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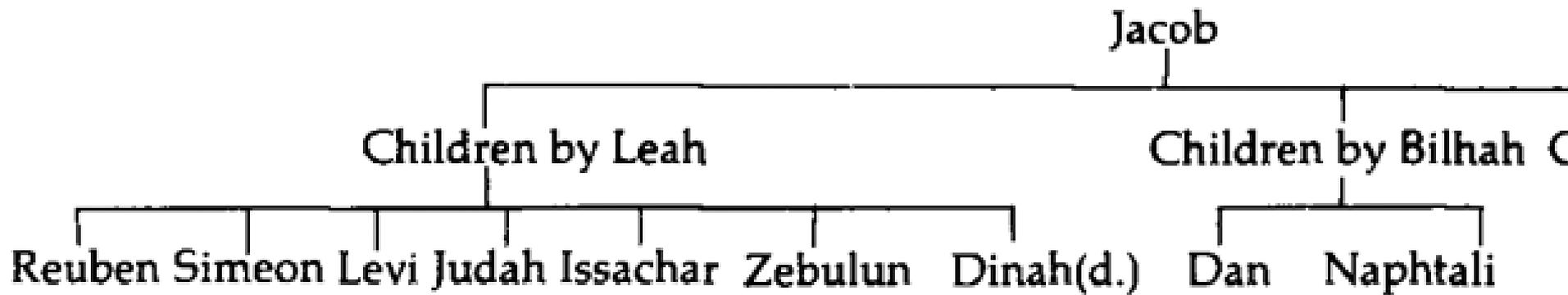
An open book is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with small, dense text, likely a Bible. The book is set against a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

# **The Expansion of the Promised Seed**

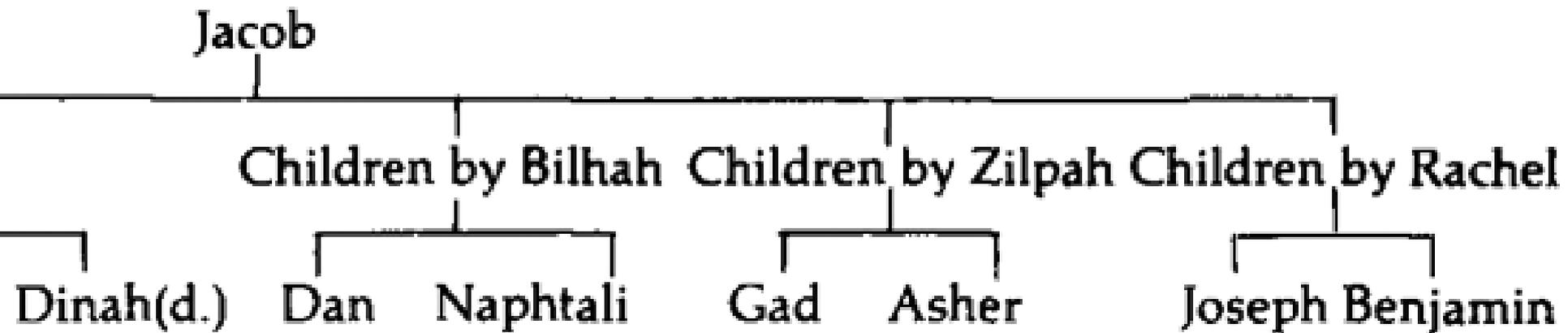
## **Trouble in the House**

Scripture text: **Genesis Ch 29:31-  
30:24**

# Jacob's Family



d. = daughter. All others are sons.



*The expansion of the promised seed in the births of the tribal ancestors (29:31–30:24)*

**The desire for affectionate approval often leads down dangerous paths.** The contest of childbearing between Rachel and Leah shows just such a struggle within a family.

**The story is about the craving of human beings for love and recognition, and the price of thwarting it.**

**Genesis 29:31-35** When the LORD saw that **Leah was hated, he opened her womb**, but Rachel was barren. 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.**" 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. 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. 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.

In his family relationships **Jacob still sowed some bitter seeds**. He was cool to Leah, his unwanted wife; God, as well as Leah, was aware of it.

Rachel, like Sarah and Rebekah before her, was barren.

**Genesis 16:1** Now **Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children**. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar.

**Genesis 25:21** And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, **because she was barren**. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Leah's first four sons were born in rapid succession; and this must be contrasted with the long waits of the earlier fathers. **The story of these births is sad**, but in them, as in the chapter as a whole, **God is recognized as the One who gives life in spite of human efforts.**

Leah named her firstborn **Reuben** (*re'ûbēn*), *indicating that the Lord had seen her misery* (*rā'âh be'ōnyî*).

Another wordplay joins it: Now at last my husband will become attached to (ye'ěhāḇanî) me. This naming showed **her hope but also her consolation and faith.**

Jacob never saw her affliction, **but God did** (cf. "Beer Lahai Roi," lit., "the well of the living One **who sees me,**" 16:14; 24:62; 25:11).

**Genesis 16:13-14** So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, "**You are a God of seeing,**" for she said, "**Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.**" Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

**Simeon** was so named because the Lord heard (šāma‘) that Leah was not loved. “**God heard**” was her testimony in faith to His provision (cf. “Ishmael,” which means “God hears,” 16:15).

