

Introduction

1. Before we get into our passage for today, we should probably do a quick summary of how Jacob ended up with two wives:
 - a. After arriving in Haran, Jacob became quite fond of Laban's youngest daughter, Rachel, and Laban agreed to give Rachel to Jacob as his wife in exchange for seven years of labor (29:15-20)
 - b. However, after the seven years, Laban' deceived Jacob and tricked him into marrying Leah instead (29:21-26)
 - c. To make amends, Laban agreed to also give Rachel to Jacob as a wife as long as he fulfilled his obligation to Leah and agreed to work another seven years (29:27)
 - d. Jacob agreed, and in a bit of foreshadowing to our passage today, vs. 28 says, **"So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah..."**
2. This last verse sets the stage for what happens in our passage today:
 - a. God saw that Leah was unloved and opened her womb (29:30-35)
 - b. Leah's and Rachel's jealousy leads to sibling rivalry (20:1-21)
 - c. God remembered Rachel and opened her womb (30:22-24)

A. God saw that Leah was unloved and opened her womb (READ 29:30-35)

1. The word translated **"unloved"** here is a Hebrew word for hate:
 - a. It's possible it's being used here as hyperbole simply to emphasize Jacob's love for Rachel compared to Leah
 - b. But, it's also possible that Jacob did indeed hate, or maybe despised, Leah because of her role in deceiving him along with Laban (it's hard to imagine she wasn't an active participant)
2. When God saw Leah's plight, and her distress, He responded:
 - a. This exact phrase **"Yahweh saw"** is used eight times in the OT and in every instance, it precedes an act of God; in other words, when God sees He responds
 - b. Here, in contrast to Rachel who was barren, God's response to seeing Leah's plight was to open her womb and the result was the birth of four sons
 - c. There are two things that stand out with each of the births:
 - 1) The first is that she directly attributed the births to the hand of God:
 - a) After Reuben was born she attributed it to Yahweh seeing her affliction: **"Because Yahweh has seen my affliction"** (32)
 - b) After Simeon was born, she does the same, **"Because Yahweh has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also"** (33)
 - c) After Judah was born, she declared, **"This time I will praise Yahweh"** (35)

- 2) The second thing that stands out is that she hoped that by providing Jacob with children, he would finally love her:
 - a) After Reuben she said, **“surely now my husband will love me.”** (32)
 - b) After Levi she said, **“Now this time my husband will be joined to me because I have borne him three sons.”** (34)

B. Leah’s and Rachel’s jealousy led to sibling rivalry (30:1-21)
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1. What we see here is a good old fashion rivalry fueled by jealousy between Leah and Rachel over two things:
 - a. Rachel wanted justice and vindication from God in the form of children—in other words, she wanted something Leah had
 - b. Leah wanted the love and affection of Jacob—in other words, she wanted something Rachel had
2. Rachel sought justice and vindication from God in the form of children through her maid-servant (READ 30:1-13):
 - a. As we might expect, when Rachel saw that Leah had born four sons she became jealous and confronted Jacob as if it was his fault:
 - 1) She demanded that he give her not just a child but children (plural): **“Give me children, or else I die”** (1)
 - 2) This upset Jacob just a tad <wink> and he responded with a stiff rebuke: **“Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?”** (2)
 - b. Rachel then followed in the footsteps of Sarah, Abraham’s wife, and gave her maid-servant Bilhah to Jacob as a wife (concubine):
 - 1) We shouldn’t be too hard on Rachel because this was the custom in the ANE if a wife was barren
 - 2) Any children born to the maid-servant were considered children of the wife, and this is reflected in vs. 3-4
 - 3) When Bilhah conceived two sons, Rachel viewed their births as a form of vindication against injustice, and a victory over her sister:
 - a) The first was Dan to which Rachel rejoiced declaring, **“God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.”** (6)
 - b) The second was Naphtali to which Rachel responded, **“With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed”** (7-8):
 - You may have a translation note in your Bible that translates this something like, **“In my wrestlings with God...”** or **“with the wrestlings of God, I have wrestled with my sister...”**
 - Some use this more literal rendering to suggest that Rachel saw her struggling to get pregnant as a form of wrestling with God

