

Life of Joseph

Lessons in Humility, Leadership and Forgiveness

Introduction

- Joseph is the 11th son of Jacob and is the first son born of Rachel [Gen 30:22-24].
- Jacob is the son of Isaac [Gen 25:21-26] who is the son of Abraham [Gen 21:1-3].
- God's covenant promises given to Abraham [Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-7; 17:1-8] were confirmed to Isaac [Gen 17:19-21] and then to Jacob [Gen 28:13-15].
- Jacob took the birthright from his older brother Esau [Gen 25:27-34] which led to Esau wanting to kill Jacob [Gen 27:41-43].
- Isaac sent Jacob to Haran to find a wife from among the daughters of Laban [Gen 28:1-2].
- When Jacob saw Rachel, he was taken by her beauty and made a deal with Laban to work seven years for her [Gen 29:10-20].
- When Jacob's service was up, Laban tricked Jacob by sending in Leah, his firstborn, to be with Jacob [Gen 29:21-26].
- Laban bargained for another seven years of work from Jacob for Rachel [Gen 29:27-28].
- Jacob was willing to work another seven years because he loved Rachel more than Leah [Gen 29:29-30].
- God opened the womb of Leah who bore Jacob his first son Reuben [Gen 29:31-32].
 - רָאוּבֵן (rə'ubēn) = behold, a son.
 - Leah knew the Lord had beheld her affliction (רָאָה בְּאֵינִי – rā'āh b'anyi) and was hoping her husband would love her (יֵאֲהָבֵנִי - ye'ehābani).
 - Jacob had defied God's will by taking two wives and the one he preferred (Rachel) was barren.
- Leah then gave birth to Jacob's second son Simeon [Gen 29:33].
 - שִׁמְעוֹן (shim'on) = heard.
 - Leah knew the Lord had heard (שָׁמָע – shāma') that she was unloved and gave her another son.
- Leah then gave birth to Jacob's third son Levi [Gen 29:34].
 - לֵוִי (lēwi) = joining.
 - Leah was hoping her husband would become attached (לָוָה – lāwah) to her now that she had borne him three sons.
- Leah then gave birth to Jacob's fourth son Judah [Gen 29:35].
 - יְהוּדָה (yəhudah) = to praise.
 - Leah decided to praise (יָדָה – yādah) the Lord when her fourth son was born.
 - We know Leah was God's choice for Jacob since it was through her that the Savior would come.

- Rachel was jealous of Leah and gave Jacob her maid Bilhah (בִּלְהָהּ, bilhāh = troubled) so she could have children [Gen 30:1-4].
- Bilhah gave birth to Jacob's fifth son Dan [Gen 30:5-6].
 - דָּן (dān) = a judge.
 - Rachel felt that she was vindicated (דִּין – din) in the Lord's eyes since He had given her a son.
- Bilhah then gave birth to Jacob's sixth son Naphtali [Gen 30:7-8].
 - נַפְתָּלִי (naphtāli) = wrestling.
 - Rachel believed that she had prevailed through her wrestlings (נַפְתָּלִים – naphtulim) with her sister Leah.
- Leah responded by giving her maid Zilpah (זִלְפָּה, tsilpāh = trickle) to Jacob [Gen 30:9].
- Zilpah gave birth to Jacob's seventh son Gad [Gen 30:10-11].
 - גָּד (gād) = good fortune.
 - Leah, excited by the birth of this son, exclaimed, "How fortunate!" (בָּגָד – bāgād).
- Zilpah then gave birth to Jacob's eighth son Asher [Gen 30:12-13].
 - אָשֵׁר ('āshēr) = blessed, happy.
 - Leah was filled with happiness (אֹשֶׁר – 'ōsher) about another son and believed she would be called blessed (אֲשָׁר – 'āshar).
- Leah paid Rachel with some of Reuben's mandrake plants (a stimulant) so Jacob would be with her again [Gen 30:14-16].
- Leah gave birth to Jacob's ninth son Issachar [Gen 30:17-18].
 - יִשָּׂכָר (yisāskār) = recompense.
 - Leah believed that God had given her wages (שָׂכָר – sākār) for giving her maid to Jacob.
- Leah then gave birth to Jacob's tenth son Zebulun [Gen 30:19-20].
 - זְבֻלֻן (tsəbulun) = exalt.
 - Leah hoped that Jacob would honor/exalt her (זָבַל – tsābal) because she had borne six of his ten sons.
- Leah's final child was Jacob's only daughter Dinah (דִּינָה, dināh = judgment) [Gen 30:21].
- Rachel was then blessed to give birth to Jacob's eleventh son Joseph [Gen 30:22-24].
 - יוֹסֵף (yosēph) = Jehovah has added.
 - Rachel asked the Lord to add to her (יָסַף – yāsaph) another son.
- A few years later Rachel gave birth to Jacob's twelfth and final son Benjamin as she died in childbirth [Gen 35:16-18].
 - Rachel named the child בְּנֵי-אֹנִי (ben-'ōni) = son of my sorrow.
 - Jacob renamed him בְּנֵי-יְמִינִי (ben-yāmin) = son of my right hand.