

A Rood Awakening!
Presents
Awakening in the Word

By Glenn McWilliams of TK TORAH KEEPERS
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THE OVERVIEW

The story of Jacob continues in this week's portion with the details of his marriage to his two wives, Leah and Rachael, and their concubines Zilpah and Bilhah. While Jacob, his wives, and his concubines take the stage as the main characters of our portion, we should not be distracted from the heart of the story, which is the faithfulness of YHWH to fulfill His promise to Abraham and his descendants concerning multiple seed. Up to this point in the patriarchal narrative we have been following the individual lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This portion marks the beginning of a long and subtle transition from a focus upon the individual patriarch to a focus upon Israel as a burgeoning nation.

THE OUTLINE

Once again, the outline of this portion is fairly straightforward.

- Genesis 29:31 YHWH sees Leah's suffering and opens her womb
- Genesis 29:32-35 Leah gives birth to Jacob's first four sons: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah
- Genesis 30:1 Rachel sees Leah's favor and envies her
- Genesis 30:2 Jacob rebukes Rachel
- Genesis 30:3-8 Rachel takes matters into her own hands, and Bilhah gives birth to two sons, Dan and Naphtali
- Genesis 30:9-13 The competition continues, and Zilpah gives birth to Gad and Asher
- Genesis 30:14-21 Leah hires Jacob for her son's mandrakes and gives birth to Issachar, Zebulun, and a daughter, Dinah

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Who is the main character in this story?
2. What are mandrakes? What is the Torah teaching about mandrakes?
3. What is revealed about Rachel's character concerning her faith?
4. What is the difference between a wife and a concubine?
5. Is there a distinction between the children of a wife and the children of a concubine?
6. Does Jacob hate Leah?
7. Is it possible that Leah is the wife YHWH intended for Jacob?
8. What is the primary purpose of marriage?
9. Does the Torah allow for more than one wife?
10. What shadow picture do we see in the marriage of Jacob?
11. What prophecies are found in the names of Leah's children?
12. What shadow picture do we see in the wives of Jacob concerning the later reconciliation of the division of the two houses?

THE TEXT

Genesis 29:31-30:21 And when YHWH saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. ³²And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely YHWH hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. ³³And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because YHWH hath heard that I was hated, He hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. ³⁴And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. ³⁵And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise YHWH: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.

^{30:1}And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. ²And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in Elohim's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? ³And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. ⁴And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. ⁵And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. ⁶And Rachel said, Elohim hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. ⁷And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. ⁸And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.

⁹When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife. ¹⁰And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. ¹¹And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad. ¹²And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son. ¹³And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher. ¹⁴And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. ¹⁵And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie

with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes. ¹⁶And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. ¹⁷And Elohim hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. ¹⁸And Leah said, Elohim hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar. ¹⁹And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. ²⁰And Leah said, Elohim hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. ²¹And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

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While never overtly mentioned or even subtly referred to in this portion, it is clear that we are witnessing YHWH'S fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob concerning multiple seed.

Genesis 13:16 *And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.*

Genesis 15:5 *And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

Genesis 22:17 *That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.*

Genesis 26:4 *And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.*

Genesis 26:24 *And YHWH appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the Elohim of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for My servant Abraham's sake.*

Genesis 28:14 *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

Genesis 32:13 *And Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.*

Up until this point in the patriarchal narrative we have been following a line of individuals, as if forming the trunk of a tree. In this portion, however, the family tree begins to branch out and take shape. The birth of each son born to Jacob marks the beginning of a family, a clan, a tribe, a people, and a nation. From this point on in the narrative a broader view will be necessary. This transition will take place over a long period of time and over a number of chapters, events, and narratives, reaching its zenith in the wilderness of Sinai.

While I will focus more narrowly on the details of this portion and some of its contextual themes, we must never lose sight of the fact that YHWH'S faithfulness is still the central and most significant revelation contained in these stories. This fact is made quite evident in the language of the very first verse of our portion.

Genesis 29:31 *And when YHWH saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*

As in a number of other similar situations throughout the Tanach, we witness that it is YHWH who exercises power and authority in the opening of wombs. The Torah is clearly teaching us that YHWH alone is responsible for fertility – not mere biological mechanics, natural accidents, or any other potion, power, or *elohim*.

