

## Genesis 29:31-35 & 30:1-24 Sisters Rivalry for the Love of Jacob

<sup>31</sup> "When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. <sup>32</sup> So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me." <sup>33</sup> 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." And she called his name Simeon. <sup>34</sup> 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 his name was called Levi. <sup>35</sup> And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the LORD." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing."

## Genesis 30

<sup>1</sup> "Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!" <sup>2</sup> And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" <sup>3</sup> So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her." <sup>4</sup> Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. <sup>5</sup> And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. <sup>6</sup> Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan. <sup>7</sup> And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. <sup>8</sup> Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

<sup>9</sup> When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. <sup>10</sup> And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. <sup>11</sup> Then Leah said, "A troop comes!" So she called his name Gad. <sup>12</sup> And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. <sup>13</sup> Then Leah said, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." So she called his name Asher.

<sup>14</sup> Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." <sup>15</sup> But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" And Rachel said, "Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes." <sup>16</sup> When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night. <sup>17</sup> And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. <sup>18</sup> Leah said, "God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband." So she called his name Issachar. <sup>19</sup> Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. <sup>20</sup> And Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun. <sup>21</sup> Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

<sup>22</sup> Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup> And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach." <sup>24</sup> So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son." NKJV

Facts revealed:

- ❖ God Himself entered into the family situation to balance the score since Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. God allowed Leah to bear children and withheld children from Rachel because she was loved by her husband more than he loved the sister.
- ❖ This tells us that sexually Jacob was not neglecting Leah because he loved Rachel more, but the difference was a love relationship that was unequal.

- ❖ The fact that Leah continued to bear children and Rachel was barren tells us that Jacob was equally sharing his attention with them both sexually.
- ❖ Therefore we realize that in spite of public opinion that calls sexual relationships as love is false, and that love is far above and beyond the simple act of sexual intercourse.
- ❖ The names of the children born is significant, Reuben means “Behold a son.”
- ❖ Jacob’s response to Rachel’s request for a son indicates that she also had been receiving her share of sexual attention but had been made unable to conceive by God Himself as Jacob said, “Am I in the place of God Who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”
- ❖ However this only increased the sense of rivalry and set the stage for the introduction of the maid servants as wives, which Jacob also accepted as evidenced by his response as he pronounced a blessing on each of his sons and addressed Reuben in [\[Genesis 49:1-4\]](#).
- ❖ At last God gave Rachel a son and she said “God has taken away my reproach.”  
To be barren was taken to be the basis of reproach among the people.  
It is similar to the reproach felt by the women of [\[Isaiah 4:1\]](#) where they are found without husbands.