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## **Genesis 30**

(2019)

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## Genesis 30

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### Topics.

- Rachel envied Leah's fruitfulness and demands Jacob gives her children.
- Rachel servant Bilhah by Jacob gives birth to Dan and Naphtali.
- Leah's servant Zilpah by Jacob gives birth to Gad and Asher.
- Rachel allows Leah to lie with Jacob in exchange for Reuben's mandrakes.
- Leah, by Jacob gives birth to Issachar and Zebulun.
- Rachel, by Jacob gives birth to Joseph.
- Jacob asks Laban to send him and his family to his own home and country.
- Speckled and spotted sheep, black lambs and spotted and speckled goats.
- The twelve sons of Jacob.

**FOR INFORMATION:** concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

**The previous chapter:** in chapter twenty-nine Jacob arrived in the land of Haran; saw Rachel Laban's daughter coming to water sheep at a well and helped her; agreed with her father Laban to will work seven years to take Rachel for his wife; Laban deceived him by giving him Leah to wife and not Rachel; Jacob completed Leah's week of marriage; took Rachel as his wife; agreed to work another seven years and Leah gave birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah.

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### GENESIS 30:1-2

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#### Rachel envied Leah and Demands Jacob gives Her Children.

- **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, Reuben, Simeon, Levi and 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.

- 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. (Gen. 16:1-16).

It is possible Jacob never come 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, 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.

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## GENESIS 30:3-6

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### **Rachel servant Bilhah by Jacob gives Birth to Dan.**

- **Genesis 30:3-6:** Then she 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.

Rachel (not Bilhah) named her first son by Bilhah Dan, his name comes from the Hebrew word (*diyyn*) it literally means judge, to rule and by implication to judge (as an umpire); to strive (as at law); to contend and execute judgment.

**Here is my servant Bilhah go in to her:** (v3) Rachel's words, "Give me children, or I shall die," shows that she was extremely distressed because of her barrenness. Her deep anguish drove her to give her handmaid Bilhah to her husband that she would bear a child by her husband through

Bilhah. 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.

- 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. (Gen. 16:2).

Leah did the same thing with Zilpah her handmaid.

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

**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 actually 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 at all because children born in this manner would be 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 with regard to her handmaid Hagar and even says the same as Sarah said to her husband Abraham.

Sarah said to her husband Abraham:

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

Rachel said to her husband Jacob:

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

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. Though there was no express law as yet forbidding taking more than one wife the following verse shows that from the beginning it was not God's intention that a man did:

- The man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup>And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2:23-25).

Even though Rachael and Leah occupied separate dwelling places with their own families which was the common custom during these days where there was a plurality of wives and in regular intervals the husband and father would spend separate time with each family it did not prevent tensions between Rachel and Leah. The fact it was at the persuasion of Leah that Jacob took Zilpah her handmaid to wife highlights the roots of bitterness and the power of jealousy and rivalry between the two sisters. Had Rachel's heart not been influenced by envy and bitterness and jealous passions and had there not been the intense rivalry between the two sisters Rachel and Leah could have had a happy extended family home environment and the brothers and their sister could have enjoyed each other's company.

**Rachel envied her sister:** envy is grieving at the good of another, rather than being joyful and celebrating their blessing. Instead of being happy for a person's success there is jealousy. This attitude will not only rob us of happiness, but is also a sin that is offensive to God and hurtful to ourselves and our neighbours. We must always be careful that this passion of envy does not rise up in our minds and hearts when the Lord is good and blesses our neighbour.

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## GENESIS 30:7-8

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### **Rachel's Servant Bilhah gives Birth to a Second Son Naphtali.**

- **Genesis 30:7-8:** Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.  
<sup>8</sup>Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

Rachel (not Bilhah) named her second son by Bilhah Naphtali, his name comes firstly from the Hebrew words (*Naphtaliy and pathal*) it literally means my wrestling; to twine, to struggle and figuratively to be morally tortuous and show oneself objectionable or distasteful of character.

