

SALT Church

Genesis 30

“Birth Wars”

July 22, 2026

“In the Beginning”

Recap:

- Jacob has his vision of the ladder that stretches from earth to heaven with the angels traveling back and forth doing the work of the Lord.
- In that moment the Lord blesses him with the same blessing that He gave Abraham and Isaac.
- Jacob responds to the Lords blessing with a conditional vow that basically says that he will follow the Lords as long as the Lord blesses him.
- Jacob arrives in Haran to find his cousin Rachael watering her fathers sheep.
- He is excited and in a moment of emption he kisses her and begins to cry.
- She runs home to tell her father that Rebecca’s son has come for a visit and Laban responds with an invitation to stay in his home.
- This quickly turns into a love story as Jacob has eyes for Rachael.
- Laban ask for an offer for his daughters hand in marriage and Jacob agrees to work 7 years for her.

- 7 years pass, and the day comes for the wedding feast but Jacob apparently gets so drunk that he does not realize that Laban swapped daughters and, in the morning, Jacob finds out that he married Leah.
- This sets in motion another 7 years of work for Jacobs beloved Rachael.
- But during that 7 year period there are a lot of babies made and none of them are made with Rachael and this is where we pick up tonight.

Genesis 29:31-35

31 When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless.

- Isn't that an interesting statement.
 - God enabled her to conceive.
 - But God did not allow Rachael to conceive.
- The Lords saw that Leah was unloved.
 - Was Rachael rubbing it in her face?
 - There is so much that we just do not know.
 - It wouldn't surprise me if she was because she must have been locked up during Leah's wedding week.
 - All we know with certainty is that God had decided to give Leah children and had not decided (yet) to give Rachael children.

32 Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now."

- Can you hear the sadness and pain of her existence?

- She had been a part of the decision to deceive Jacob and now she was having to lie in the bed that she had made. (Alone, most of the time)
 - Reuben name means “Look a son”
 - Keep in mind that the only reason that she and Jacob are still in Haran is due to the fact that he is working off his debt for Rachael. (another 7 years)

33 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.” So she named him Simeon.

- Simeon means “God hears”
 - Clearly there is some loving going on.
 - It is safe to say she is not loved as much as Rachael.

(Side note) can you imagine the logistics of all of this?

- This is a mess
- Two women that are sisters sharing the same man!
 - Life is hard enough without adding the stress of two wives that are sisters.
 - But no worries these two women have a plan that is going to make things better.
 - The plan is to add more women to the bedroom!
 - Oh my!

34 Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Now at last my husband will become attached to

me, because I have borne him three sons.” So he was named Levi.

- Levi means “attachment”

- (Just a thought)

- These boys would never forget the pain of their mother because every time their names were called, they would be reminded.
- This is going to be part of the motivations of the boys as they get older.
- I can think of few things that stir up more powerful emotions in a young man than one that loves his abused mother.

We continue:

³⁵She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

- Judah mean praise.

- The phrase, “then she stopped having children” should be followed up with “for now.”
 - She will have two more before she is done.

This whole thing is a mess!

- What do we see clearly in all of this?
 - That the chosen people of God still live with the consequences of sin but they still remain His chosen people.

- That God's grace in this moment should not be confused with His endorsement of sinful behavior.
 - From the very beginning God had said 1 woman for 1 man and the 2 shall become 1.
 - Abraham made this same mistake with 2 women and later with more.
 - **Isaac did not**
 - Esau did with 3 women
 - Jacob topped them all with 4 women and yet he is known as Israel.
 - He was the recipient of God's grace, mercy, and blessing.

There is more deception to come.

- This is what happens when Gods people refuse to listen to Him
- When they refuse to believe in the promises that He has made to them.
 - Jacob has more to learn and the fallout from this mess will be passed down to the next generation.
 - Lots of people will die but, in the end, God will get the glory and Jacob will become Israel.
 - And Israel will have 12 tribes.

Genesis 30

¹When Rachel saw that she wasn't having any children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. She pleaded with Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!"

- Moses is quick to point out that Rachael pleaded with Jacob not the Lord.
 - I wonder if she thought that Jacob wasn't asking the Lord for children with her?

² Then Jacob became furious with Rachel. "Am I God?" he asked. "He's the one who has kept you from having children!"

- Jacob speaks the truth here.
 - God had opened Leah's womb when she was unloved.
 - Leah was sad and desperate.
 - Rachael was very much loved and irrational.

³ Then Rachel told him, "Take my maid, Bilhah, and sleep with her. She will bear children for me, and through her I can have a family, too."

- Sounds like a page out of Sarah's book doesn't it.
 - Surly Jacob had told her about Hager and Ishmael.
 - In Exodus 20 we are told that the sins of a father and be passed down to the third and forth generations.
 - Sexual sins are powerful and have devastating consequences.
- So, Jacob agrees
 - This is clearly a different time and place.
 - I am sympathetic to Jacobs position.
 - He didn't ask for two wives, especially two wives that are sisters.

- Now, the wife he truly loves says, “take my servant so that she can bear children for me.”
 - Keep in mind that the Word of God would not be written for another 500 years.
 - And Abraham did it.

⁴So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her. ⁵Bilhah became pregnant and presented him with a son.

- I had a friend at the fire department say to me “I am trying to get my girlfriend pregnant.” I asked him why and he said “I think it will make me calm down.”
 - I remember telling him that “That is the dumbest idea I have ever heard of!”
 - Jacob sleeping with any woman that is not his wife is a dumb idea!
 - But it happened and it created even more problems.

