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Birth Wars  
Sunday, 30-March 2014

Genesis 29:31–30:24 (ESV) When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 32 And Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben, for she said, “Because the Lord has looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me.” 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also.” And she called his name Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” Therefore his name was called Levi. 35 And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she ceased bearing. 1 When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die!” 2 Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” 3 Then she said, “Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her.” 4 So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. 5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 6 Then Rachel said, “God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son.” Therefore she called his name Dan. 7 Rachel’s servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. 8 Then Rachel said, “With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed.” So she called his name Naphtali. 9 When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. 10 Then Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. 11 And Leah said, “Good fortune has come!” so she called his name Gad. 12 Leah’s servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. 13 And Leah said, “Happy am I! For women have

called me happy.” So she called his name Asher. 14 In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went 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.” 15 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?” Rachel said, “Then he may lie with you tonight in exchange for your son’s mandrakes.” 16 When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, “You must come in to me, for I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he lay with her that night. 17 And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. 18 Leah said, “God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband.” So she called his name Issachar. 19 And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. 20 Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons.” So she called his name Zebulun. 21 Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah. 22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. 23 She conceived and bore a son and said, “God has taken away my reproach.” 24 And she called his name Joseph, saying, “May the Lord add to me another son!”

I. Four Sons By Leah (29:31-35)

A. The focus on God.

Exodus 3:7 (ESV) Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,  
Psalm 139:1–6 (ESV) O Lord, you have searched me and known me! 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts

from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. 5 You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

B. The sons of Leah.

Psalm 102:17 (ESV) he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer.

Psalm 34:19 (ESV) Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

1. Reuben = look, a son!

Exodus 2:24 & 25 (ESV) And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. 25 God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

2. Simeon = the Lord has heard.

Exodus 3:7 (ESV) Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,

3. Levi = attachment.

Jeremiah 31:31 & 32 (ESV) “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

4. Judah = praise.

Exodus 15:11 (ESV) “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

II. Four Sons By Slave Wives (30:1-13)

A. Confrontation between Jacob and Rachel.

Ephesians 4:26 & 27 (ESV) Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil.

Ephesians 4:30–32 (ESV) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

B. Rachel’s maneuver = Bilhah.

1. Dan = judged/vindicated.

Hebrews 10:30 & 31 (ESV) For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

2. Naphtali = wrestlings.

Exodus 17:8–16 (ESV) Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. 9 So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” 10 So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses’ hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. 13 And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. 14 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” 15 And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The Lord Is My Banner, 16 saying, “A hand upon the throne of the Lord! The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”

C. Leah’s response = Zilpah.

1. Gad = good fortune.

Joshua 23:14 (ESV) “And now I am about to go the way of all the earth, and you know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed.

2. Asher = happy.

Psalms 144:15 (ESV) Blessed are the people to whom such blessings fall! Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord!

III. Four Sons By Leah and Rachel (30:14-24)

A. The mandrake episode.

Song of Solomon 7:13 (ESV) The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.

B. Leah hires Jacob (30:16)

1. Issachar = wages.

Exodus 3:21 (ESV) And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty,

2. Zebulun = endowment/honor.

1 Samuel 2:30 (ESV) Therefore the Lord, the God of Israel, declares: ‘I promised that your house and the house of your father should go in and out before me forever,’ but now the Lord declares: ‘Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.

3. Dinah = judgement/vindication.

Hebrews 13:4 (ESV) Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

C. Rachel is remembered.

1. Joseph = may the Lord bless.

Genesis 45:7 & 8 (ESV) And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was

not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

2. Benjamin = son of my right hand.

Conclusion

Luke 1:46–49 (ESV) And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, 48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; 49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

Romans 11:33–36 (ESV) Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” 35 “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.