**With great wrestlings:** (v8) some say that this refers to Rachel's wrestling with God in prayer pleading before the LORD that she would give birth. It is certain that Rachel's barrenness and bitter jealousy toward her sister and the reproach of being childless did drive her to spend much time in prayer. However, verse eight shows that the mighty wrestling's refer to her struggle with her sister Leah therefore it is more likely that it carries the idea that Rachel wrestled within herself with the bitterness, envy and jealousy she had toward her sister because of her bareness.

**I have prevailed:** (v8) does not mean that Rachel had superseded her sister since her sister exceeded her in the number of her children born from her own womb. The previous chapter shows that Leah had given birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah and these all from her own womb and not of her handmaid's as Rachel's were. After giving birth to Judah Leah ceased bearing children (Gen. 29:31-35). The meaning of the words, "I have prevailed," is that she now has her own adopted children by her handmaid Bilah and her husband Jacob, which means that her sister can no longer taunt her for being childless.

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## GENESIS 30:9-11

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### **Leah's servant Zilpah by Jacob gives Birth to Gad.**

- **Genesis 30:9-11:** When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. <sup>10</sup>Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. <sup>11</sup>And Leah said, "Good fortune has come!" so she called his name Gad.

Leah (not Zilpah) names her first adopted son by Zilpah Gad, his name comes firstly from the Hebrew word (*guwd*) it literally means to crowd

upon, (i.e. attack, invade and overcome). After giving birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah Leah ceased bearing children (Gen. 29:31-35), and now follows the pattern of Rachel and gives her handmaid Zilpah to Jacob. Having fulfilled the will of one wife Jacob could hardly deny the will of the other so at Leah's request he consents to take Zilpah to wife (as he had taken Bilhah at Rachel request) and Gad is born.

**Good fortune has come:** (v11) after Gad is born Leah claims, "victory has come.," When Leah gave birth to Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah (Gen. 29:31-35) and to Issachar and Zebulun (Gen. 29:18, 21) all infants born from her own womb she acknowledged that the LORD had blessed her. In contrast to this when her handmaid Zilpah gives birth to Gad and Asher there is no mention of the LORD. This is perhaps because Leah never actually considered God was involved in the births of these two infants, but rather saw herself taking matters into her own hands.

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## GENESIS 30:12-13

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### Leah's Servant Zilpah gives Birth to a Second Son Named Asher.

- **Genesis 30:12-13:** Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. <sup>13</sup>And Leah said, "Happy am I! For women have called me happy" (daughters will call me blessed in KJV) so she called his name Asher.

Leah (not Zilpah) named her second adopted son by Zilpah Asher, his name comes from the Hebrew word (*'ashar*) it literally means to be right and happy and figuratively, to go forward, be honest, prosper, guide, lead and relieve.

**Happy am I, (daughters will call me blessed in KJV):** (v13) Leah gives Zilpah to Jacob and after giving birth to Asher she claims "happy am I," meaning the birth of Asher is an addition to her happiness and will increase her happiness. Her statement, "daughters will call me blessed," means the women in the place where she lived would speak of her as a happy woman, because she had so many children of her own and others by her maid.

- Children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. (Psalm 127:3).
- Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them (children)! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (Psalm 127:5).

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## GENESIS 30:14-15

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### Rachel allows Leah to Lie with Jacob for Reuben's Mandrakes.

- **Genesis 30:14-15:** 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." <sup>15</sup>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."

**Mandrakes: comes from the Hebrew word (*duwday*)** it literally means boiling and to boil it can refer to caldron and a kettle for boiling as seething pots or to a basket. Figuratively it carries the idea of an aphrodisiac as a token of love and to love and a lover, but can also refer to a well-beloved friend, an uncle or father's brother. The fact Reuben found the mandrakes in a field shows that they are a plant (v14-15). They are only mentioned in this chapter and in the following verse:

- 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. (Song 7:13).

