

## Rachel Gave her Handmaid to Jacob

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the pain and hurt that a wife feels when she feels that she is unloved. We saw that Leah experienced that pain from Jacob for many years. In this topic, we will see what Rachel did because of the fact that she did not have any children.

We saw in our last topic that Leah felt very sad because she was not loved by Jacob. However, Rachel became upset because her sister was having children and the Lord had not given her any children. Genesis 30:1-2 says, “Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die!’ And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, ‘Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?’” Leah had been given four children which meant that Rachel had seen several years pass by and the Lord had not given her any children. As we mentioned in the previous topic, children, especially one or more sons, were very important to the women of that day.

As the years went by, we see that Rachel envied Leah because she had given birth to four sons. The word translated “envied” means *jealousy, envy or zealous and speaks of a very strong emotion*. It can speak of the strong feeling that one has because someone else has something the first person desperately wants. Rachel envied her sister because her sister had four sons and she desperately wanted at least one son, but she did not have any children. This feeling within her became so strong that Rachel could no longer keep quiet. However, she could not say anything to her sister because Jacob loved her and it was obvious to both sisters that he did not have that same love for Leah. As a result, Rachel expressed her envy to Jacob and said, “Give me children, or else I die!” Here, we see that she blamed Jacob for her lack of sons.

Jacob became angry when Rachel blamed him for not giving her any sons and he answered back, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” Here, we again see that one of the consequences of wrong choices is that we begin to blame the other person. That began back in the Garden of Eden as soon as Adam and Eve sinned. Genesis 3:12 says, “Then the man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’” Here, we see that Rachel blamed her husband because she envied her sister. Then, Jacob spoke in anger because he was blamed. Instead of praying and asking the Lord to give her a son, we see that Rachel made a different choice.

Genesis 30:3-8 says, “So she said, ‘Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a *child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her.’ Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, ‘God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.’ Therefore she called his name Dan. And Rachel’s maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, ‘With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed.’ So she called his name Naphtali.” Here, we see that Rachel made the same choice Sarah had made many years earlier. She asked Jacob to have sexual relations with her maid so

she could have a son through her maid. This did not solve the conflict but only brought more people into the conflict.

Jacob followed the instructions of Rachel and went into Bilhah. Then, Bilhah became pregnant. When the child was born, it was a son. Rachel chose to name that son “Dan” which means *justice*. As a result, this child was given a name which would speak of the conflict between Rachel and Leah throughout his life. In fact, that name still points back to the conflict between the two sisters. This is a reminder of the continuing consequences of sin. The choice of Sarah to give Hagar to Abraham, so that she could have a son, still has daily consequences because of the conflict between the Jews and the descendants of Ishmael. Genesis 16:11-12 says, “And the Angel of the LORD said to her: ‘Behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand *shall be* against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.’” Then, Genesis 21:9-10 adds, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.’” That conflict continues today.

Rachel was not satisfied with one son and she wanted another. As a result, Bilhah became pregnant by Jacob again and a second son was born. When this son was born, Rachel said, “With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed.” This time, Rachel named the son “Naphtali” which means *my wrestling*. In this statement by Rachel, we also see why she gave this name to the second son. Rachel said that she had wrestled with her sister and had prevailed. This statement tells us that a strong spirit of competition had developed between the two sisters. Instead of the sons providing a source of joy and peace, their names showed that Rachel felt these two boys born to her maid had given her a victory over her sister.

That attitude of victory over her sister caused Leah to react with an attitude of competition. That is shown by what Leah chose to do next. Genesis 30:9-13 says, “When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, ‘A troop comes’ So she called his name Gad. And Leah’s maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, ‘I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.’ So she called his name Asher.” Throughout the books of the Old Testament, we see this same spirit of competition in families as a result of the choices of men to violate the first principle given about marriage in Genesis 2:24, where we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The violation of this one flesh principle led to many conflicts. In 1 Samuel 1, we see that Elkanah had two wives. 1 Samuel 1:5-6 says, “But to Hannah he would give a double portion, for he loved Hannah, although the LORD had closed her womb. And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the LORD had closed her womb.” Here, we see that Peninnah made life miserable for Hannah.

Then, 2 Samuel 13 tells how Amnon was killed by his half-brother because he committed incest with Tamar. 2 Samuel 13:28-29 says, “Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, ‘Watch now, when Amnon’s heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon!’ then kill him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant.’ So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons arose,

and each one got on his mule and fled.” Here, we see that one brother ordered the murder of another brother because of the conflict between the sons of different wives of David.

Here, in Genesis, we see how the competition between Leah and Rachel continued to get worse. Leah made the decision to follow the example of Rachel, and she also gave her handmaid to Jacob. As a result, Zilpah became pregnant by Jacob. When a son was born to Zilpah, Leah named him “Gad” which means *a troop comes* or *good luck*. Here, we see that Leah continued to try to win the favor of Jacob and become the favorite wife. Meanwhile, the sons and the names that they were given meant that the competition would continue for many years after Leah and Rachel died. This is a reminder that we cannot solve our problems through envy and human thinking. James 3:14-16 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” There was plenty of envy and self-seeking going on between Leah and Rachel.

This competition continued until the death of Rachel, and then, it continued on between the sons who were born into the family. We see that Zilpah then had a second son. This time Leah named the son “Asher” which means *happy*. By this name, we see that Leah had given up trying to become the favorite wife of Jacob because she did not mention anything about Jacob. Instead, she said that the daughters of others would call her blessed because she had so many sons. It sounds like she had decided to try and find her happiness in her sons and had given up trying to become the favorite wife of her husband. However, her sons recognized the sadness in the life of their mother, especially when they later saw how Jacob favored Joseph over the rest of his brothers. Genesis 37:3-4 says, “Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age. Also he made him a tunic of *many* colors. But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.” In fact, we see that this hatred took root in their lives.

Genesis 37:19-21 says, “Then they said to one another, “Look, this dreamer is coming! Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit; and we shall say, ‘Some wild beast has devoured him.’ We shall see what will become of his dreams!” But Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, “Let us not kill him.” Here, we see that several of the brothers were ready to kill Joseph because of the attitude of their mother which led to their own hatred. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to help people who are experiencing similar rejection in their own lives. Christ is able to change hearts and lead them to forgive. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain true forgiveness to others.