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**Adoption, Surrogacy  
Sarah, Hagar  
Rachel, and Leah**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

# Adoption, Surrogacy, Sarah, Hagar, Rachel, and Leah.

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## Topics.

- Rachel asks Jacob to give her children.
- Job viewed his life under the control of God.
- Habakkuk viewed his life under the control of God.
- Rachel servant Bilhah by Jacob gives birth to Dan.

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## RACHEL ASKS JACOB TO GIVE HER CHILDREN

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- **Genesis 30:1-2:** When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" <sup>2</sup>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?"

The previous chapter ended with Leah giving birth to four sons:

1. Reuben.
2. Simeon.
3. Levi.
4. Judah.

Rachel her younger sister seeing this coveted and resented her. From this spirit of envy, she demands that Jacob gives her children. Following are the two most common thoughts amongst commentators concerning Rachel demand.

1. Rachel did not think it was in Jacob's power to make her the mother of children, but that he would think of some way of obtaining children for her, that would become hers, but, since no method occurred to him, she proposes one. Jacob would have been fully aware of the practise of using a type of surrogate mother and the law of adoption since Abraham's wife Sarah gave Abraham to Hagar for the very purpose of obtaining children.

- **Genesis 16:1-4:** Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup>And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. <sup>3</sup>So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife. <sup>4</sup>And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.

It is possible Jacob never came up with any suggestion because he had already been tricked into marrying two wives who were rivals with each other, and he did not want to obtain any more wives, and add to the already difficult tensions.

2. Rachel did believe it was in Jacob's power to make her the mother of children. In this scenario. This idea is supported by Jacob's response to her. If Jacob simply believed that Rachael was talking about the practise of using a surrogate mother and adoption it is hardly likely he would have responded in anger saying, "Am I God?" Since Jacob loved Rachel this type of response would most likely stem from a sense of hurt and offence.

Jacob's words, "Am I God," are unneeded if Rachel was simply asking Jacob to think of some type of surrogacy or adoption since these would have been fully in the power of Jacob to do. It seems more likely that Rachael knowing her husband was a godly man who had in the past been given by God an amazing vision of angels descending and ascending from heaven to earth, and visions of God and was to inherit God's promise to Abraham, believed he should have the power to pray and intercede for her to have children of her own. During these ancient days the greatest blessing for parents was to have children, so it is certain that during Jacob's years of marriage to Rachel the woman he loved they would have laid together many times for the purpose of having a child, and he would have prayed many times that his loved wife would conceive and give birth to her own child. This would explain his frustration, hurt, and anger when she made the demand, "Give me children, or I shall die," since he was fully aware such a thing was not in his power, but God's. Added to this, the problem was not him (he produced twelve sons and a daughter), but in Rachel. We know this because Scripture tells us Rachel was barren (Gen. 29:31) and that the LORD opened her womb (Gen. 30:22). Jacob's faith before the LORD is manifested in this story, the things that were out of his control (i.e., opening Rachel's womb) he trusted God was in control of, this was the faith of those devoted to God in the Old Testament, they saw their life being under the hand of God in both good and bad circumstances.

**Job viewed his life under the control of God:** even though Job suffered great affliction his attitude was:

- **Job 13:15:** Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him.
- **Job 19:25-26:** I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

**Habakkuk's viewed his life under the control of God:** Habakkuk begins his prayer saying, "Even though his body trembles at the power of the LORD, and he feels weak and feeble because of the enemies who are coming to invade his land, he will quietly wait for the day of trouble." He then ends his prayer with the following great words of faith.

- **Habakkuk 3:17-19:** Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, <sup>18</sup>yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. <sup>19</sup>GOD, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

We make the LORD our fortress and refuge, in the same way that David, Job and Habakkuk did, which is by making him our greatest love, our best thought, and the passion of our heart and mind, and rest in the knowledge if everything fails in this life, we will be raised to be with the Lord in eternal glory where happiness and everlasting dwells, and while on this side of eternity rest in the confidence and faith that the Lord is with us by his Spirit, his love and his grace.

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## **RACHEL SERVANT BILHAH BY JACOB GIVES BIRTH TO DAN**

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- **Genesis 30:3-6:** Rachel said, "Here is my servant Bilhah; go in to her, so that she may give birth on my behalf, (she shall bear upon my knees in KJV) that even I may have children through her." <sup>4</sup>So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a 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 me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

In today's language it could be said that Bilhah was Rachael's and Jacob's surrogate mother. This was a custom that existed during these early ancient years Sarah the wife of Abraham being barren gave Hagar her handmaid to her husband for the same reason.

- **Genesis 16:2:** Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant (Hagar); it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Leah did the same thing with Zilpah her handmaid.

- **Genesis 30:18:** Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant (Zilpah) to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.

**She may give birth on my behalf:** (v3) (she shall bear upon my knees in KJV) following are the two most common teaching amongst commentators concerning this expression:

- 1 The pregnant mother would sit upon the knees of the mother adopting her child in the time of her labour, and so bring forth as if the adopting mother herself; was bearing the child. Immediately after the birth, the adopting mother would take the child and nurse the baby upon her knees as her own.
- 2 Immediately after the new-born child was born it was placed upon the knees of the father who would accept the infant and acknowledge the child as his own and then the child would be placed upon the knees of the mother who would also accept it acknowledge the infant as her own.

Regardless of which two of these Rachel did matters little since in either scenario the child was legally regarded as being born of Rachel and being her child. Even though such children were only the mothers by legality and reputation and not biologically a married woman during these days would rather have children in this way than have none because children born in this manner would be called her own and considered by others to be her own children. The expression, "That I may also have children by her," also carries the idea that Rachel would be built up by the children she receives by adoption from her handmaid. This of course she was since she by the Hebrews and Jews is esteemed as the mother of Israel. The following verse shows that Rachel followed the example of Sarah regarding her handmaid Hagar and even says the same as Sarah said to her husband Abraham. Sarah said to her husband Abraham:

- **Genesis 16:2:** Go in to my servant Hagar; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.

Rachel said to her husband Jacob:

- **Genesis 30:32:** Go in to my servant Bilhah, so that she may give birth on my behalf, that even I may have children through her.

Sarah adopted Hagar's child Ishmael as her own (at least for thirteen years until Isaac was born), likewise Rachel adopted the children of her handmaid Bilhah and likewise Leah adopted the children of her handmaid Zilpah. This practise could be likened to woman today using a surrogate mother and adopting her baby, the only difference being that today the surrogate mother has the choice of giving her baby away, whereas in the ancient days of Rachel and Leah servants were not their own masters so their work and their fruit, were not their own, but their masters.

- For further details, see Genesis chapter 29 and 30 in Commentary OT (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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