In this verse the mandrakes are in the context of the king being captivated by a beautiful woman who he describes as his beloved whose eyes are

like pools in Heshbon; her mouth like the best wine; her thighs rounded like jewels; her belly encircled with lilies and her two breasts like twins of a gazelle. (Song 7:1-13). A mandrake was a common plant that grew all over Palestine and Mesopotamia. Even today it still grows near Jerusalem and in other parts of Palestine. It has a thick upright root that is usually forked and often resembles human figures. Its flowers are purple and bell-shaped and its berries grow to about the size of a small apple and are yellow, and pale orange in colour. Though the fruit has a sweetish taste they are too poisonous to be used as everyday food. The plant contains stimulating narcotic properties and when used in small quantities like opium it excites the nerves and acts as a stimulant. It has been called by the Arabs, the love-apple and Satan's apple or the devils apple, because of its narcotic power to excite voluptuousness (sensuous enjoyment and pleasure). Mandrakes, have also been associated with a variety of superstitious practices throughout history and long been used in magic spells, rituals and pagan traditions and by the ancients was commonly known to be an aphrodisiac. The fruit of the mandrake plant is even to this day believed by some to promote fruitfulness of the womb. It is for this purpose Rachel desired to obtain them from Leah. (v14-15).

**Please give me some of your son's mandrakes:** (v14) up to this point Rachel has given no birth to infants from her own womb, so it is very likely that she believed that the mandrakes had the power to make her fruitful and also thought that Leah's fruitfulness was partly due to her eating small portions of the plant. Rachel was so desperate to have these mandrakes she offers to give her husband to Leah for the night. (From this night Leah conceived and gave birth to Isaac).

**Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband?** (v15) this statement of Leah's implies that Rachel got the greatest share of Jacob's affections and had most of his company; which was very likely since Leah had ceased bearing children and Rachel was the woman Jacob loved. Leah's accusation, "Would you take away my son's mandrakes also? (v15) is not exactly correct since Rachel did not offer to take Leah's mandrakes away from her son, but asked to purchase them from Leah by giving Jacob to lie with her. It is almost certain that Rachel's motivation for making such an offer stemmed from her belief that the mandrakes would help make her fertile and able to fall pregnant next time she laid with her husband. In the agreement the two sisters made with each other it would be safe to say that Leah considered herself well paid for her mandrakes and Rachel considered herself equally rewarded for her purchase of them.

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## GENESIS 30:16-18

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### **Leah, gave Birth to a Fifth Son Name Issachar.**

- **Genesis 30:16-18:** 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. <sup>17</sup>And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. <sup>18</sup>Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.

Leah named her fifth son by Jacob Issachar, his name comes from the two Hebrew words (*Yissa<sup>e</sup>kar and nasa'*) it literally means he will bring a reward and to lift or bear up, accept, bring forth forgive and help. Concerning him Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband." So, she named him Issachar.

**God listened to Leah:** (v17) these words show that Leah spent much time praying before the LORD that He would bless her with many children.

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## GENESIS 30:19-21

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## Leah gave Birth to a Sixth Son named Zebulun.

- **Genesis 30:19-21:** And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. <sup>20</sup>Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honor me, (now will my husband dwell with me in KJV) because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun. <sup>21</sup>Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name Dinah.

Leah's named her sixth son by Jacob Zebulun, his name comes from the Hebrew word (*zabal*) it literally means habitation and carries the idea of inclosing, to reside and dwell with. Concerning him 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 named him Zebulun (Gen. 30:19-20).

**God has endowed me with a good dowry** (v20) the dowry refers to her many children. At Leah's marriage to her husband he had no dowry (worldly wealth) to give her and her father Laban gave her nothing, but one handmaid. Now she praises God for abundantly making it up to her by giving her many sons which are the blessing of the LORD.

- Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. (Psalm 127:3)

The birth of a son is celebrated with demonstrations of joy and the possession of many sons adorns the mother with honour and respectability according to the number of her children. This honour is not limited to the mother only, since the father also rejoices with great joy and places and equal importance upon the birth of a son.

**Now my husband will honor me:** (v20) carries the idea that from this time forward her husband will dwell with her. In the East a woman's value increases with each son she gives birth to. Now that Leah has given Jacob six sons, she feels that he will set his affections toward her and come to her tent far more often and spend much time with her. It is certain that Leah's six sons would have formed a bond of union between Jacob and Leah that would have made it impossible for Jacob to ever forsake or to be cold to her after bearing to him so many sons.

