

**May 7, 2017 - Gen. 29:31 – 30:21 - Rivalry between Rachel and Leah**

**Torah Reading: Gen. 29:31 – 30:21 - Rivalry between Rachel and Leah**

**Psalm 24**

**Haftorah - (1) Isaiah 60:15-22 + 61:8-9**

**(2) 1 Samuel 1:2-11 + 2:28**

### **Rivalry between Rachel and Leah**

Jacob's relationship with Leah was full of neglect and probably contempt. She represented his frustration and humiliation before Laban. Leah also received envy and contempt from Rachel, once Leah became pregnant while Rachel was barren.

Leah's only usefulness to Jacob was to bear children.

**Genesis 29:31** - "And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."

"Hated" comparatively less loved than Rachel.

These kind of situation were common enough that provision is made for them in the Law:

**Deuteronomy 21:15-16** - "If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn...."

The eye of the Lord is upon the sufferer, and he blesses Leah with children.

Leah had qualities of heart, if not of outward appearance, which commanded esteem. She had learned to acknowledge the Lord in all her ways, reflected in the naming of all her children:

**Reuben** - "see, a son" - "The LORD has surely seen my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me."

**Simeon** - Hearing - "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also."

**Levi** - Joined; attached - "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons."

**Judah** - Yah be praised - "Now I will praise Yahweh."

**Genesis 30:1-2** - "And when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said to Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

The Targum of Jonathan paraphrases it that she hoped he would pray the Lord to give her children, as Isaac prayed for Rebekah (**Genesis 25:21**).

Rachel had three strong reasons for desiring children - that she might emulate her sister, become more dear to her husband, and above all share the hope of being a vehicle through which the promised Seed would come.

Rebekah had been barren for 20 years, Rachel now for only four. Rebekah in similar circumstances had sought relief in prayer and an oracles from God. Observe the difference between Rachel's asking for this mercy, and Hannah's (1 Samuel 1:10) - Rachel envied, Hannah wept. - *Benson Commentary*

**Genesis 30:3** - "And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in to her; and she shall bear on my knees, that I may also have children by her."

This suggestion came solely through vexation at her own barrenness, not any nobler aspiration.

It appears that there was a custom of placing the new-born child upon the knees, first of the father, who, by accepting it, acknowledged the infant as his own; and secondly, upon those of the mother. (**Genesis 50:23**)

#### **Children by Bilhah, for Rachel:**

**Dan** - "Judge" - "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son."

**Naphtali** - My wrestling - "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed."

**Genesis 30:9** - "When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife."

Children by Zilpah, for Leah:

**Gad** - Troop; invader; or, good fortune - "A troop comes!"

**Asher** - Happy - "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed."

**Genesis 30:14** - "And 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, Give me, I pray you, of your son's mandrakes."

## **Mandrakes?**

The mandrake (*mandragora vernalis*) is a tuberous plant, with yellow plumlike fruit. It was supposed to act as a love-charm. The Hebrew name arose from the popular belief that it would prevent barrenness. They were also pleasant to the smell (Song of Solomon 7:13).

**Issachar** - Man of hire - "God has given me my hire [wages] because I have given my maid to my husband."

**Zebulun** - Dwelling - "...now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons."

A daughter, **Dinah**, was also born by Leah. Her names also means "judgment," the female version of Dan.

One midrash states that Dinah was conceived as a male in Leah's womb but miraculously changed to a female, lest Leah be associated with more of the Israelite tribes than Rachel. (Berkahot 60a)

No mention of Dinah is made in **Genesis 32:22**, where Jacob's "eleven children" are spoken of.