And there's this deep pain within her heart where she feels completely alone and abandoned. And so the scripture says that God heard her cries and allowed her to have children.

So she has children and she continues having children. And then Rachel notices one day, 'Oh wow, Leah has four sons for my husband, but Rachel hasn't conceived one yet.' And so what happens? Rachel gets jealous of Leah, and the entire soap opera aspect of this story begins.

But one thing I want to take an exit ramp on, if we can just kind of move off the interstate here. Where did Jacob meet Rachel? Well, they met at a well. Is this the first time a meeting at a well facilitates a marriage proposal? No, it isn't. A meeting at a well was also involved with Jacob's parents, Isaac and Rebekah. Getting married. [Genesis 24](#), right? It's in that story that God makes a promise to Abram, Isaac's father, that he will make his family a great nation that will come through Isaac, who just met his future wife, right? So it's a big deal in the story. Rebecca, Isaac's wife, is not just a love interest or Isaac's high school sweetheart. This is a woman who will help bring forth the promises and covenants of God.

The Pattern at the Well

So Abraham sends a servant to go find a wife for his son. And he goes to a well. And he prays to God to send a wife for Isaac. And before he can finish, before he can say amen, bloop, Rebecca

shows up. She helps draw him water out of the well and then goes back to her family to share the news of the visitor. And long story short, she then returns to meet and marry Isaac.

Then we come, of course, to the story that we just read with Jacob and Rachel. He follows the same pattern as his parents. He comes up upon a well. He begins speaking with the shepherds there. Before he can finish, he has an encounter with Rachel. He rolls the stone back, draws water for her, and immediately begins to tell her how their families are actually related. She then hurries back and tells her family, just like Eleazar, Abraham's servant, did. And he stays with them.

Each story has the same elements, right? You have a journey, you have a woman at a well, some form of drawing of water, you have the grand news of a new visitor that a woman runs and tells someone about, and you have a sign of hospitality that mentions a meal being shared with two parties. And you have the joining together of two as one.

But those two stories could totally be a coincidence, right? There's nowhere else in the Bible that a story like that happens, right? Except there is in the story of Moses in Exodus chapter 2.

Moses is on the run after killing the Egyptian and he went to the land of Midian. And there in the scriptures it mentions a priest of Midian had seven daughters who, wait for it, went to go draw water to water their flocks. You have the journey. There's a woman at the well, well seven actually. There's the drawing of water. News travels as the daughters run home to tell their father of this Egyptian that saved them. Hospitality takes place and Reuel invites Moses to stay for dinner. And a joining together takes place between him and Zipporah as they get married. This is an intentional pattern being emphasized and set up in the biblical story. It's meant for you to say, oh look, it's happening again.

Who else has a meeting at a well? Can you think of one? That's right, in John's account of the gospel. Yeshua, Jesus, has a meeting at a well with a Samaritan woman. It's in John chapter 4 and it begins with a journey. Jesus is passing through Samaria. There's a woman at the well. The author points out even in verse 6 that it's Jacob's well. Just in case you didn't notice the parallel between this one and three other stories in the Torah.

A Woman at Jacob's Well

And guess what happens? There's a drawing of water. But there's a twist here because Yeshua does not offer her the well water like in the other stories. Instead, He offers her living water, this type of image from Eden, the Edenic waters, right? Waters of life. And He connects having

these waters of life, this vitality, with Himself, which is really neat because we know that life and the vitality of heaven can only be found in the person of Jesus.

But if this is supposed to be a parallel of the Isaac and Rebekah well story, or the Jacob and Rachel well story, or the Moses and Zipporah well story, shouldn't we be expecting some sort of a wedding announcement to happen next, right? Well here, Yeshua asks the woman for a drink, and the woman objects. Jews don't associate with Samaritans. There's then this discussion of her having five husbands, and the conversation quickly turns to the religious differences between the Judeans, or Jews, and the Samaritans—how they each worship on different mountains.

See, that's the point as the reader—you're supposed to realize, wait, this is following the same type of motif as the other well stories, except it's not going to end in a wedding per se, but it is going to end with relationships between people that are far apart and now they're going to be brought together. There's going to be a unification between her people and Yeshua.

See, Yeshua then makes a stunning claim. He makes this claim in verse 21. He says, 'You know what? Despite the Samaritans thinking they are right about the way that they read how to keep the feast days and how to keep Sabbath and on which mountain to do the offerings on, despite that, and despite how the Jews think they should keep the feast days and the Sabbath and how to keep the sacrifices on the temple mount, the day is coming where your people and the Jews will worship God not on the Temple Mount, not on Mount Gerizim, but the time is coming where we will together worship God in both spirit and in truth.'

And that time has already begun. Whoa! Yeshua is telling her there will be a future bond where peoples won't be separated in how they worship God. They will be united together. This is kind of a marriage bond in this well story in the Bible.