**She bore a daughter and called her name Dinah:** (v21) the inferior value set on a daughter is displayed in this very brief and bare announcement of Dinah's birth. The name Dinah comes from the Hebrew word (*Diy nah*) it literally means justice, to execute and minister judgment. The birth of Dinah and Joseph was after Jacob had completed his fourteen years of service to Laban, it seems that both Dinah and Joseph were born in the same year.

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## GENESIS 30:22-24

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### Rachel by Jacob gives Birth to a Son Named Joseph.

- **Genesis 30:22-24:** Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. <sup>23</sup>She conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." <sup>24</sup>And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

Rachel named her firstborn son by Jacob, Joseph; his name comes from the Hebrew word (*yacaph*) it literally means let him add. It carries the idea of continuing to do a thing, to conceive again, to increase more and more. Concerning him, Rachel said, "God has taken away my reproach." So, she named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

**God remembered Rachel:** (v22) this does not mean that God had forgotten Rachel, but that He heard her prayers and now responded to them. Some see the words as a desire or prayer, (i.e., may the Lord add,

or that the Lord would add). Now that she had given birth to a son she hopes in her heart and prays that God will add to her another son.

**The rivalry between the two sisters:** this competitive spirit and battle between the two sisters to have more children than each other manifest the bitter and intense rivalry that existed between them. The cause of their improper behaviour may have stemmed from the following two desires:

- 1 To be esteemed and honoured for being the mother of many children (especially sons), since women during these ancient days reckoned a family of many children to be a great blessing and a great honour.
- 2 To gain the greater love, affection and care of their husband and his company.

Though both of these are likely, an even greater motivation would be the hope that by having many children they had a better chance of being the mother of the promised seed the Messiah the Christ. Being wives of Jacob, they would have been fully aware of God's promise made to Abraham and to Jacob their husband and as his wives desired to be the mother of the promised Messiah or the mother from whose offspring he would descend. Amongst the faithful of the Old Testament it was the desire of most Jewish women to be the mother of the promised seed Israel's Messiah the Christ so it is possible that this was an underlying desire that drove Jacob's two wives to outdo each other in childbearing.

**NOTE:** it should be mentioned here that neither of these women were driven by any inordinate lust, but by the deep desire to have children. The desire for the company of their husband was not from lust or an amorous desire in them, but for the sake of having many children. This is clearly manifested in them both giving their handmaid to Jacob for the purpose of gaining children or adding more children to those they already had.

**The final and youngest son Benjamin:** in chapter thirty-five we are told that Rachel named her second and last-born son by Jacob Ben-oni (Benjamin) (Gen. 35:16-19). His name comes from the Hebrew word (*ben and yamiyn*) it literally means son of the right hand as the stronger and more resourceful and skillful, especially as a builder of the family name. Concerning him Rachel had great difficulty in giving birth and while in labour and dying she named him Ben-oni, but Jacob his father called him Benjamin. (Gen. 35:16-19). He was the youngest son of Jacob by Rachael. The tribe of Benjamin descended from him and were given their own territory. For a complete list of the twelve sons of Jacob, see the title: "The Twelve Sons of Jacob," (at the end of this document).

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## GENESIS 30:25-28

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### Jacob asks Laban to Send Him and His Family to His Own Country.

- **Genesis 30:25-28:** As soon as Rachel had borne Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own home and country. <sup>26</sup>Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, that I may go, for you know the service that I have given you." <sup>27</sup>But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your sight, I have learned by divination (by experience in KJV) that the LORD has blessed me because of you. <sup>28</sup>Name your wages, and I will give it."

**Divination (by experience in KJV):** comes from the Hebrew word (*nachash*) it literally means to hiss, (i.e. whisper a magic spell). Generally, it carries the following two meanings:

- 1 An enchanter (i.e., charmer and fascinator); one who predicts future things; a diviner (i.e., a psychic, mystic or spiritualist); a soothsayer (i.e., a fortune-teller and clairvoyant) or to one who prophesies (i.e., has visions and revelations of future things and forewarns or foretells them).

