

Gen. 30:1 And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.

Gen. 30:2 And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

Rachel was jealous of Leah for being able to give Jacob sons. So she vented at Jacob and told him to "give me children, or else I die." Jacob got angry with her. He reminded her that God was the one who controlled her ability to have children—not him. (It's obvious that Jacob couldn't have hated Leah all that much. He kept sleeping with her enough to get her pregnant four times.) I think for Jacob to get angry with Rachel, she must have been putting a lot of pressure on him and maybe even blaming him for the fact that she wasn't pregnant.

Gen. 30:3 And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.

Gen. 30:4 And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.

Gen. 30:5 And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.

Gen. 30:6 And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan.

Gen. 30:7 And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.

Gen. 30:8 And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

So, Rachel decided to take matters into her own hands. (Here we go again. Our lack of dependence on God always results in trouble.) She decides to give her maid Bilhah to sleep with Jacob so she could have children through her (according to the custom of the day). Jacob slept with her. (He was probably willing to do anything to make Rachel happy.) Bilhah became pregnant and bore a son, and Rachel named him Dan, "he has vindicated." She thought that God had vindicated or OK'd her plan since He had given her a son in response to her plea. Then Bilhah bore Jacob another son, and Rachel named him Naphtali, "struggle," because of the struggle with her sister in providing heirs for Jacob.

(1/05) As I was reading through this section again, I thought about the fact that Jacob, the father, was the common factor in the birth of his 12 sons whose progeny would produce the nation of Israel. It's interesting that Jewish identity in Israel today is established through the mother. God made His promise through the men.....

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

Gen. 30:10 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son.

Gen. 30:11 And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad.

Gen. 30:12 And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.

Gen. 30:13 And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher.

The Leah decided to give Jacob her maidservant, Zilpah. She too bore a son, and Leah named him Gad, "good fortune." Zilpah bore a second son, and Leah named him Asher, "happy," to express her joy.

Gen. 30:14 And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes.

Gen. 30:15 And she said unto her, *Is it* a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes.

Gen. 30:16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.

It is time for wheat harvest, and Reuben, the oldest son, brought his mother, Leah, some mandrakes. (This is a poisonous plant with a short stem and purple and white flowers with a thick root that was used in medicine for its narcotic properties and ability to cause vomiting.) When Rachel saw them, she asked for some of them, but Leah decided to take another jab while she had the upper hand. She chided Rachel for being selfish. She already was Jacob's favorite, now she wanted to take something else from Leah. So, Rachel traded Leah a night to sleep with Jacob for some mandrakes.

This is really pretty unbelievable. Supposedly, the man was put in authority over the woman—but the women pretty much seem to be running the show in this family. I can't imagine sharing a husband, let alone bartering sleeping privileges—or feeling like you are in a war with another wife who just happens to be your sister to see who can provide the most children—or even thinking that your servant's children were the same as your own. Yet, God allowed this and blessed these offspring of Jacob by making them the fathers of the tribes of Israel, these children of four different women and one father.

Back to the story. When Jacob comes in from the fields, Leah meets him and tells him that he must sleep with her that night because she had "hired thee with my son's mandrakes." So Jacob complied.

Gen. 30:17 And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.

Gen. 30:18 And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.

Gen. 30:19 And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.

Gen. 30:20 And Leah said, God hath endued me *with* a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun.

Gen. 30:21 And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Leah became pregnant and bore a fifth son. She named him Issachar, "reward," since she thought God was rewarding her for giving her servant to Jacob. Then Leah conceived again. (I wonder how she got to sleep with him again!) She gave birth to a sixth son and named him Zebulun, "honor." She was sure Jacob would treat her with honor after giving him six sons. A little later on she gave birth to a daughter, Dinah.

Gen. 30:22 And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.

Gen. 30:23 And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach:

Gen. 30:24 And she called his name Joseph; and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.

