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God Listened to Leah, and She Became Pregnant and Bore Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah

30: 14-21

God listened to Leah, and she became pregnant and bore Issachar, Zebulun and Dinah DIG: What are mandrakes? What deal did Rachel make with Leah? What was the motivation for each wife? What did Jacob think? Why did Rachel probably end up being mad? What did the names of Leah's son's mean? Why was Dinah mentioned?

REFLECT: How does it feel to work and work to try to impress someone and they don't give you the time of day? Are you doing that now? Where can you put your energies to better use?



Years later **during the wheat harvest, Reuben**, who was about seven years old at the time, **went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants**, literally meaning *love apples*, **which he brought to his mother Leah. Mandrakes** are in the potato family. **They** grow in stony ground in Palestine and are very common. **Their** berries have white and reddish blossoms, and a yellow fruit similar to small apples that ripen in March and April. They emit a very distinctive odor. Mentioned in **Song of Songs 7:13**, the superstition was that they were an aphrodisiac, or an inducer of fertility. The Hebrew root of **mandrake** is the same as the Hebrew word for *lover*. **Rachel** was so desperate that **she** seemed to think

they would solve **her** problem of barrenness. So when **she** saw **the mandrakes**, **she said to Leah** her sister: **Please give me some of your son's mandrakes (30:14).**

But Leah said to **her**, "**Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?**" **She** had no intention of improving **her** sister's love life, in light of the fact that **she** was already **his** favorite. But **Rachel** made **Leah** an offer **she** couldn't refuse and said: **Very well, he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes (30:15).** **She** obviously hoped that later, when **she** would be with **Jacob**, the **mandrakes** would enable **her** to become pregnant. These were desperate housewives.

So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, he found that **he** had been hired by **Leah** to **sleep with her** that night. **Leah went out to meet him. You must sleep with me tonight**, **she** said in a very businesslike manner: **I have hired you with my son's mandrakes.** **He** didn't say a word. Was **he** amused or flattered by this competition between **his** two **wives**? Was **he** saddened with the strife and competition? How did **he** feel about having children with the maidservants of **his wives**? Was **he** just trying to keep peace in the family? We don't know, but **he** seems compliant. **So he slept with her that night (30:16).** The Hebrew word for **hired** is *saphar*, which is the root meaning of **her** next **son's** name. The use of the word **hired** indicates that **Ya'akov** normally slept with **Rachel**, whom **he** really loved.

As a result, **God listened to Leah**, and **she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son (30:17).** I am sure this infuriated **Rachel** to no end. **Rachel** got the **mandrakes**, but it was **Leah** who had another baby! **Then Leah** said that **God has given me my hire, sechari, because I have given my maid to my husband (30:18a NKJ).** **Leah** had hired **Jacob** with the **mandrakes**; now **Leah** thinks that **Elohim** has rewarded **her** for giving Zilpah to **Jacob (30:9-13).** The reward was a fifth **son**. **So she named him Issachar**, which means **hire (30:18b).** **Jacob** could not walk through a bedroom without finding a baby there.

Leah conceived again and bore Jacob (Hebrew: **Ya'akov**) **a sixth son (30:19).** **Leah** had four **sons** originally, two **sons** by **her** maidservant, and now two more **sons**. **Then Leah** said: **God has given me a wonderful gift (30:20a).** In Hebrew the word **endowed me** is *cevadni*, and the word **dowry** is *zeved*. **Now my husband will dwell with me**; in Hebrew it is *yizbeleini*, from the Hebrew *zabal*, which means *to dwell or to honor*, **because I have borne him six sons.** It was a word used for the marriage **gift**, so **she named him Zebulun**, which means *dwelling or honor (30:20b).*

So after bearing **six sons**, **she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah (30:21)**. Therefore, the seven additional years **Jacob** agrees to serve Laban for **Rachel** parallel the seven children **he** fathers by **Leah**. In other words, **Leah** bears one child for each of the seven years that **Ya'akov** served for **Rachel (30:25-36)**.⁴⁸²

After the first seven years, **Leah** will have several more daughters. We know this because when Joseph seemed lost to him, **all his sons and daughters came to Ya'akov, but he refused to be comforted (37:35)**. Also, when **Jacob** went to Egypt, **he took with him his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters, all his offspring (46:7, 46:15)**. But **Dinah** is the only one of **Jacob's daughters** that is named because of **her** role in the events of **Chapter 34**. **Dinah** is the feminine form of the name Dan, also meaning *judge*.