Genesis 16:2 *And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, YHWH hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.*

Genesis 20:17 *So Abraham prayed unto Elohim: and Elohim healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children.*

Genesis 25:21 *And Isaac intreated YHWH for his wife, because she was barren: and YHWH was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.*

Judges 13:3 *And the angel of YHWH appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son.*

Psalms 113:9 *He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye YHWH.*

Jacob likewise affirms this reality in his sharp rebuke of Rachel. Having witnessed her sister Leah conceive and bear her husband the firstborn son as well as three others, Rachel, the beloved wife, now envies her sister. We should not miss the irony that the “loved wife” envies the “hated wife.”

Genesis 30:1 *And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die.*

Let us not miss the fact that Rachel holds Jacob responsible for her barrenness. Jacob rebukes Rachel for her misdirected blame.

Genesis 30:2 *And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in Elohim's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?*

Clearly Jacob identifies YHWH Elohim as the source of fertility. Echoing the revelation of Sarah, Jacob declares that it is Elohim who is withholding children from Rebekah. This reality is again confirmed in the middle of our portion in the story of the “mandrakes.”

Genesis 30:14-18 *And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. ¹⁵And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes. ¹⁶And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. ¹⁷And Elohim hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. ¹⁸And Leah said, Elohim hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar.*

To truly understand the dynamics of what is going on in these verses, it may help to know a little bit about mandrakes.

Mandrakes—Hebrew “duda'im,” has long been identified with the Mandragora Officinarum, which grows wild in fields. Its small, yellow tomato-like fruit ripen during March and April. Chemical analysis shows it to contain emetic, purgative, and narcotic substances, which explains its widespread medicinal use in ancient times. Because the fruit exudes a distinctive and heady fragrance, and its sturdy, forked, or intertwined root has torso-like features, the mandrake appears as a widely diffused folkloristic motif associated with aphrodisiacal powers. Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, beauty, and sex, was given the epithet “the mandragoric” Lady of the Mandrake. The Hebrew term duda'im is close in sound to dodim, “love.” Indeed, the two are associated in the Song of Songs: “There I will give my love (dodai) to you. The mandrakes (duda'im) yield their fragrance...my beloved (dodi)” (7:13-14).¹

In our portion there is no overt reason given for Rachel's intense interest in mandrakes, but the context of the story clearly indicates that Rachel understands the folkloristic purpose of these wild fruits. Rachel, who has been suffering the disappointment, frustration, and reproach of barrenness, now turns to means beyond YHWH to solve the problem of her infertility. Here we see an interesting characteristic of Rachel's personality. Note that even after Jacob clearly declares to his wife that it is YHWH who brings life and fertility, she attempts to circumvent the will of the Creator by seeking a natural means of fulfilling her heart's desire. We will revisit this character flaw in a moment, but for now let us see how the story of the mandrakes confirms the revelation that it is YHWH alone who is the source of life and fertility.

While the common culture clearly believed that these naturally occurring fruits had aphrodisiacal powers that could bring about, at least, the opportunity of fertility, we must note that it is still Leah, the seller of the mandrakes, who gets pregnant and brings forth two more sons and a daughter, while Rachel, the buyer of the mandrakes, remains barren. Once again the Torah teaches that folklore is no replacement for the truth. The myth of the mandrakes is exposed while YHWH'S power over fertility and life is revealed. YHWH is clearly in charge of the universe. Once again we may confirm the very fact that the children of Israel are not merely the product or accident of nature; rather, they are the direct result of the will of the Sovereign Creator of the Universe.

In all of these many stories of barrenness and miraculous births, one must conclude that Israel exists for the plan and purpose of the Creator. Israel's existence is indeed an intentional existence. At the right time and in the right place, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the twelve tribes, the nation of Israel, Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist, and even Yeshua the Messiah were born. In many ways we may say the same thing for the spiritual children of Israel who are begotten of faith and adopted as sons and heirs, having been grafted into the original, cultivated olive tree.

