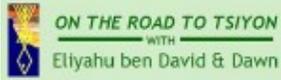


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Tsiyon News

Tsiyon Messianic Radio Newsletter - Vol 8.17 - 02/21/6013 TAM - 05/01/13 AD



Jacob's Fruitfulness

Genesis 30

Jacob's Fruitfulness



*"Like Rachel and like Leah,
which two built the house of Israel"*
Ruth 4:1, Genesis 30

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Jacob's Family & The Tribes of Israel

Reprint from: [Israel-a-history-of.com](#)

The development and evolution of the 12 tribes of Israel took place over the course of hundreds of years. The process began with the call of Abraham, and continued through the birth of Isaac. However, with the birth of Jacob, and subsequently his twelve sons, the tribes began to evolve and appear in the Old Testament.

The time period involving the early patriarchs is far from being agreed upon. William F. Albright, one of the leading Biblical Archaeologists of his time, wavered on the dating of Abraham. It is generally believed Abraham lived around 2000 B.C. Jacob, thus, has been argued to have lived around 1850 B.C.

The unification of Israel under Saul would not take place until around 1000 B.C. In between, was the migration of Jacob to Egypt, the 400 year stay in Egypt, the Exodus out of Egypt under Moses, and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua.

These events would shape and transform Israel from a loose confederation of tribes to a world Empire.

However, the foundation upon which the tribes of Israel would be built was set much earlier, during the sojourn of Jacob and his sons, both in Mesopotamia and in the land of Canaan.



Genesis 29:32

"And Leah conceived, and bare 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."

With these words were born the twelve tribes of Israel. Reuben was the first born son of Jacob, through his wife Leah, and would become the head of the tribe of Reuben.

Jacob would father 11 other sons, through four different women. Each son would become the head and founder of his particular tribe.

The Hebrew phrase *Bnei Yisrael* is used to denote the Israelites in the Bible. The literal translation of this phrase is, "sons of Israel".

From this phrase, Scripture uses a number of different appellations when referring to the 12 tribes of Israel.

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people are referred to as; "Sons of Israel"; "Children of Israel"; "House of Jacob"; "House of Israel"; "Israel".

Mentioned as a side note almost, in Genesis 30:21, is the birth of the only daughter of Jacob named in Scripture, Dinah. She would later figure prominently in the narrative. She was born to Leah, *"some time later"* after the birth of Zebulun, and before Rachel's birth of Joseph.

12 sons of Jacob

In their order of birth, the 12 sons of Jacob are as follows: Reuben (Gen. 29:32), Simeon (29:33), Levi (29:34), Judah (29:35), Dan (30:5), Naphtali (30:7), Gad (30:10), Asher (30:12), Issachar (30:17), Zebulun (30:19), Joseph (30:23), and Benjamin (35:18).

The following are the 12 sons of Jacob grouped together by birth mother.

Leah

Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun

Zilpah - Leah's handmaiden

Gad and Asher

Bilhah - Rachel's handmaiden

Dan and Naphtali

Rachel

Joseph and Benjamin

Interestingly, all but one son (Benjamin) of Jacob was born in Mesopotamia, in the city of Haran. Haran was also the name of the brother of Abraham who had prematurely died (Gen. 11:28), and where he and Terah stopped on their journey to Canaan.

This further strengthens the Biblical ties between the Holy Land and Paddam - Aram, the same area known as Aram - Naharaim to Abraham.

Some [feminist] scholars have taken a matriarchal view of the twelve tribes of Israel. This line of thought follows the idea that the sons of Leah and Rachel indicate an early entrance into, what would become, the twelve tribes of Israel.

Thus, the founding tribes were attributed to the wives of Jacob; the tribes of Leah, and the tribes of Rachel.

The sons of Bilhah and Zilpah indicate a later entrance into the tribes of Israel. These tribes are less prestigious than the founding tribes.

This theory, of course, denies the Biblical account. However, it does illuminate the [complex] nature of Jacob's family. As was seen in the instance of Abraham, Sarai, and Hagar, there surely existed rivalries, jealousies, and alliances amongst the wives and handmaidens of Jacob, as well as among the 12 sons of Jacob.

A natural result of these alliances and rivalries would have been the formation of cliques within Jacob's family. Power struggles were sure to take place amongst the wives, concubines, and sons of Jacob, each seeking to assert their place in the family hierarchy.

The interactions between each son of Jacob would prove to form a foundation upon which the tribes of Israel would interact with each other.

Thus, to understand the relationship between each tribe, it is important to understand the relationships between the sons of Jacob, and the wives / concubines of Jacob.



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From Eliyahu

The origin of the tribes of Israel in the family of Jacob involves the same vices that have plagued the many generations of Israel - and mankind generally - ever since. As we look at this story of our nation's beginning we cannot help but be moved by the pain of heart experienced by Jacob and his two wives, Rachel and, perhaps especially, Leah. We feel repulsed as we look with horror upon the naked rivalry, envy and suffering that seems to dominate a very sad story.

However, the question must be asked: Have we been missing something?

I believe we have. While it is only natural to reject and turn away from the unseemly side of human nature and the pain associated with it - is in not also true that nothing can be gained until we come to grips with the very same? Suffering that comes to nothing is indeed a tragedy beyond words. However, suffering that produces fruit for the Kingdom and glory to our Father in heaven - such suffering paves the way for our very entrance into a glorious eternity! Suffering is no stranger to the overcomer today, even as it was no stranger to the overcoming fathers and mothers of our nation. When we take another look at this story from this more exalted view, the standpoint of the overcomer, we can begin to understand what this origin story in Genesis 30 really means. Please join me for our latest *EBD Bet Midrash* as we look into this controversial portion of Torah together, this Sabbath.

Blessings and Shalom!

Eliyahu ben David
www.tsiyon.org

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