Verse 22 tells us that God “remembered” Rachel. He never forgot her in the sense that we think of forgetting; He just decided it was time to answer her prayer and open her womb. It’s a staggering thought that God is so in the know with us that He controls the opening and closing of our womb. It’s just another affirmation that each person that is conceived is special in His sight. He is the only authority for beginning and terminating a pregnancy. The fact that God “hearkened” to Rachel meant that she must have been talking/praying to Him for a child. She had no doubt who was in control. (She had learned.) When she gave birth to a son, she named him Joseph, “may he add,” in the hope that God would give her another son. (It really makes me sorry that Jim and I ever used any kind of birth control. I wish I had had the faith to trust God to provide in His own perfect will. In fact, I wish I had learned a whole lot more about walking in faith a whole lot sooner.)

Gen. 30:25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

Gen. 30:26 Give *me* my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

After Joseph was born, Jacob began wanting to go home. So he went to Laban and told him he felt he had earned the right to take his wives and children and leave to go home. (It seems strange to me that he was asking Laban. He had been given his wives in payment for services performed. It was his family. I guess he just wanted there to be no hard feelings.)

Gen. 30:27 And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, *tarry*: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

Gen. 30:28 And he said, Appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

Laban begs him to stay. He tells Jacob that he realizes that the Lord has blessed him because of Jacob. He basically asked Jacob to name his price.

Gen. 30:29 And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

Gen. 30:30 For *it was* little which thou hadst before I *came*, and it is *now* increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

Gen. 30:31 And he said, What shall I give thee? And Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed *and* keep thy flock:

Gen. 30:32 I will pass through all thy flock to day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats: and *of such* shall be my hire.

Gen. 30:33 So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be counted stolen with me.

Jacob basically agrees with Laban's assessment, but he still wants to be independent. So he offers Laban a deal. He will stay a while longer and tend the flocks for Laban if Laban will agree to give Jacob all the speckled and spotted sheep, dark colored lambs, and spotted or speckled goats as his wages. In the future, as a testimony of Jacob's honesty, Laban could consider as stolen any goat that wasn't speckled or spotted or any lamb that wasn't dark colored.

Gen. 30:34 And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

Gen. 30:35 And he removed that day the he goats that were ringstraked and spotted, and all the she goats that were speckled and spotted, *and* every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons.

Gen. 30:36 And he set three days' journey betwixt himself and Jacob: and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Laban agreed to the deal, but he tried to stack the deck or guarantee the odds in his favor. He removed all the "off color" sheep and goats from the flock and put them in the care of his sons. He thought this would guarantee pure color offspring and Jacob would gain very little. He also separated the off color flock from the flock that Jacob was tending by a journey of three days to make sure they didn't mix.

Gen. 30:37 And Jacob took him rods of green poplar, and of the hazel and chesnut tree; and pilled white strakes in them, and made the white appear which *was* in the rods.

Gen. 30:38 And he set the rods which he had pilled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs when the flocks came to drink, that they should conceive when they came to drink.

Gen. 30:39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, speckled, and spotted.

Gen. 30:40 And Jacob did separate the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstraked, and all the brown in the flock of Laban; and he put his own flocks by themselves, and put them not unto Laban's cattle.

Gen. 30:41 And it came to pass, whensoever the stronger cattle did conceive, that Jacob laid the rods before the eyes of the cattle in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

Gen. 30:42 But when the cattle were feeble, he put *them* not in: so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's.

Gen. 30:43 And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maidservants, and menservants, and camels, and asses.

This wasn't making any sense, so I did a little research. Jacob was no dummy. He devised a plan to outwit his uncle. The coloring of the sheep's offspring is influenced by its mother's surroundings. So Jacob put streaked rods in front of the ewes at the watering trough where they mated. He also separated the spotted and striped lambs and kids from the herd, but kept them in front of the ewes. Then he made sure that only the stronger ewes mated near the streaked

rods/branches at the trough. This resulted in strong animals for Jacob and weaker animals for Laban. Jacob grew very prosperous and came to own large flocks, many servants, and camels and donkeys.