2 To learn diligently and by observation or by experience.

**I have learned by divination (by experience in KJV):** (v27) since it is Laban saying I have learned by divination it is possible that it means he had learned by omens and rituals, especially since he was an idol worshipper. We know this for we read in the following chapter of Laban being very angry because Rachel his daughter had stolen his household gods and he went to great trouble searching Rachel's and Leah's tents and the tents of their two female servants to find them. (Gen. 31:30-35). However, in this context it is far more likely that it means that he had learned by experience and observation since Jacob had spent fourteen years serving him and during those years Laban would have seen that God had abundantly blessed the work of his hands and multiplied the livestock that he shepherded. Though Laban did worship idols he recognised that Jacob's God was the supreme God and rightly ascribed the good things he had gained through Jacob's loyal service to the God that Jacob worshipped. He credited the God of Abraham as the giver of his good things and not his idols. During these early ancient years, it was not uncommon for those who had been raised under the teachings of the true God to add other gods to their faith. The nation of Israel and their kings did this many times throughout their Old Testament history.

**Send me away:** (v27) Jacob could not ask for his dismissal until the two lots of seven years of service for Rachel were completed which means the earliest, he could even begin to think of departing from Laban would be sometime in the fifteenth year of his dwelling with him. After serving Laban for so long for Rachel, Jacob now wishes to return home with his wives and children which he could not do before now. Laban's motivation for not wanting Jacob to leave did not stem from a warm affection toward Jacob and his daughters, but from the loss his own interests would suffer. He was fully aware that his stock had greatly increased because of Jacob's management and God's blessing on him. To keep Jacob with him he tells him to name his wages and he will pay it to him. (v28)

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## GENESIS 30:29-33

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### **Speckled and Spotted Sheep, Black Lambs, and Speckled Goats.**

- **Genesis 30:29-33:** Jacob said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you, and how your livestock (cattle in KJV) has fared with me. <sup>30</sup>For you had little before I came, and it has increased abundantly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned. But now when shall I provide for my own household also?" <sup>31</sup>He said, "What shall I give you?" Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and keep it: <sup>32</sup>let me pass through all your flock today, removing from it every speckled and spotted sheep (cattle in KJV) and every black lamb (brown cattle in KJV), and the spotted and speckled among the goats, and they shall be my wages (be my hire in KJV). <sup>33</sup>So my honesty (righteousness in KJV) will answer for me later, when you come to look into my wages with you. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs (sheep in KJV), if found with me, shall be counted stolen."

**Speckled and spotted:** means that black sheep had white spots (or large patches) and white sheep had black spots (or large patches) on their coats. Jacob reminds Laban that he had very little before he began working for him and that his livestock had abundantly increased because of his honest service to him. He then points out to him that though he had grown wealthy from Jacob's service, Jacob himself had nothing to support his family when he departs. It appears that Laban only paid Jacob enough to support his family and nothing more. It is most likely Laban gave him only food and shelter for his wages. Laban not wanting Jacob to leave offers to pay him whatever he wants for wages, but Jacob turns down his offer. This is a common practice even today, many bosses will pay miserly wages to a skilled and talented staff manager who they know is worth a whole lot more to their company, but only offer to pay the extra when the person chooses to leave. Though Jacob had honestly and loyally served

Laban, Laban had in the past cheated him and changed his wages ten times. (Gen. 31:6-7). This most likely is why Jacob turned down his offer and no doubt is also why the angel of God had shown him in a dream sheep and goats breeding and giving birth to speckled, spotted and mottled lambs and calves (Gen. 31:10-12). Rather than take wages, Jacob suggest to Laban that for wages he would serve him again and at the end of this period (6 years) he would take the following livestock as his own:

- Every speckled and spotted sheep.
- Every speckled and spotted cattle.
- Every black lamb.
- Every brown cattle.
- Every spotted and speckled goat.

Every sheep, goat and cattle that is not speckled and spotted and every lamb that is not black and every cattle that is not brown would remain Laban's property. Laban quickly sees that such a suggestion is in his favour and therefore agrees to the proposal. It appears that Jacob worked another six years for Laban, before departing from him to Haran (Genesis 31:41).

