

## **Jacob's Tumultuous Household: 4 Women and 12 Children (Gen 29:31–30:24)**

Grace Chapel January 27, 2010 Dr. John Niemelä

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A WORD ABOUT TRANSLATIONS OF NAMES**

In Modern Finnish, the word *niemellä* means *on the peninsula*. In older Finnish, there was only one *L*. My last name preserves an older form. Similarly, names in Gen 29–30 reflect pronunciation in Jacob's day, but Moses and other writers of scripture used newer grammar. We are familiar with Moses' grammar, but not with Jacob's grammar.

#### **GOD OPENED LEAH'S WOMB, BUT CLOSED RACHEL'S WOMB (29:31–35)**

**(29:31) God gave [mercy] to the unloved Leah, opening her womb, but left Rachel barren**

**(29:32) Leah bore a son, whom she called Reuben (Looked upon affliction), because the LORD had looked upon her affliction; she also stated her wish that Jacob would love her**

**(29:33) Leah bore a second son Simeon (Heard), because the LORD had heard [her prayers complaining] that she was unloved**

**(29:34) Leah bore a third son, whom she called Levi (Attached), because she hoped that Jacob would become attached to her because she bore him three sons**

**(29:35) Leah bore a fourth son, whom she called Judah (praised), and vowed to praise the Lord, but she ceased bearing children.**

**ENVY OF LEAH CAUSED RACHEL TO GIVE HER MAID TO JACOB (30:1–8)**

**(30:1) Rachel became envious of Leah and gave Jacob an ultimatum [to spend more time with her and less with Leah and Zilpah, so Rachel would have children; or at least so Leah would not have any more]**

**(30:2) Jacob angrily replied that it was God, not Jacob, who caused her to have no children**

**(30:3–4) Rachel gave him her handmaid, Bilhah, so she could have children through her**

**(30:5–6) Bilhah bore a son whom Rachel named Dan (Vindicated), because the LORD had vindicated her [in regard to Leah]**

**(30:7–8) Bilhah bore a second son whom Rachel named Naphtali (My wrestling), because she had great wrestlings with Leah, but finally prevailed over Leah**

**BARRENNESS SET IN, SO LEAH GAVE HER MAID, ZILPAH, TO JACOB (30:9–13)**  
**(30:9) Leah saw that she no longer became pregnant, so she gave Zilpah to Jacob.**

**(30:10–11) Zilpah bore a son whom Leah named Gad (Fortune), because good fortune has come**

See the note in the NKJ on the text

**(30:12–13) Zilpah bore a son whom Leah named Asher (Fortune), because daughters will call her blessed**

**LEAH & RACHEL BICKERED OVER AN APHRODISIAC, BUT GOD GAVE LEAH CHILDREN, WHILE WITHOLDING THEM FROM RACHEL (30:14–21)**

**(30:14) Rachel expressed discontentment by offering to buy Leah's mandrakes (30:14)**

**(30:15a) Leah expressed discontent by claiming that Rachel stole Jacob [on a night that it was Leah's turn]**

**(30:15b) Rachel traded mandrakes for Leah having an extra night with Jacob**

**(30:16–18) Leah told Jacob that she hired him (by giving mandrakes to Rachel), so he was with her; God listened to her plea; she named her fifth son Issachar (My hire), because God gave her wages for giving her maid to Jacob**

**(30:19–20) Leah bore a sixth son, whom she called Zebulun (elevation), because God endowed her with a good endowment (i.e., an elevated one), so Jacob would live with her**

**(30:21) At some later point, Leah had a daughter (Dinah)**

Her name is not explained, because she would not head a tribe. Her name is a feminine form from the same root as Dan, meaning Vindicated.

**GOD REMEMBERED RACHEL AND OPENED HER WOMB, SO SHE SAID THAT THE LORD HAD REMOVED HER REPROACH; SHE NAMED HIM JOSEPH (MAY HE ADD); AND SHE REQUESTED FOR THE LORD TO GIVE HER ANOTHER SON**

Rachel died in giving birth to Benjamin in Genesis 35:18

## **SUMMARY**