⁶Rachel named him Dan, for she said, “God has vindicated me! He has heard my request and given me a son.”

- Dan means “He judged or He vindicated”
 - Did you notice that Rachael named the boy and not Bilhah.
 - Thus Rachael and Leah enter into the birth wars!
 - It doesn’t stop here as more babies will be born and another woman will be added.
 - What a mess!

⁷Then Bilhah became pregnant again and gave Jacob a second son. ⁸Rachel named him Naphtali, for she said, “I have struggled hard with my sister, and I’m winning!”

- Naphtali means “my struggle or my wrestle”
 - I have no idea why she would have thought that she was winning.
 - As I said before, these boys will grow up remembering what their mothers went through and how their father did nothing to calm the situation.

⁹Meanwhile, Leah realized that she wasn’t getting pregnant anymore, so she took her servant, Zilpah, and gave her to Jacob as a wife.

- What does this say about the hearts of these two women?
 - Leah has given Jacob 4 sons and Bilhah only 2 why would she think that she needed to do anything?
 - But lets not forget Jacob in all of this, he is going to pull off 13 children in approximately 7 years.

¹⁰Soon Zilpah presented him with a son. ¹¹Leah named him Gad, for she said, “How fortunate I am!” ¹²Then Zilpah gave Jacob a second son. ¹³And Leah named him Asher, for she said, “What joy is mine! Now the other women will celebrate with me.”

- Again notice that Leah is naming these boys
 - Gad means “good fortune”
 - Asher means “happy”

- ***“Now the other women will celebrate with me.”***
 - How sad Leah’s life must have been for she is always wanting the approval of someone else.

Now things get a little worse:

¹⁴ One day during the wheat harvest, Reuben found some mandrakes growing in a field and brought them to his mother, Leah. Rachel begged Leah, “Please give me some of your son’s mandrakes.”

- What’s the big deal about mandrakes?
- Mandrakes are mentioned in The Song of Solomon chapter 7:13
 - They were also called “love apples”
 - They were believed to increase sexual desire and to open the womb.
 - With this information we can see why Moses would have brought it up.
 - Rachael is desperate and willing to do anything to have a child.
 - So she begs...

¹⁵ But Leah angrily replied, “Wasn’t it enough that you stole my husband? Now will you steal my son’s mandrakes, too?”

- We need to hit the pause button here
 - Leah stole Rachael’s husband
 - She is the one who pretended to be Rachael on Rachael’s wedding night.

- Sin will do that to you, if we are not careful the truth will be replaced with a lie and soon it will be believed as if it were truth.

Rachel answered, “I will let Jacob sleep with you tonight if you give me some of the mandrakes.”

- It sounds like Rachael had placed a hold on Jacobs contact with Leah
- My guess is so that she couldn’t get pregnant again
 - And apparently it had been working
 - But desperate people do desperate things

¹⁶So that evening, as Jacob was coming home from the fields, Leah went out to meet him. “You must come and sleep with me tonight!” she said. “I have paid for you with some mandrakes that my son found.” So that night he slept with Leah.

- How do you respond to this?
 - Oh, okay let me call my wife and tell her I’ll be working late?

¹⁷And God answered Leah’s prayers.

- Don’t miss that sentence.
 - It appears that Leah has been praying for a while.

She became pregnant again and gave birth to a fifth son for Jacob.

- One thing is for certain, Leah does not need any love apples!

18 She named him Issachar, for she said, “God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband as a wife.”

- Issachar means “reward or wages”
 - Think about that name “wages”
 - She had bought her time with Jacob with the wages of the love apples.
 - It feels like it is a dig at her sister.
 - It will become a dig every time she says his name.

19 Then Leah became pregnant again and gave birth to a sixth son for Jacob. 20 She named him Zebulun, for she said, “God has given me a good reward.

- Zebulun means “honor” which is rather upbeat for this group.

Now my husband will treat me with respect, for I have given him six sons.” 21 Later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.

- Dinah means “vindicated judgment”
 - Leah gives Jacob 7 children
 - 6 boys and 1 girl
 - I would have to agree that the unloved Leah has been vindicated.

22 Then God remembered Rachel’s plight and answered her prayers by enabling her to have children.

- Three years had passed since the whole “love apple” mess.
- Rachel prays instead of looking for some sensual fruit.

- And God remembers Rachel
 - It is God who opened her womb
 - Don't miss the fact that both Leah and Rachael had to be at the very end of their own ideas and remedies before God answers their prayers.
 - That is a very important lesson for all of us to learn.

²³She became pregnant and gave birth to a son. “God has removed my disgrace,” she said. ²⁴And she named him Joseph, for she said, “May the Lord add yet another son to my family.”

- Joseph means “may He add”
 - Grateful Rachel thanks the Lord for what He has done and hopes for another child that will come but the next child will come at a great price.

Final thoughts as we close:

- Moses writes this book approximately 500 years after these events take place.
- Can you imagine reading or hearing someone read these events as you discover your family lineage.
 - Imagine hearing about God's grace and mercy over this family mess as somehow, He kept His covenant promise even though the family He loved was so messed up.
 - They, like us, needed a savior
 - A King that would rescue them from their worst enemy (Their selves).

That king was born and many of you know His birth story recorded in Luke 2.

- But I want to take you to an event that occurred just after Jesus' birth when Mary and Joseph were headed to the temple to make an offering.

Luke 2:25-32

²⁵ And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel."

Later this same Jesus would quote Isaiah as He began His public ministry
Luke 4:18-19

***⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me***

*To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”
²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant
and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue
were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this
Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*