**So my honesty will answer for me later:** (v33) Jacobs integrity was such that during his fourteen years of working for Rachel in the hot sun and cold nights he never ate of Laban's flocks and what was torn by wild beasts or stolen he bore the loss of it himself (Gen. 31:38-55). He treasured a good reputation (it seems that he had learned that lies and description only led to heartache). This is why he tells Laban, when he returns at the end of Jacob's service to him to check out what animals Jacob had set aside for his wages, that should he find any animals amongst them that are not speckled and spotted among the goats and not black among the lambs (sheep in KJV) he could count them as being stolen which means Jacob would be treated as a thief and judged and punished accordingly. Jacob desired to make a clear bargain so that they would avoid any disputes that could arise. If he had agreed with Laban to take a certain number of livestock each year and some of the flock died, or got lost, or was stolen or still born etc., there would be room to debate whether the still born or missing livestock, were of Jacob's or Laban's flock. By stating he would only take the speckled, spotted and black stock all possible disputes were prevented. In the East sheep are generally white and goats black or brown which means according to the natural laws of nature this proposal seems to be very strange on Jacob's part since it is far more in Laban's favour and to his advantage than it is Jacobs. However, the fact an angel came to Jacob in a dream shows that he knew exactly what he was doing. (Gen. 31:10). The expression, "My honesty (righteousness in KJV) will answer for me," means my integrity and loyalty will be clearly seen. The colour of the animal will determine at once whose animal is whose.

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## GENESIS 30:34-36

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### Laban Sets Three Days' Between Him and Jacob.

- **Genesis 30:34-36:** Laban said, "Good! Let it be as you have said." <sup>35</sup>But that day Laban removed the male goats that were striped (ringstraked in KJV) and spotted, and all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had white on it, and every lamb that was black (brown in KJV), and put them in charge of his sons. <sup>36</sup>And he set a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob pastured the rest of Laban's flock.

**Ringstraked (stripped in the ESB):** comes from the Hebrew word (*`aqod*) it literally means striped with bands.

The King James Bible uses the word ringstraked while the English Standard Bible uses the word stripped, both of these words carry the same idea. It simply means that the animal has strips on its coat (i.e., long thin rectangular marks) of different colours to the main colour of the animal. The word speckled comes from the Hebrew word *naqod*) meaning spotted and the word spotted comes from the Hebrew word (*tala'*), meaning spotted with different colours while the word, mottled (grised in KJV) comes from the Hebrew word (*barod*), it also means spotted. This shows that the words ringstraked, speckled, spotted, mottled and grised all carry a similar idea which is that the animal would have various size patches and shapes of different colours upon their coats, some of these patch's would appear spotted in shape (i.e., circular) while others would appear more like strips on its coat (i.e., long thin rectangular marks) of different colours to the main colour of the animal. Laban agrees to Jacob's proposal and immediately has his sons remove all the male and female speckled and spotted, goats and every black lamb so that only the pure animals remained with Jacob. Laban is again acting from his selfishness and greedy nature, by doing this he is doing everything in his power to make sure he has the greatest chance of multiplying his livestock and Jacob has the least.

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## GENESIS 30:37-39

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### Sheep Bring forth Striped, Speckled and Spotted Sheep.

- **Genesis 30:37-39:** Then Jacob took fresh sticks of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white streaks in them, exposing the white of the sticks. <sup>38</sup>He set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks in the troughs, that is, the watering places, where the flocks came to drink. And since they bred when they came to drink, <sup>39</sup>the flocks bred in front of the sticks and so the flocks brought forth striped (ringstraked in KJV), speckled, and spotted.

