

### Introduction

- This passage is a strange pregnancy battle between Leah and Rachel.
- Jacob is only a bystander and barely involved.
- This is not a lesson on how to conceive or make God open your womb.
- It serves as a turning point in Jacob's story.
- Rachel learns to depend on God instead of manipulation in order to receive God's blessing.
- It is the origin of the twelve tribes of Israel.

### Leah's Pregnancies (29:31-35)

- