

Journey Through HIStory: The Children of Jacob

Text: Genesis 30:1-24

Introduction:

After Leah had born four sons to Jacob, Rachel became envious and was frantic. She gave her maid, Bilhah, to Jacob so that she may give him a son through her. She succeeded, but then Leah gave her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob as well, so she may have more sons through her also. Thus was the account of the children of Jacob.

I. Leah's First Four Sons. – Gen. 29:31-35

- Reuben, the firstborn, Simeon, Levi, and Judah.

II. Rachel's Frustration. – Gen. 30:1-8

- A. She **envied** her sister, Leah, for having sons, and vented her frustration at Jacob.
- B. She gave her maid, Bilhah, to Jacob as a secondary wife so that she could give him a son through her.
 - *"Much like Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham in a surrogate-mother type arrangement (Genesis 16), Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob."* [1] (David Guzik, *The Children Born to Jacob*)
- C. Bilhah conceived and gave birth to **two** sons for Jacob.
 1. Dan (He judged) – *"God has judged and vindicated me, and has heard my plea and has given me a son [through my maid]."* (Gen. 30:6 AMP)
 2. Naphtali (my wrestlings) – *"With mighty wrestlings [in prayer to God] I have struggled with my sister and have prevailed."* (Gen. 30:8 AMP)
 - *"With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed: This seems strange, because at this point Leah had four sons, and Rachel (through Bilhah) had two sons. Yet Rachel said that she had **prevailed**. Perhaps she meant it in the sense that now Leah seemed to have stopped having children."* [1]

III. Leah Gives Her Maid, Zilpah. – Gen. 30:9-13

- A. When Leah saw that she stopped bearing children, and probably saw what her sister, Rachel, did with her maid, she also gave her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob as a secondary wife that she may give him a son **through** her.
- B. Zilpah conceived and gave birth to two sons for Jacob.
 1. Gad (good fortune) – *"How fortunate!"* (Gen. 30:11 AMP)
 2. Asher (happy) – *"I am happy! For women will call me happy."* (Gen. 30:13 AMP)

IV. Leah Gives Birth to More Children. – Gen. 30:14-21

- A. Rachel offered to let Jacob spend the night with Leah in **exchange** for Reuben's mandrakes.
 - *"A narcotic plant thought by ancient peoples to be an aphrodisiac or cure for infertility."* [2] (Footnotes, Amplified Bible, [The Lockman Foundation](#))
- B. Leah slept with Jacob (a couple of times) and the **Lord** listened and answered her prayer, so she conceived and gave birth to two more sons and one daughter.
 1. Issachar – *"God has given me my reward because I have given my maid to my husband."* (Gen. 30:18 AMP)
 2. Zebulun – *"God has endowed me with a good [marriage] gift [for my husband]; now he will*

live with me [regarding me with honor as his wife], because I have given birth to six sons.”
(Gen. 30:20 AMP)

3. Dinah (Jacob and Leah’s daughter) – Gen. 30:21

- *“Now how many other daughters were born, we don't know. If there were daughters born in between here, we don't know. We do know that Jacob did have daughters. They are mentioned later but none of them by name. Dinah is the only daughter that is named and she's only named here because she becomes an important part of the story later.”* ^[3]
(Chuck Smith, Verse by Verse Study on Genesis 29-31)

V. God Blessed Rachel with a Son. – Gen. 30:22-24

- A. God remembered Rachel and **thought** of her, and opened her womb so that she might conceive.
1. *What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of [earthborn] man that You care for him?* (Ps. 8:4 AMP)
 2. **“And opened her womb:** *The idea of God’s sovereignty over the womb is a repeated theme in the Bible. The purposes of God in opening one and closing the other may be completely unknowable, but God has His purpose.”* ^[1]
- B. Rachel gave birth to a son and said, *“God has taken away my disgrace and humiliation.”* (Gen. 30:23 AMP)
- Joseph (may He add) – *“May the Lord add to me another son.”* (Gen. 30:24 AMP)

VI. Spiritual Insights and Principles.

- A. On Rachel and Jacob’s Dialogue.
1. **“Give me children, or else I die**—*either be reckoned as good as dead, or pine away from vexation. The intense anxiety of Hebrew women for children arose from the hope of giving birth to the promised seed. Rachel's conduct was sinful and contrasts unfavorably with that of Rebekah (compare Gen 25:22) and of Hannah (1 Sam 1:11).”* ^[4] (Robert Jamieson, Commentary on Genesis 30)
 2. *“Jacob chides, and most justly. He loved Rachel, and therefore reproved her for what she said amiss, v. 2. Note, Faithful reproofs and products and instances of true affection, Ps. 141:5; Prov. 27:5, 6. Job reproved his wife when she spoke the language of the foolish women, Job 2:10. See 1 Co. 7:16. He was angry, not at the person, but at the sin; he expressed himself so as to show this displeasure. Note, sometimes it is requisite that a reproof should be given warm, like a medical potion; not too hot, lest it scald the patient; yet not cold, lest it prove ineffectual. It was a very grave and pious reply which Jacob gave to Rachel's peevish demand: **Am I in God's stead? The Chaldee paraphrases it well, Dost thou ask sons of me? Oughtest thou not to ask them from before the Lord? The Arabic reads it, "Am I above God; can I give thee that which God denies thee?"** This was said like a plain man.”* ^[5] (Matthew Henry, Commentary on Genesis 30)
- B. Leah’s resentment.
- **“You have taken away my husband:** *The hostility between Leah and Rachel was as obvious as it was painful. It must have been terrible living in a home where one wife believed the other had stolen her husband from her.”* ^[1]
 - *“This confirms the wisdom of God’s original plan, as expressed in Genesis 2:24: one man to be joined to one woman in a one-flesh relationship. Later, Leviticus 18:18 forbade the*

marrying of sisters, and this shows why.” ^[1]

Conclusion/Application:

Jacob’s words provide wonderful insight, “*Am I in the place of God?*” (Gen. 30:2 AMP) We may get frustrated with others, our circumstances, and even ourselves, but everything is truly dependent on God’s **sovereign** will. It is up to Him to bestow or withhold His blessings. The best that we can do is to know our place (where we are in God’s plan and our standing with Him) and trust in Him.

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1. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/genesis/genesis-30.cfm?a=30001
 2. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+30&version=AMP>
 3. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/smith_chuck/c2000_Gen/Gen_029.cfm?a=30001
 4. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/jfb/Gen/Gen_030.cfm?a=30001
 5. https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Gen/Gen_030.cfm?a=30001