

## ENCOUNTER AT A WELL

It was evening. In the outskirts of a city in Mesopotamia there was a well where “*the daughters of the men of the city*” (Genesis 24:13) went to draw water for all their family’s needs. Elizer, Abraham’s servant, was sent on a very important mission. He had to find a wife for Isaac, his master’s son, within his relatives. He did not go to a place of amusement, or to a beach, but to a well. He was looking for a hard-working and diligent young woman. The story of how he met Rebecca is well known to all of us.

Another important encounter took place at a well. Jacob was fleeing because he had deceived his brother. Isaac, his father, advised him to go to Mesopotamia to look for a wife among his relatives, because he feared he would take one of the daughters of Canaan, like his other son Esau had done. At a well, Jacob met a nice looking shepherdess, who later on became his wife.

Someone else who was also fleeing met his wife at a well. Moses had killed an Egyptian in order to defend his Hebrew brothers and he was forced to flee the country to save his life. When he came to the land of Midian, he sat by a well and seven young girls, the daughters of the priest of the region, came to draw water. One of them, Zipporah, became Moses’ wife. A great change took place in the life of Moses after this encounter at the well; from heir of the throne of Egypt he became a shepherd in the steppes of Midian.

There is a turning point in the life of each person. From one moment to the other, the situation that we have today may change. Sometimes a happy event, others a tragic one force us to take a certain decision that leads our life in a completely different direction. Whether joyful or traumatic, these experiences are indispensable since they lead us to self-knowledge, liberation and growth.

Surely, each one of us has such kind of commemorative monuments in his life and when we look back we can understand that they were quite necessary and enriching.

Rebecca, Rachel and Zipporah, these three nice-looking, young women went everyday to the well to draw water, thus fulfilling their family duty. How many dreams and questions about their future life occupied their thoughts! Would they ever meet the elected of their heart that would change their life completely and make them happy? How? Where? When? And the moment came in which the wonder took place, the important meeting that brought a great change in their lives. Not all were roses on their way, but all trials had a purpose, even the ones that did not come from God, taught them something.

But there is an encounter at the well that is more important than all of these together because the Husband to be here is God Himself in human form and the covenant will remain in eternity.

It was noon and the sun was in the zenith when Jesus, weary and thirsty, came to the well in Samaria. Shortly after he had sat at the edge of the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. We are acquainted with the story and know why she did not come in the evening, with the other women from the village. This woman was not a virgin who dreamt of meeting the man of her life to be happy with him thereafter. She had

had a life full of broken dreams and bitter disappointments. Her heart was full of mistrust and a polite aggressiveness, which was nothing else but her self-defence and was sensed in her words and the tone of her voice. She did not hurry to quench the thirst of the stranger, as Rebecca did when she met Elizer, but she spoke of separation and prejudice. You are a Jew; I, a Samaritan. Her heart was hardened by sin and the rejection and scorn of the people in town, so the appearance of that weary and thirsty man did not move her to compassion.

She did not have anything to give to others, not even water, because she herself was dry. Her spiritual thirst was thousand times more serious and painful than Jesus' physical need. Her soul longed for a little understanding and genuine love and she was not even aware of the needs of others and even less care for them. Her own needs were so great and they were never satisfied! Her life was a great burden, and her daily duty made her more exhausted than the journey that Jesus was taking!

Jesus, the Healer of the human soul, understood everything, knew everything, and lovingly and mercifully offered her immediately what she needed: living water. He forgot his own thirst, or maybe this was only an excuse to enter into a conversation with her. The woman had never heard that there was such a thing as living water and she found still another subject for controversy. He had no pail to take the water. How could he offer her such water? Was he greater than Jacob who had dug up that well? Jesus explained to her what quality was the water he was ready to give her. She would never again need to walk in the heat of the noon hour to the well, but she herself would be a fountain of water that would never dry up. Although she could not quite understand such manner of speech, she could not refuse such an offer and answered: *"Sir, give me this water"* John 4:15. But Jesus was not offering her a glass or a bottle of water, not even a pail, but a well of flowing water *"springing up into everlasting life"* John 4:14. He had to dig deeply, because as David says in His Psalm 51:6: *"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts"* Psalm 51:6. So Jesus touched now another subject, her private life and he did it in a very tactful ways. *"Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly"* John 4:16-18.

Jesus did not expect any public confession or deep repentance, but only that she might acknowledge Him as the Messiah, the Redeemer of the World, something that the Jews had not been able to do in three years he had been serving them. The woman was amazed, *"Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet"* John 4:19. Perception is a subjective attribute quite developed in most women. Prophets knew everything before hand and they usually did not bring good news.

But she would not allow this stranger to enter into her private life. He had no right to do that. She could simply turn the conversation and speak about something else, for example: religion. Surely she never went to the temple where the believers gathered together to worship God. She was the black sheep of the town, but that issue was a good excuse to distract the attention of the Prophet from her private life.

Where should a believer worship, in the mountains of Samaria or in Jerusalem? - she asked him. Her thoughts moved in the physical world, she could not see further than what was before her eyes; introspection was unknown to her. She wanted to know:

where, not how. Where is your pail? Where is the true temple? But Jesus wanted to lead her to look deeper. How is your heart? How do people need to worship?

*“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him”* - said Jesus. (John 4:23). This high estimation of worship which she could not quite understand, reminded her of something: *“I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things”* John 4:25. Slowly, but surely, the greatest missionary of all times reached His goal. That was enough. He had led the woman to take a short look at herself and then to concentrate her whole attention on Him and what He could give her.

The disciples came back. They were bound to the letter of the Scriptures and could not understand why Jesus was speaking with a woman. The important conversation was interrupted and the woman went to town to preach the good news; she left her pitcher at the well. What use had the water that she had drawn? She had found something much better! Now she could talk to others about the living water. She herself was already turning into a fountain of flowing water, although she still had a long way before her. She had not yet understood the gospel, the power of God that saves those who believe in it, but in the depth of her souls she knew that Jesus was the solution to all her problems and to the longing of her soul.

The stranger at the well was first acknowledged as a prophet, then as the Messiah, and at the end of the story as the Redeemer of the world.

Four women in different times in history had a special encounter at a well that changed their lives; outwardly or inwardly? That is actually what counts.

The Lord is still at the well. He is thirsty for your soul. He, the Redeemer of the world tells everyone, *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come... incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you”* Isaiah 55:1-3.

COME! Nobody has ever regretted having accepted His invitation.

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