The green poplar tree, the hazel tree and the chestnut tree were common trees in Palestine. Jacob used sticks from these trees either, because they were close at hand or because he saw them in the dream that he had (Gen. 31:10). Jacob peeled strips of bark of the sticks so that the white sap appeared and then placed them in front of the water troughs that the flocks drank from and in front of them while they were breeding. In some mystical way this resulted in the pure coloured animals giving birth to striped, speckled and spotted livestock. Obviously if any other shepherd tried this today or in Jacob's day it would not have any effect on the animals. The only reason this worked for Jacob was because God was rewarding Jacob for his good and honest service to Laban over the many years (Gen. 31:38-42) and punishing Laban for his greed and the unjust way he had treated Jacob. (Gen. 31:9).

**Jacob peeled white streaks in the sticks:** (v37) in the following chapter Jacob told Rachel and Leah:

- During the breeding season of the flock he lifted up his eyes and saw in a dream that the goats that mated with the flock were striped (ringstraked in KJV), spotted, and mottled.  
<sup>11</sup>Then the angel of God said to him in the dream, "Jacob," and he said, "Here I am!"  
<sup>12</sup>And he said, "Lift up your eyes and see, all the goats that mate with the flock are striped (ringstraked in KJV), spotted, and mottled, for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you." (Gen. 31:10-12).

This shows that concerning the sticks and peeling them it is very likely that Jacob was not acting from his own wisdom, but had either been told by the same angel of God (perhaps in a similar dream) or was being influenced by the Spirit of God to set the sticks that he had peeled in front of the flocks.

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## GENESIS 30:40-43

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## Jacob Increased with Large Flocks, Servants Camels and Donkeys.

- **Genesis 30:40-43:** And Jacob separated the lambs and set the faces of the flocks toward the striped (ringstraked in KJV) and all the black (brown in KJV) in the flock of Laban. He put his own droves apart and did not put them with Laban's flock (cattle in KJV).  
<sup>41</sup>Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks in the troughs before the eyes of the flock, that they might breed among the sticks, <sup>42</sup>but for the feebler of the flock he would not lay them there. So the feebler would be Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's. <sup>43</sup>Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

**Jacob's flock:** when the strongest of the flock were breeding, Jacob would lay the sticks before their eyes in their water troughs so that they would be born speckled and spotted and in this way Jacob's flock would consist of the stronger stock.

**Laban's flock:** when the weakest of the flock were breeding, Jacob would remove the sticks from the water troughs so that they would be born of a pure colour and in this way Laban's flock would consist of the feebler stock. In this manner and over time Jacob's flocks greatly increased and as a result of this so too did his female and male servants and his camels and donkeys. One of the reasons for this would be that the larger the flocks of cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys the greater the number of servants the manager of the household needs to oversee them. Laban could not complain of Jacob's great success since Jacob took nothing more than was agreed that he should have and Laban also benefitted by his services. It is thought by some that the path Jacob took after this agreement was a work of his own wisdom and management. There is, no doubt certain actions were the work of Jacob, but it is evident from the next chapter (Gen. 31:5-13) that there was something miraculous involved and that the means he had employed had been suggested by an angel of God. Jacob's success was a manifestation of God's power and favour toward him, since his success could only come about if God was by His Spirit and power working upon the livestock to produce speckled and spotted animals.

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## THE TWELVE SONS OF JACOB

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### Rachel's sons born to her by Bilhah

**Dan:** (Gen. 30:5) Rachel (not Bilhah) named her first born son by her handmaid Bilhah Dan. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*diyn*), it literally means judge, to rule and by implication to judge (as an umpire); to strive (as at law) and to contend and execute judgment. Concerning him Rachael said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son." (Gen.30:5-6). His descendants became the tribe of Judah and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Naphtali:** (Gen. 30:7) Rachel (not Bilhah) named her second son by her handmaid Bilhah Naphtali. His name comes from the two Hebrew words (*Naphtaliy/pathal*), it literally means, my wrestling, to twine, to struggle and figuratively to be morally tortuous and show oneself objectionable or distasteful of character. Concerning him Rachael said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed." (Gen.30:7-8). His descendants became the tribe of Naphtali and colonized a place in Palestine.