The woman then says, 'You know what? That's great. That's pretty deep. But when the Messiah, when the Christ comes, He'll explain all the details.' Here's what Yeshua says in response, in [John 4:26](#): 'Then Jesus said, I, the one speaking to you, I am He.'

Jesus just said He's the Messiah. He's the Christ, the King. Now why is this significant? Because here in the book of John, this foreign, borderline pagan woman is the first person that Yeshua reveals himself to as the king, as the Christ. That's a big deal in John's account. Why would Jesus choose a woman to be the first to embrace his salvation? And as we will see, be the first evangelist of his earthly ministry.

But look what happens next. Verse 28: 'Then, leaving her water jug, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him.' Golly! So we have a journey. We have a woman at the well. You have this imagery of the drawing of water, except here it's living water. You have this grand news of a new visitor that the woman runs and tells everyone. Except here it's bigger. This is not news of a woman going to tell of a visitor. This is a woman going to tell of the arrival of Messiah that will unite all people to himself—all people, Samaritans, Judeans, Gentiles, the whole world, everybody!

United in Worship

During this time, Jews and Samaritans did not get along. Josephus even writes about how Samaritans intentionally broke into the temple one year during Passover week and littered it with bones and pieces of dead bodies just to make it unclean. These people hated each other and they hated the differences of religious opinions that they had in regards to the Bible and in regards to God.

And here, Jesus makes the claim that they will be united despite their differences, despite their backgrounds, despite their opinions, despite their pasts. They will be united in worship of God through Him. This is a bold story and it's so exciting.

And what's the next thing on the list for this to fit the well motif pattern that we found in the other stories in the Torah? Oh yeah, the sign of hospitality. Verse 40: 'So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed for two days.'

A sign of hospitality. There's even a mention of food where his disciples tell him to eat something right there in the passage.

Yeah, when John begins to frame this story out, we, as the readers, are looking for a type of marriage to happen, but instead of one woman becoming married, she convinces many people in her community to follow her and join themselves with Yeshua. This is the final element of the well motif we see in the Torah, where multiple relationships form into one united body, echad.

See, the meeting that took place at the well with the Samaritan woman was a bit awkward. When His disciples returned, they didn't know what to think. Even the woman herself was a bit put off.

What is happening? But despite it being weird, the best possible outcome came from it. Why? Because God is in control. It seems common of God for His love to be implemented and His plan to be made known in awkward, uncertain situations. Even in the most awkward situation, Jacob, Rachel, and Leah, guess what? God was still in control and opened the door for the dynasty of Jacob, Israel, to be built.

When Leah gives birth to her first son in [Genesis 29:32](#), she praises God for looking upon her affliction and the pain in the relationship. Now Rachel also experienced affliction in chapter 35 when she tragically gave up her life to bear her son. But we see that the affliction of Leah overflows into the names of her sons. In Reuben, his name communicates that God saw. And of course in Simeon's name, it's God heard the affliction of Leah. And the thing that at least is communicated to me in this awkward situation is that even as the less preferred wife, Leah found favor with the God who hears the cries of the broken.

Let that sink in for a moment. God met Leah and Leah found favor with the God who hears the cries of the broken.

God Hears the Afflicted

Leah hoped that her childbearing would earn her husband's love. Subsequent narratives continuing the story indicate that Jacob still continued to honor Rachel first. But whether Leah saw it or not, Leah also received favor from the God who looked on her suffering. The message here is super simple, guys. And it may be so simple that you will roll your eyes at it, but it's a message for you today, all friends.

The Samaritan woman at the well did not expect to sit down with a Jewish man and then be told he can give her some living water. Like, what does that mean? Who was she that she would have the revelation of the King before her? Who was she? She's someone that was overlooked by the disciples, just a normal everyday person who met a man at a well and became the first to carry the message of hope to her people.

Do not discount awkward moments. Don't discount cringe-worthy moments. Don't discount times of pain. Don't discount times of discomfort. Why? Because despite what man sees, God is still fully in control of your life. Will you trust Him? Will you trust and take hold of the true waters of life?

Yeshua Challenges the Status Quo

As I mentioned before, Yeshua loved challenging the status quo in the world. The way the world says it should work. And Yeshua just walks up and says, "No. The world will work differently because heaven is here and heaven works differently."

In the first century, women were still valued based on their childbearing ability. [Deuteronomy 25:5-10](#) reviews the Levirate Laws for ancient Israel that really solidified that. There's even valuation differences for women in [Leviticus 27](#) where a financial value is given as a redemptive price for men, women, and children. And women are about half the financial value or worth in that regard than men. And I point that out to show due to culture, due to the way the world worked, much of the value was placed and assumed on labor force by men, which means that sons were preferred. Men were preferred.

Women in Hebrew Culture

In the temple, women were not allowed to be priests. They couldn't even enter into the inner courts. Women tended to have a secondary position within Hebrew culture, and in many Hebrew circles today, this still remains true.