We may remember from previous portions that there is a difference between being a wife and being a concubine. Wives and their children had legal rights. Concubines were generally servants who had been elevated to the position of concubine for the purpose of producing children. The children of the concubine were likewise servants unless adopted and declared to be sons or daughters of the master. Thus, the children of Zilpah and Bilhah remain nothing more than the offspring of Jacob until he adopts them as his sons. This makes it clear that many of us have entered our inheritance in the nation of Israel through adoption by the Father.

***John 1:12-13** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of Elohim, even to them that believe on his name: ¹³which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of Elohim.*

***Romans 8:15-17** For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of Elohim: ¹⁷and if children, then*

¹ The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis, Nahum M. Sarna, Jewish Publication Society, Pg. 209

heirs; heirs of Elohim, and joint-heirs with Messiah; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Romans 11:17 *And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree...*

Galatians 3:29 *And if ye be Messiah's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Now let us return for a moment to the character of Rachel. While Rachel is clearly the beloved wife, it is ironic that she that envies her sister. This jealousy seems to provoke Rachel to desperate behavior. Rachel is depicted much like Sarah, who declared with her own lips that YHWH prevented her from having children, yet she so desired them in her heart that she sought means to circumvent the very clear will of the Creator.

Genesis 16:2 *And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, YHWH hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.*

Genesis 30:3 *And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her.*

Taking no heed at all to the rebuke and instruction of her husband and covering, Rachel immediately suggests the same remedy as Sarah. The fact that Rachel must go to these extremes to fulfill her heart's desire raises some interesting questions.

The conflict contained in this text almost demands that we raise the question as to why YHWH was blessing Leah with such extreme fertility while at the same time heaping reproach upon Rachel by restraining her womb. The text gives us a simple response to this question.

Genesis 29:31 *And when YHWH saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.*

Here we are told that the reason YHWH shows mercy to Leah is because she is "hated." Before we go further in this study, let us recognize that Leah is not "hated" by Jacob. In Ancient Near-Eastern language this term is simply a contrasting statement of preference.

Matthew 10:37 *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

Luke 14:26 *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

Luke 16:13 *No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve Elohim and mammon.*

Romans 9:13 *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

Clearly Yeshua was not teaching his disciples to love him and hate their parents. Instead, Yeshua was teaching that if we try to be loyal to two authorities in our lives at the same time, we will favor or prefer one over the other. This preference will inevitably evoke jealousy in the one authority for the loyalty toward the other, leading to tension and strife. The mere fact that Jacob continues to perform his conjugal duties to Leah clearly indicates that he does not despise or hate her, although he may resent the circumstances surrounding their marriage.

In answer to our original question we may state that YHWH opens Leah's womb because He sees that Leah is the least preferred and feels the sting of this emotional position. This explanation does not, however, give us the reason for Rachel's barrenness. I would suggest for your consideration that the favor and distinction being made between Leah and Rachel may be due to the fact that Leah is the wife YHWH intended for Jacob. To explore this possibility there are several issues that we must address. The first of these issues is the intended purpose for marriage. To answer this question we must return to the narrative of creation where the first marriage took place.

Genesis 1:26-28 *And Elohim said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim created He him; **male and female created He them.** ²⁸And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,** and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

Genesis 2:18 *And YHWH Elohim said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an **help meet for him.***

Genesis 2:21-24 *And YHWH Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; ²²and the rib, which YHWH Elohim had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³And Adam said, This is now bone **of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:** she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Adam was called to be the image of the Creator. This would be accomplished not in the manner of Adam's appearance but in the manner in which he exercised dominion over the animal realm, including his own fleshly nature, and in his ability to bring forth life. The Creator made Chava as a helpmate for Adam. It was in the unity of their lives that they would bring forth life and fulfill the heavenly calling upon them. Bringing forth children is clearly a primary purpose of marriage. Even in the Ancient Near-Eastern culture, marriage was not so much for romance and companionship as it was for economical and political reasons. It was through marriage that an individual would grow into a household, family, clan, tribe, nation, and people. The more children one had, the more laborers were present and the more warriors were available to protect the family. Numbers in family meant wealth and security. This is why the firstborn is often described as being the "beginning of strength."