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## LEAH'S SONS BORN TO HER BY ZILPAH

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**Gad:** (Gen. 30:10-11). Leah (not Zilpah) named her first born son by her handmaid Zilpah Gad. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*guwd*), it literally means to crowd upon, (i.e. attack, invade, overcome). Concerning him Leah said, "Good fortune has come!" His descendants became the tribe of Gad and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Asher:** (Gen. 30:12-13) Leah (not Zilpah) named her second born son by her handmaid Zilpah Asher. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*'ashar*), it literally means to be right and happy and figuratively, to go forward, be honest, prosper, guide, lead and relieve. Concerning him Leah said, "Happy am I for women have called me happy." His descendants became the tribe of Asher and colonized a place in Palestine.

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## LEAH'S SONS BORN TO HER BY JACOB

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**Reuben:** (Gen. 29:32) Leah named her first born son by Jacob Reuben. His name comes his name comes firstly from the Hebrew word (*Re'uwben*), it literally means to see and joyfully look on one another and secondly, from the Hebrew word (*banah*) meaning a son (as a builder of the family name). Concerning him Leah said "Because the LORD has looked upon my affliction, for now my husband will love me." His descendants became the tribe of Reuben and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Simeon:** (Gen. 29:33) Leah named her second born son by Jacob Simeon. His name comes firstly, from the Hebrew word (*Shim`own*) which literally means hearing and secondly from the word (*shama*) which means to hear intelligently, to give ear and listen (often with diligently, discernment, attention and obedience). Concerning him Leah said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also." His descendants became the tribe of Simeon and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Levi:** (Gen. 29:34) Leah named her third born son by Jacob Levi. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*lavah*), it literally means to twine and by implication to unite, to lend and to borrow (as a form of obligation) or to join self to another by lending or borrowing. Concerning him Leah said, "Now this time my husband will be attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." His descendants became the tribe of Levi and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Judah:** (Gen. 29:33) Leah named her fourth born son by Jacob Judah. His name comes firstly, from the Hebrew word (*Yehuwdah*) which literally means celebrated and secondly from the word (*yadah*) which means to physically use or hold out the hand, especially to revere or worship and praise (with extended hands). It carries the idea of making confession and casting out. Concerning him Leah said, "This time I will praise the LORD." After the birth of Judah, she ceased bearing. It is the name of five Israelites. The descendants of Judah by Jacob became the tribe of Judah and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Issachar:** (Gen. 30:17-18) Leah named her fifth born son by Jacob Issachar. His name comes from the two Hebrew words (*Yissa<sup>e</sup>kar and nasa'*), it literally means he will bring a reward; to lift or bear up; to accept; to bring forth; to forgive and to help. Concerning him Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my servant to my husband." His descendants became the tribe of Issachar and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Zebulun:** (Gen. 30:19-20) Leah named her sixth born son by Jacob Zebulun. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*zabal*), it literally means habitation and carries the idea of inclosing and to reside and dwell with. Concerning him Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons." His descendants became the tribe of Zebulun and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Dinah:** (Gen. 30:21) Leah named her daughter by Jacob Dinah. Her name comes from the Hebrew word (*diyn*), it literally means justice and carries the idea of judgment and sentence and by implication strife.

**Joseph:** (Gen. 30:22-24) Rachel named her first born son by Jacob Joseph. His name comes from the Hebrew word (*yacaph*), it literally means, let him add and adding, it carries the idea of continuing to do a thing, to conceive again, to increase more and more. Concerning him, Rachel said, "God has taken away my reproach." So she named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!" It is also the name of six other Israelites. The descendants of Joseph by Jacob became the tribe of Joseph and colonized a place in Palestine.

**Benjamin:** (Gen. 35:16-19) Rachel named her second and last-born son by Jacob Benjamin. His name comes from the two Hebrew words (*ben and yamiyn*), it literally means son of (the) right hand as the stronger and more resourceful and skillful, especially as a builder of the family name.

Concerning him Rachel had great difficulty in giving birth and while in labour and dying she named him Ben-oni, but Jacob his father called him Benjamin. (Gen. 35:16-19). He was the youngest son of Jacob by Rachael; his descendants became the tribe of Benjamin and colonized a place in Palestine.

Now the sons of Jacob were twelve (Gen. 35:22)

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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.*