This is why the story of the daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers chapter 27 is so important in the Torah. It is a story of resistance to the culture where women spoke up against the ways of Israel and demanded change. The inheritance was only given to sons and the daughters of Zelophehad had no brothers. They were about to enter the land and their father's name would be lost. There would be no inheritance for them or for their father's name to continue on.

So what did they do? Well, they spoke out. They petitioned Moses. Moses said to God, "I got these ladies out here, and they're going against the way that we do things in our culture, in our world." And God hears them, and it's comical. God so casually says, "Oh yeah, they're right, yeah, they're actually right. Let's change things. We should change how we do things from now on. Yeah, they're right."

Stories of Resistance

It's an incredible story and the reason it's written like that is to echo the justice of the Torah and the justice of God despite the culture around it, right? Even today in the Tosefta, in Barakot 7:18, there is a prayer Jewish men say daily that thanks God that they are not a woman. "Thank you God that you did not create me to be a Gentile. Thank you God that you did not create me to be a woman." In the first century things were no different. Until Yeshua arrives in the scene, that is.

When Yeshua Arrived

Yeshua came to tear down boundary markers, tear down the walls that separate people. John records him taking the less taken route through Samaria where he meets a Samaritan woman at a well. And there, John records the longest private conversation found in the entire New Testament. That conversation between Yeshua and the woman at the well, the Samaritan woman, is the longest recorded conversation in all the New Testament.

I mean, who sits and talks to a Samaritan? The Jews saw the Samaritans as people who broke God's law. They didn't keep God's Torah. They didn't keep it the way they thought they should. They were sinners as a result. Talking to a woman in public was even more frowned upon than that. Like, you don't do that, but here comes Jesus. And John even records his disciples marveled at the sight of him speaking to the Samaritan woman, just shredding these gender and social barriers.

The Longest Conversation

Then Jesus asks to share a water vessel with the woman. "Hey, you want to share some water? Can I have some water?" Why was that so taboo? There was a rabbinic ruling that states that Samaritan women never stop menstruating. Therefore, any dish they touch or share makes you unclean. This shows the lengths Jewish men went through to condemn Samaritans. And not just that, the second class Samaritans, the women. And I really want to emphasize the culture here because this is bad. This is bad.

A Woman Overlooked

Jesus doesn't care. Jesus sees a woman who likely has experienced some of the greatest loss and pain ever, having five husbands. Having five husbands isn't like something we think of today. You didn't simply hop marriages in the first century. Some might assume that she was an adulterous woman, but men in the first century would not willingly marry a woman that had four adulterous affairs prior. She had four different husbands.

No. The text nowhere says that or indicates that in John. She was likely a widow of five husbands. And if that is true, how many times has she cried out? Did God hear her affliction? The answer is yes. She became the first to be given the revelation of Yeshua as Christ. She became the first to go and lead her people to Him. [John 4](#) says that many Samaritans believed that day.

Bigger Than Our Categories

Yeshua is bigger than the categories and the social structures and the labels that we want to put on people. He is bigger than that. He is bigger than our judgments of other people based on their skin or their culture or their gender. He is bigger than that. And our heart is supposed to explode daily with that type of love for everybody that we meet. That we would not judge people by the petty speculations or the petty labels or the petty judgments that everyone else in the world uses. If we're supposed to be His hands and feet, when people see us, they're supposed to experience Yeshua. And that starts by shredding social barriers. That starts by shredding gender barriers. That starts by sharing God's love with everybody as if everybody deserves it because that's the truth of the gospel message.

Living as His Hands and Feet

So I don't know where you're at today, but I want to invite you to understand that God is in control of your life. And maybe you don't see it. Maybe you're crying out to God right now. God, I don't know where you are taking me in this journey. Don't discount a random meeting at a well. Maybe you're in a situation that is awful in your life. Maybe you find yourself feeling far from God, lonely. You're not alone. God hears the cries of the afflicted.

Trust God in Your Journey

I believe that's the message we find in the story of Rachel and Leah. It should be noted that at the end of her life, it was Leah, not Rachel, who was buried with Jacob in the cave of Machpelah, the family tomb. Rachel died and she was buried on the road of Ephrat. Leah is the one that found peace to lay with her husband and her tribe at the end. And I think that's beautiful. That is notebook worthy.

So if you're joining me in prayer, Alvina Marquenu, our Father, our King, Father, I ask that the spirit that you have given to us, the same spirit that raised Yeshua from the dead, Father, I ask that you would allow us the courage and wisdom to face awkward moments, especially when it comes to things that have happened in our lives, that these things would come to the surface so that we can grow to a new level and that we would not be afraid to face the awkward. But not only that, Father, that you would allow us the courage and wisdom to boldly walk into awkward situations knowing that you are in control of the outcome, that we would be reminded that it is through awkward situations that your power is seen. Father, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for the meditation on your word and that you would give us hearts of

love for all people over the earth. No matter what their background is, no matter what social barrier our world has put up or labeled them, that we would be like Yeshua and just tear it down. We thank you, Father. In the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen. Shalom.

I'm Matthew Vanderels, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives.

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