Genesis 49:3 *Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.*

Psalm 127:4-5 *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. ⁵Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.*

Thus, the primary purpose for marriage is bringing forth the image of YHWH through the bringing forth of children. This is especially so for the marriages of the children of Israel, since we are promised multiple seed. I would warn caution here not to neglect the concept of multiplying "spiritual children."

The next issue that we must address is the idea of polygyny, which is the practice of having more than one wife or female mate at a time. I will, like many others, agree that there is no overt prohibition against a man having more than one wife. In fact, the Torah gives several instructions concerning marriages to multiple wives.

Exodus 21:10-11 *If he take him another wife; her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage, shall he not diminish. ¹¹And if he do not these three unto her, then shall she go out free without money.*

Deuteronomy 21:15-17 *If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: ¹⁶then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn: ¹⁷but he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.*

Leviticus 18:18 *Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.*

While the Torah clearly puts in place laws and instructions for the purpose of protection and justice for the wives in the event of a polygynous marriage, there is no commandment for a man to have more than one wife. In fact, these laws are only necessary because of the dangers and injustices that plague such marriages. In other words, if no one smoked, there would be no necessity for laws governing the rights of non-smokers or the placement of warning labels on packaging stating that smoking is dangerous to one's health or concerning the sale of tobacco products to minors. The fact that these laws exist in no way should be understood as an endorsement for the practice of smoking. In the same manner, the mere presence of laws in the Torah governing a polygynous marriage should in no way be understood as an endorsement for the practice of polygyny. In fact, the Torah clearly casts the practice of multiple wives in a negative light. Wherever multiple wives exist, there seems to be strife or other negative elements present. The very first mention of a man having two wives is connected with a confession of murder. Elsewhere, there is strife between the wives or their offspring, or, as with King Solomon, the wives leading their husbands into idolatry.

Genesis 4:23 *And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.*

Genesis 16:5-6 *And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: YHWH judge between me and thee. ⁶But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.*

1 Samuel 1:2 *And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.*

1 Samuel 1:6-7 *And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because YHWH had shut up her womb. ⁷And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of YHWH, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.*

1 Kings 11:4-8 *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other elohim: and his heart was not perfect with YHWH his Elohim, as was the heart of David his father. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶And Solomon did evil in the sight of YHWH, and went not fully after YHWH, as did David his father. ⁷Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. ⁸And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their elohim.*

We may state quite clearly that there is no overt prohibition against the practice of polygyny, yet neither is there any overt commandment or teaching endorsing the practice. To the contrary, there are numerous teachings depicting the dangers of the practice. But before we leave this topic altogether, let us turn to the teachings of Yeshua the Messiah. In dealing with the religious leaders over the matter of consecutive wives and divorce, Yeshua makes a bold statement concerning the laws of divorce found in the Torah.

Matthew 19:3-8 *The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? ⁶Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore Elohim hath joined together, let not man put asunder. ⁷They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.*

Let us note that Yeshua points to the fact that Elohim created marriage between one man and one woman. This is clearly the intended will of the Creator. But just as in the case of divorce, YHWH likewise put in place laws of justice to protect against the effects of man's sinfulness and hardheartedness. Just as the Creator foresaw the need for divorce laws to assure justice, so too He foresaw the need for laws to assure justice in case a man would take more than one wife. In both of these instances we see the distinction between the intended will and the permissive will of the Creator. Again, therefore, we should not confuse the presence of laws protecting justice in the circumstance of multiple wives with the endorsement of such practices.

With this said, I would again assert that it is possible that Leah is the wife YHWH intended for Jacob. Helping to support this statement is the manner in which Jacob meets and falls in love with Rachel. We may take note that when Abraham's servant Eliezer came to Haran to find a wife for Isaac, he took time to pray and ask that YHWH would direct the woman He had chosen for Isaac to the well.

Genesis 24:10-14 *And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. ¹¹And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. ¹²And he said, O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, I pray Thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. ¹³Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: ¹⁴and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that Thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.*

Genesis 29:10-11 *And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. ¹¹And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept.*

In contrast with Eliezer, Jacob offers no such prayer for guidance and wisdom; but upon seeing Rachel, he kisses her. While a kiss was the common greeting between men, it was considered rare and unacceptable for a man to kiss a woman publicly. We are also told that Rachel is very attractive.

