

“God’s Word, Alive!”

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A Biblical Teaching Ministry Dedicated to “Holding Forth the Word of Life”
by Velma Sanders

“Rachel’s Complaint”

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

And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, He opened her womb: but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived, and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. And she conceived again, and bore a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, He hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon. And she conceived again, and bore 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, and she conceived again, and bore a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing. **And when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel:** and he said, Am I in God’s stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

(*Genesis 29:31 – 30:2, King James Version*)

If ever there was a man that loved a woman, Jacob was that man. So strong was the love of Jacob for Rachel that he willingly and cheerfully worked seven years to become wedded to her. On the last day of that seventh year, it was with great excitement that Jacob looked forward to being with Rachel as her husband. But Jacob, the trickster, was now tricked himself into marrying Leah, Rachel’s older sister.

That the traditions might be kept, Laban, the father of both Leah and Rachel, deceitfully gives Leah, the firstborn, to Jacob to become his wife. Jacob, however, did not let this deter him from obtaining the object of his affections, Rachel. With love as strong as cords, Jacob contracted with Laban to work, without wages, an additional seven years, which he counted as only a few days that he might gain Rachel as his wife.

In so doing, Jacob’s love for Rachel became a living example of that love which Paul speaks about in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13. Love which “beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” With “love that never fails” Jacob obtained Rachel, at long last, as his wife.

Being so highly esteemed and powerfully loved by Jacob, one would think that Rachel would have been satisfied. She, who once was keeper of the sheep, was blessed above many to have had a husband that sincerely and deeply cared for her. Jacob was a man that unquestionably had proven his love by working untiringly for many years for Rachel. He did not give up on his heart's desire. "Even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it," so was Jacob's love for Rachel. (Ephesians 5:25)

But, we find instead of Rachel rejoicing in her husband's great love, her eye turned, in envy, to Leah, her older sister. Leah, a woman, who was not as beautiful as Rachel. Leah, a woman, although Jacob had married previously he did not love her then, and he does not love her now.

Looking at Leah, and comparing herself to her, Rachel opened her mouth in a complaint that began her path down a very slippery slope. With her eye off of the blessing of God in her life, she could not possibly remain in an attitude of thanksgiving and peace. As Eve focused on the one item she was forbidden to have in the Garden, so Rachel focused on her one item of not being able to bear Jacob a child.

Rachel desired that which Leah had, children. However, through the names of Leah's first three children, we see Leah striving furiously for that which Rachel had, the love of Jacob.

In order to gain Jacob's love, Leah named her first-born child "***Reuben***." The literal translation of "Reuben" is "***See, A Son***." With the birth of that man-child, Leah had hoped that Jacob would "see, a son," and that his affections would be stirred towards her. Not only did that not work, it backfired, for this scheme provoked Jacob even more. What does Leah now do? Of all things, she had another child and named him "***Simeon***." Simeon meaning "***Hearing***." Blindly believing God had heard her desire to become the favored of Jacob. However, the child, Simeon, did not have the power to induce Jacob's heart towards Leah either. In desperation, Leah bears another child and calls him "***Levi***." The literal translation of "Levi" is "***To Join***." But, Levi could not impart unto Jacob love for Leah and cause him to be joined to her.

Leah has another child, her fourth child. With hands lifted up, Leah names this son, "***Judah***." Judah meaning, "***Praise***." Now Leah, at last, renders praises to God.

In the meantime, all that Rachel could see, from the outside, was that Leah was having Jacob's children; children that she could not have. Rachel is obviously oblivious to Leah's inner struggle to win the affections of Jacob and seemed to be completely blinded to the fact that although Leah had Jacob's children, Leah did not have Jacob's love. So Rachel set out to scheme and resolve her complaint, and to fulfill the lusts of her flesh. By so doing, the relationship between her and Jacob became seriously damaged, and her life was never as satisfying and fulfilling as it was before. Through Rachel's ingratitude, she complained and for the first time we see Jacob's strong love towards Rachel fade as it turned to anger. The "threefold cord" which is not easily broken was now severely stretched and strained. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

One can easily imagine how Rachel must have sounded as she approached her husband, Jacob, and demanded, “Give me children, or else I die!” In that one spoken poisonous sentence, Rachel’s beauty turned ugly and with her mouth she set in motion her own early death.