**Levi** was named for **her hope** that her husband would become attached (yillāweh) to her, but it was not to be.

**Judah** was her **consolation**; she would be **satisfied to praise** (’ôḏeh) the Lord, for Judah means “let Him be praised.” Leah exhibited **genuine faith during her great affliction.**

**Genesis 30:4-8** So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. 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's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "**With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and have prevailed.**" So she called his name **Naphtali.**

**Judges 13:2 -5** There was a certain man of Zorah, of the tribe of the Danites, whose name was Manoah. And his wife was barren and had no children. And **the angel of the LORD** appeared to the woman and said to her, "Behold, you are barren and have not borne children, but **you shall conceive and bear a son**. Therefore be careful and drink no wine or strong drink, and eat nothing unclean, for behold, you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor shall come upon his head, **for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb, and he shall begin to save Israel from the hand of the Philistines.**"

**Judges 13:23-24** But his wife said to him, "If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a grain offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these." And **the woman bore a son and called his name Samson.** And the young man grew, and the LORD blessed him.

**Genesis 49:16-17** "Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that his rider falls backward.

**Rachel's sons through Bilhah do not reflect the faith Leah had. Rachel felt wronged over her barrenness. Her effort to have children through her maidservant reflects Sarah's similar attempt with Hagar (Genesis 16:1–4).**

**The names of the two sons born to Bilhah reflected Rachel's bitter struggle and feeling of victory. The name Dan is explained by the word dānannî, God has vindicated me, that is, He now had corrected Rachel's wrong, her barrenness. The name Naphtali reflected her great struggle (naptûlê) which, she said, "I fought" (niptaltî) with my sister (30:8).**

**Genesis 16:1-4** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. 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. 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. And **he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.**

**Genesis 30:1-4** When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "**Give me children, or I shall die!**" 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?**" 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.**" So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.

**Rachel envied.** Envy and jealousy are most tormenting passions to the breast which harbors them, vexatious to all around, and introductory to much impatience and ungodliness. **‘Who is able to stand before envy?’**

**Proverb 14:30** A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but **envy makes the bones rot.**

**1 Corinthians 3:1-3** But I, brothers, **could not address you as spiritual people**, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For **while there is jealousy and strife among you**, are you not of the flesh and **behaving only in a human way?**

**James 3:14** But if you have **bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts**, do not boast and be false to the truth.

**2 Corinthians 7:8-10** For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it--though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but **because you were grieved into repenting.** For **you felt a godly grief,** so that you suffered no loss through us. **For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret,** whereas worldly grief produces death.

**Leah responded** by offering Jacob her maidservant Zilpah, to whom Gad (fortune) and Asher (“blessing”) were born. **Leah saw that with God’s help she was prospering.**

**Genesis 30:10-13** Then Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, "**Good fortune has come!**" so she called his name **Gad**. Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. And Leah said, "**Happy am I!** For women have called me happy." So she called his name **Asher**.

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, found some mandrake plants, *supposedly aphrodisiacs*, and Rachel felt they would work for her (vv. 14–15). Thus Leah hired Jacob with the plants and had a son Issachar.

**Issachar** is explained by śekartîkā (“**my hire**,” kjv). The name of Leah's sixth son.... **Zebulun**, has the double significance of dowry or “**gift**” as well as “**honor**”; Leah said God gave her Zebulun as a gift and **her husband would treat her with honor**. Thus **Leah's hopes never left her**. Then Dinah, a daughter, was born to her.

**Genesis 30:15-16** 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." 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.

**The mandrake:** These were brought her in the wheat harvest, which in Galilee is in the month of May, about this time, and the mandrake was now in fruit.' The Abbe Mariti describes it as growing '**low like a lettuce, to which its leaves have a great resemblance, except that they have a dark green color.** The flowers are purple, and the root is for the most part forked. **The fruit, when ripe in the beginning of May, is of the size and color of a small apple, exceedingly ruddy, and of a most agreeable odor.**

[The Treasury of Scripture knowledge \(Vol. 1, p. 21\). London: Samuel Bagster and Sons.](#)

**Finally Rachel gave birth to Joseph (yô<sup>h</sup>sēp̄) but not by the mandrakes. This shows that births are given by God, not manipulated by people.**

Joseph's name, like Zebulun's, had a double meaning. She said, **God has taken away ('āsap̄) my disgrace; and she prayed that He would add (yō<sup>h</sup>sēp̄) another son.**

Finally Rachel was jubilant, looking in faith for a second child from God.

**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. And **God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.** Leah said, "**God has given me my wages** because I gave my servant to my husband." So she **called his name Issachar.**

**Genesis 30:19-21** And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a **sixth son**. 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**. Afterward she bore a daughter and called her name **Dinah**.

**Dinah (di'-na) = Judged; i.e., vindicated; justice; she that is judged.**

*The exhaustive dictionary of Bible names*

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

**Be fruitful and multiply,**' was the blessing of God: barrenness therefore was reckoned a reproach. The intense desire of having children, observable among the Jewish women, arose not only from this reproach of barrenness, but **from the hope of being the mother of the promised seed, and Him in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.**

**Genesis 29:31** When the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.

**Psalm 113:9** He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!

**Psalm 127:3-5** Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. **Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!** He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

**Isaiah 4:1** And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, **only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach.**"

**Luke 1:24-25** After these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept herself hidden, saying, "**Thus the Lord has done for me in the days when he looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.**"

Certainly the passage shows how God prospered Jacob and **started to make from him a great nation.** All Israelites could thus look back and see their ancestry in Jacob and in the conflict of the women. As brothers the sons of Jacob, who became “**Israel,**” were not to become envious like their mothers.

To Israel these narratives were more than interesting little stories. The rivalry that appears here explains much of the tribal rivalry that followed. But Genesis is clear: **God chose the despised mother,** Leah, and exalted her to be the first mother. The kingly tribe of **Judah** and the priestly tribe of **Levi** trace back to her, **in spite** of Jacob’s love for Rachel and her son Joseph.