Genesis 29:17 *Leah was tender eyed; but Rachel was beautiful and well favoured.*

We may remember that when Eliezer brought Rebekah back to Canaan to meet her intended husband, Isaac's "love" for her was described as a fruit of their relationship, not the motive for it.

Genesis 24:67 *And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*

Jacob's "love" for Rachel, however, is declared long before there is a marriage or a relationship.

Genesis 29:18 *And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.*

Genesis 29:20 *And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for **the love he had to her.***

While these statements are indeed romantic, they should in no way indicate that Rachel is right for Jacob or is even the woman YHWH intends him to marry. If one believes in divine providence, then one must assert that Laban's deception was not exposed in order to put the correct sister in the marriage bed with Jacob. Just like Sarah and Rachel, Jacob may have circumvented the will of the Creator in continuing to work for another seven years in order to have what his heart desired instead of whom or what the Creator willed for him. Therefore, I would suggest that YHWH opens Leah's womb and closes Rachel's in order to affirm in the heart of Jacob that Leah is his true and intended wife.

This then raises the question as to why YHWH does not rebuke Jacob for his determined heart. The fact that Jacob's "favored" wife does not provide him the firstborn may be such a rebuke. It is likewise interesting to note that Jacob's rebuke is directed toward the favored wife and not the hated wife. Leah clearly desires her husband's love and goes to great measures to secure it. Rachel, on the other hand, does all within her power to protect her favored status. This should raise the question as to why YHWH allows this situation to continue. I would suggest that it is because it serves a special purpose.

We have already declared that the purpose of marriage is to bring forth the image of YHWH. I will now suggest to you that in the marriage of Jacob we witness a shadow picture of YHWH'S relationship with Israel. While from the beginning there was to be but one bride, this is not what happened. Israel was to be YHWH'S single bride at Mount Sinai, but His wife divided into two, the House of Judah and the House of Israel. We should note that within the names of Leah's first four sons there is a direct connection with the story of the exodus. To see this connection we need to understand the meaning of these names.

Genesis 29:31-35 *And when YHWH saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. ³²And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely YHWH **hath looked upon my affliction**; now therefore my husband will love me. ³³And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because **YHWH hath heard that I was hated**, He hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. ³⁴And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will **my husband be joined unto me**, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi. ³⁵And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I **praise YHWH**: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.*

- Reuben "behold, a son"
- Simeon "he heard"
- Levi "joined to"
- Judah "praised"

Here we may draw a connection between YHWH'S relationship to Leah and His relationship to the children of Israel at the time preceding the exodus.

Exodus 3:7 *And YHWH said, I have surely **seen** the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have **heard** their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I **know** their sorrows.*

Leah begins by stating that YHWH has seen or looked upon her affliction. This is exactly what YHWH tells Moses – that He has seen or looked upon the affliction of His people. Leah then states that YHWH has heard about her hated status. Likewise, YHWH reveals to Moses that He has heard the oppressed cries of His people. Finally, Leah hopes for intimacy with her husband – that Jacob would be joined to her. We may remember that such unions are referred to as “knowing.” YHWH declares to Moses that He is intimately aware of and knows all the sorrows of the children of Israel. This revelation of YHWH’S intimate knowledge of Israel’s condition will ultimately lead to the children of Israel praising YHWH.

It is interesting to note that when Leah stops giving birth, she gives Jacob her handmaid Zilpah, who bears two sons – Gad, which means “troop,” and Asher, which means “happy.” We may recall that the children of Israel were described as an “army” when they left Egypt, and they were clearly happy to be going.

We may also note that between the births of the sons of Leah and Zilpah are the sons of Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah, whose children’s names are Dan, meaning “judge,” and Naphtali, meaning “wrestling,” which seems to represent Israel’s battle with Pharaoh prior to the exodus. Following the births of all of these are Leah’s final three children – Issachar, meaning “there is recompense,” Zebulun, meaning “exalted,” and Dinah, meaning “judgment.” This likewise seems to fit the events after the exodus where the children of Israel are recompensed with the spoils of Egypt, are exalted over their enemies, and win a favorable judgment in the battle with Pharaoh at the Red Sea.