- However, most view the phrase “wrestlings of God” as simply a way to refer to a great struggle
- c. Apparently, this stirred up some jealousy on Leah’s part so she followed suit:
 - 1) Leah had already born Jacob four sons, but she was no longer bearing children
 - 2) So, like Rachel, she also gave her maid-servant Zilpah to Jacob as a wife (concubine) and she bore Jacob two more sons:
 - a) The first was Gad, to which Leah replied, **“How fortunate!”** (11)
 - b) The second was Asher, to which Leah declared, **“Happy am I for women will call me happy!”**
 3. Leah sought Jacob’s affection through bargaining and more sons (READ 30:14-21):
 - a. In these verses, Leah trades mandrakes for some intimacy time with Jacob:
 - 1) Mandrakes were the roots of a particular plant and in the ANE they were believed to be aphrodisiacs and thought to help with fertility; they are only mentioned here and in the book of Song of Solomon
 - 2) When Leah’s son Reuben found some in a field and brought them to her, Rachel demanded some for herself (possibly because she thought it would help her conceive)
 - 3) Leah’s response is rather blunt and reveals the bitterness she felt toward Rachel (15): **“Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son’s mandrakes also?”** (the implication that the two go hand in hand)
 - 4) So, Rachel cuts a deal with Leah: she can sleep with Jacob for one night in exchange for the mandrakes (15-16)
 - 5) The result is that she conceived a fifth son, which she viewed as a reward from God for giving her maid-servant to Jacob
 - b. Leah conceived two more children with Jacob, Zebulun and Dinah:
 - 1) V. 20 reveals that after the birth of Zebulun Leah hoped she would finally get what she so desperately wanted: Jacob’s love and affection
 - 2) The NASB, KJV, and NKJV translate the Hebrew word Leah used here as “dwell” (e.g. this time my husband will dwell with me), but all other major English translations believe the word means to honor (e.g. now my husband will honor me)
 - 3) Either way, the idea is that Leah was hoping that after giving Jacob six sons he would finally treat her with the love and affection she desired

C. God remembered Rachel and opened her womb (READ 30:22-24)

1. **“Then God remembered Rachel...”**: Isn’t that an awesome statement? It means God is about to do something on behalf of someone!

- a. In Genesis 8:1 it says, **“But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided.”**
 - b. In Genesis 19:29 it says, **“Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.”**
 - c. Exodus 2:24 says, **“So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them.”**
 - d. 1 Samuel 1:19: **“...And Elkanah had relations with Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. It came about in due time, after Hannah had conceived, that she gave birth to a son, and she named him Samuel, saying, ‘Because I have asked him of the LORD.’”**
2. In the same way, God remembered Rachel, listened to her, opened her womb:
 - a. As a result, Rachel conceived and bore Jacob another son, Joseph
 - b. And, as an added benefit, it took away her reproach (the stigma and shame of a wife not being able to provide children for her husband)

Takeaways

1. God sees and hears our cries when we are afflicted:
 - a. Look at the number of times in this passage where it says things like God saw, God heard, God listened, and God remembered:
 - 1) V. 29:32: **“...Yahweh has seen...”**
 - 2) V. 29: 33: **“...Yahweh has heard...”**
 - 3) V. 30:6: **“...[God] has indeed listened to my voice...”**
 - 4) V. 30:17: **“...and God listened...”**
 - 5) V. 30:22: **“...then God remembered...”** and **“God listened to her...”**
 - b. Psalm 34:15-19: **“15 The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous And His ears are open to their cry. 16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers, To cut off the memory of them from the earth. 17 The righteous cry, and the LORD hears And delivers them out of all their troubles. 18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. 19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.”**
 - c. 1 Peter 5:6-10 (READ)
2. God uses our affliction to fulfill His purpose and plan:
 - a. Ruth 4:11: **“All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel;”** (the people of the court speaking to Boaz regarding Ruth)

- b. God used the affliction Leah and Rachel experienced to accomplish His purpose and plan for Israel (we have the births of 11 of Jacob's 12 sons recorded here)
- c. He even did this when they tried to bring some relief to their suffering through their own human efforts (e.g. giving Jacob their maid-servants)
- d. In the same way, God uses our affliction to accomplish His purpose in the Gospel (READ 2 Corinthians 4:7-18)