

# **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

## **Bible Study Notes**

**1-8-20**

### **Genesis 30**

#### **Children of Jacob - Verses 1-25**

<sup>1</sup>When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I'll die!" <sup>2</sup>Jacob became angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?" <sup>3</sup>Then she said, "Here is Bilhah, my servant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and I too can build a family through her." <sup>4</sup>So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, <sup>5</sup>and she became pregnant and bore him a son. <sup>6</sup>Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son." Because of this she named him Dan. <sup>7</sup>Rachel's servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. <sup>8</sup>Then Rachel said, "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So she named him Naphtali. <sup>9</sup>When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her servant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. <sup>10</sup>Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. <sup>11</sup>Then Leah said, "What good fortune!" So she named him Gad. <sup>12</sup>Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. <sup>13</sup>Then Leah said, "How happy I am! The women will call me happy." So she named him Asher. <sup>14</sup>During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." <sup>15</sup>But she said to her, "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?" "Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." <sup>16</sup>So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. "You must sleep with me," she said. "I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he slept with her that night. <sup>17</sup>God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son. <sup>18</sup>Then Leah said, "God has rewarded me for giving my servant to my husband." So she named him Issachar. <sup>19</sup>Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. <sup>20</sup>Then Leah said, "God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. <sup>21</sup>Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah. <sup>22</sup>Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive. <sup>23</sup>She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, "God has taken away my disgrace." <sup>24</sup>She named him Joseph, and said, "May the LORD add to me another son."

**30:3** Each of the three great patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) had wives who had difficulty conceiving children. It is interesting to note how each man reacted to his wife's predicament. Abraham had relations with Sarah's servant in order to have his own child, thus introducing bitterness and jealousy into his family. Isaac, by contrast, prayed to God when his wife was barren. God eventually answered his prayers, and Rebekah had twin sons. Jacob, however, followed his grandfather's example and had children by his wives' servants, leading to sad and sometimes bitter consequences.

**30:4-13** Rachel and Leah were locked in a cruel contest. In their race to have more children, they both gave their servants to Jacob as concubines. Jacob would have been wise to refuse, even though this was an accepted custom of the day. The fact that a custom is socially acceptable does not mean it is wise or right. You will be spared much heartbreak if you look at the potential consequences, to you or others, of your actions. Are you doing anything now that might cause future problems?

**30:22-24** Eventually God answered Rachel's prayers and gave her a child of her own. In the meantime, however, she had given her servant to Jacob. Trusting God when nothing seems to happen is difficult. But it is harder still to live with the consequences of taking matters into our own hands. Resist the temptation to think God has forgotten you. Have patience and courage to wait for God to act.

### **Jacob's Flocks Increase - Verses 25-43**

<sup>25</sup> After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. <sup>26</sup> Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I've done for you." <sup>27</sup> But Laban said to him, "If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you." <sup>28</sup> He added, "Name your wages, and I will pay them." <sup>29</sup> Jacob said to him, "You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. <sup>30</sup> The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?" <sup>31</sup> "What shall I give you?" he asked. "Don't give me anything," Jacob replied. "But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: <sup>32</sup> Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages. <sup>33</sup> And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen." <sup>34</sup> "Agreed," said Laban. "Let it be as you have said." <sup>35</sup> That same day he removed all the male goats that were streaked or spotted, and all the speckled or spotted female goats (all that had white on them) and all the dark-colored lambs, and he placed them in the care of his sons. <sup>36</sup> Then he put a three-day journey between himself and Jacob, while Jacob continued to tend the rest of Laban's flocks. <sup>37</sup> Jacob, however, took fresh-cut branches from poplar, almond and plane trees and made white stripes on them by peeling the bark and exposing the white inner wood of the branches. <sup>38</sup> Then he placed the peeled branches in all the watering troughs, so that they would be directly in front of the flocks when they came to drink. When the flocks were in heat and came to drink, <sup>39</sup> they mated in front of the branches. And they bore young that were streaked or speckled or spotted. <sup>40</sup> Jacob set apart the young of the flock by themselves, but made the rest face the streaked and dark-colored animals that belonged to Laban. Thus he made separate flocks for himself and did not put them with Laban's animals. <sup>41</sup> Whenever the stronger females were in heat, Jacob would place the branches in the troughs in front of the animals so they would mate near the branches, <sup>42</sup> but if the animals were weak, he would not place them there. So the weak animals went to Laban and

the strong ones to Jacob. <sup>43</sup> In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

**30:25-30** Jacob had now worked for Laban fourteen years for his two wives. After the birth of Joseph, Jacob went to Laban to tell him he wanted to leave. He had fulfilled his agreement and wanted to return to his own country and presumably to his parents' family. He had not intended to stay long with Laban, but had already been there at least 14 years. Laban, however, realized that God was with Jacob and had blessed Laban because Jacob was with him. He therefore asked Jacob to consider staying and continuing to work for him. He asked Jacob to name his wages and he would give what Jacob asked. Laban was not doing this as a favor to Jacob. He knew he had prospered because Jacob was with him, and he wanted to continue for his own benefit.

**30:31-34** So, Laban again asked what he should give Jacob, but Jacob said he did not want anything given to him. He simply wanted an understanding regarding the arrangement for his future pay. Jacob's wages would be that all the strange-colored animals born in the future would be his. He would take the speckled and spotted sheep, the brown lambs, and the speckled and spotted goats. Laban readily agreed, doubtless thinking that he had made a great bargain.

**30:37-43** Jacob was evidently relying on a popular superstition, namely, that certain experiences of the mother sheep or goats during pregnancy influenced the condition of her offspring. Most likely, the selective breeding and God's promise of provision were the main reasons that Jacob's flocks increased. The text records that Jacob became very wealthy. The lesson of this section is that people who experience God's material blessing need to acknowledge that it comes from Him rather than from their own abilities.