We may also see another shadow picture in the wives of Jacob concerning the later reconciliation of the division of the two houses. Let us look at the prophecy found in the book of Ezekiel concerning the restoration of the nation of Israel.

***Ezekiel 37:15-22** The word of YHWH came again unto me, saying, ¹⁶Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: ¹⁷and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. ¹⁸And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? ¹⁹Say unto them, Thus saith Adonai YHWH; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in Mine hand. ²⁰And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. ²¹And say unto them, Thus saith Adonai YHWH; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: ²²and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.*

Here I would suggest that Leah and Rachel represent the House of Judah and the House of Israel, while Zilpah and Bilhah represent their “companions.” Ultimately these four women and their offspring become one nation, the nation of Israel.

I would conclude from this portion that YHWH intended Leah for Jacob. Jacob, however, pursued his own heart’s desire for Rachel. While this may not have been what YHWH had intended, He did permit it for the sake of the prophetic shadow picture that would emerge from the circumstances. We may learn from this situation that we are to serve YHWH with our whole heart, mind, strength, and life. YHWH will and can sanctify to His holy purposes everything and anything we bring to Him, even our self-willed actions.

One final issue that I would like to address with this portion has to do with the name of Leah’s son Gad (*gimmel, dalet*). Many people just coming into the Hebrew Roots or Messianic movement, especially from the Christian Church, rejoice in learning the true Hebrew names of the Creator and the Messiah. Connected to this new understanding is the rejection of the numerous pagan traditions that have filtered

into their beliefs. Some of these new converts become extreme in fulfilling the letter of the law. Thus, when they read that we are not to have the name of any pagan deity upon our lips, they refuse to use the names of the days of the week or the months of the pagan calendar because they are indeed the names of pagan deities.

***Exodus 23:13** And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other elohim, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.*

This commandment has also caused many believers to stop using the word "God," replacing it, as I do, with the word "Elohim." While I use the word "Elohim" instead of "God" in my writing, it is because that is the word that is present; and there are times, as we shall see in future portions, where this word usage is important to the story. Some, however, reject the word "God" because they claim it is a pagan deity. The proponents rejecting the word "God" most often proof-text their argument with the following passages:

***Joshua 11:17** Even from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto **Baal-gad** in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.*

***Joshua 12:7** And these are the kings of the country which Joshua and the children of Israel smote on this side Jordan on the west, from **Baal-gad** in the valley of Lebanon even unto the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir; which Joshua gave unto the tribes of Israel for a possession according to their divisions.*

***Joshua 13:5** And the land of the Giblites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrising, from **Baal-gad** under mount Hermon unto the entering into Hamath.*

In the above texts we see that the name "Gad" is prefixed with the title *ba'al*. The Hebrew word *ba'al* is the title "lord" or "master." The word *ba'al* may be used of both humans and deities. In modern Hebrew the word *ba'al* means "husband." *Ba'al* is also used of the various forms of fertility deities worshipped in the land of Canaan. The *ba'alim* were closely connected to idol worship. We have already seen that the name "Gad" means "troop." The title *Ba'al-Gad* may indeed be read as "Lord Gad." However, this is not the etymology of our English word "God," which comes instead from the Anglo-Saxon word for "good."

Thus, we should not use the above verses as proof-texts for not using the word "God." Beyond this, we should recognize that the names El, Eloah, Elohim, El Elyon, and El Shaddai, all used in the Torah for the Creator, were also names of Canaanite deities. Therefore, to substitute El or Elohim for the word "God" because "God" is a pagan name would be to substitute one pagan name for another.

Again, we should recognize that there is a small grain of truth in every religion. Paganism is simply a corruption of the truth. It should not surprise us to find the names of the Creator in use, even if improperly, in pagan religions. My advice is that there is much yet to be discovered about the Torah and the Hebrew language; therefore, we should not be going to such extremes. Instead, we should concern ourselves with understanding not simply the letter of the Torah but the Spirit of the Torah as well.

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