Did not Rachel realize that God alone was the giver of life? Instead of complaining to Jacob, Rachel forgot the instruction of Scripture, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” (Philippians 4:6) Hannah, who was in the same dilemma as Rachel, did not complain to Elkanah, her husband, but instead prayed “and she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give Him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.” (1 Samuel 1:11) God heard and answered Hannah’s prayer, and gave her a child.

In complaining to Jacob, Rachel actually stood, as it were, with fist lifted up towards God as she said, “Give me children, or else I die!” With this “beam in her eye,” it was impossible for Rachel to see that she was the cause of her problem, and not Jacob. It was Rachel who had the “barren womb.” (Matthew 7:3-5) Striving with God, and striving with Jacob, Rachel did not yield. She had not learned “in whatsoever state I am in therewith to be content.” (Philippians 4:11) As a result, Rachel’s attitude was one of bitterness and strife, which resulted in manipulative actions.

Although Rachel was so abundantly blessed, we do not read one time of Rachel giving thanks to God for Jacob, nor does Rachel thank Jacob for being a good husband to her. Instead, Rachel said, “or else I die!” She sounded as a screaming child that was having a temper tantrum. Rachel said, “life is over!” Rachel threatened suicide if Jacob did not give her children. She placed her ultimate happiness in the hands of a man. Rachel demanded of Jacob life. Not life just for children, but life for herself. Be Jacob’s love for Rachel ever so great, he could not give “life.”

To complicate matters much further than they ever had to go, Rachel brought another woman into the picture. Rachel in trying to solve her problem came up with a scheme and then gave Jacob, Bilhah, her handmaid. This same scheme did not work for Sarah, in Genesis 16:1-6, and it did not work for Rachel. Bilhah does indeed have children, and Rachel claims them as her own. However, Rachel had only multiplied her misery. That envy which was once hidden beneath the surface in Rachel, for Leah, was then brought fully to the light. “And Rachel said, with great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali.” (Genesis 30:3-8) Now Rachel has the compounded problem of beholding two women bearing multiple children by Jacob.

Life would have been so much easier for Rachel had she only gone to God and made her request known to Him, and then waited for His answer. Yielding to His will, whether He said “Yes,” or “No.”

After many years of plotting by Rachel, God nevertheless did bless her with a child. “And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bore a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: And she called his name Joseph.” (Genesis 30:22-24)

In His Almightyness, the LORD did what no other power could do and opened Rachel’s closed womb, enabling her to conceive and bring to birth a man-child. However, Rachel was not satisfied with this one child, and she did not give thanks. She named her son “**Joseph.**” The literal translation of “Joseph” is “**adding.**” With the naming of her child, it was exposed that Rachel was not yet satisfied. She seeks yet another child. For Rachel goes on to say, “The LORD shall add to me another son.”

In her presumption, God did indeed add to Rachel another son, but the birth of that son is the door to her death.

“And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labor. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing (for she died), that she called his name “**Benoni:**” but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel’s grave unto this day.” (Genesis 35:16) “**Son of my sorrow**” is the literal translation of “Benoni.”

In conclusion, Rachel so blessed of God lived a very unhappy life. She had more than heart could wish, but was not content with her blessings. Therefore, her life that should have been fulfilling became a life of unnecessary, self-inflicted and multiplied sorrow.

Thousands of years later we find in the New Testament, Rachel mentioned only once. This one reference speaks of Rachel . . . of children . . . of weeping. “In Ramah was there heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.” (Matthew 2:18)

***“Let your manner of life be without covetousness, and
be content with such things as ye have;
for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”***
(Hebrews 13:5)

(Rachel’s complete story is recorded in Genesis Chapters 29-31; Genesis Chapter 35:16-20)

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