

JACOB: HIS LIFE IN HARAN Part II (Genesis 29:30 – 31:43)

If you are new or visiting; a special warm welcome to you. We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

HIS CHILDREN (29:31-30:24)

Jacob now has two wives, each with her own maidservant. One wife he loves and one he doesn't love. It is an unhappy, tension filled home that will pit sister against sister and wife against husband.

v.31–35. “When the Lord saw that Leah was *not* loved he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren“. It is helpful to remember, firstly, that nothing is hidden from the eyes of the Lord (I Chron.28:9^b), secondly, that he understands our pain and struggles and, thirdly, that the ancient patriarchs had a much more complete view of life and conception than modern man – He is the ultimate giver of life and of children.

Leah has four children in quick succession, their names reflecting her pain and struggles.

Reuben – literally, “he (God) has seen my misery” [surely my husband will love me now, or become attached to me]

Simeon – “one who hears” [the Lord has heard that I am not loved]

Levi – “attached” [now my husband will become attached to me]

Judah – “praise” [This time I will praise the Lord]. What a prophetic choice of name for his lineage would produce the saviour, the one deserving of all praise?

Three of these four names refer to Jehovah, suggesting that this woman with tender (kind) eyes, suffering in an unhappy marriage, had a real measure of faith. Not only would she be the mother of Judah - the kingly tribe, but also of Levi - the priestly tribe.

Ch. 30:1-8. “When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister ----- Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived ---.

Rachel's reaction to her sister's fruitfulness was jealousy, not joy. There was no appeal to God nor any seeking of the Lord, just a strident demand of her husband.

Jacob, while angry, rightly identifies the real issue.

Rachel wrongly identifies the solution. Compare with Gen. 16:1-4.

The names of Bilhah's two sons via Jacob reflect Rachel's mindset. Dan = “he has vindicated”, and Naphtali = “my struggle” (i.e. with my sister).

v.9-13. “When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife --- Zilpah's two sons were Gad = “good fortune”, Asher = “happy”.

v.14-21. Mandrakes were a type of herb with a yellow fruit, the size of a small apple. They were thought to give sensual desire and thus aid conception. In a shameless barter arrangement, Leah gives some to Rachel in return for Jacob's services for the night. “God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son”. Issachar = “reward”, then Zebulun = honour, dowry or gift”. God had given Zebulun as a gift and thus her husband would now honour her (she hoped).

v.22,23. “Then God **remembered** Rachel, he --- opened her womb --- She named him Joseph”.

This is the same word used of Noah in 8:1 when God took care of Noah in a supernatural way during the flood. The sense here is of someone who at last has sought the Lord in the matter, who, after many years of frustration and failure is now looking to Jehovah for help.

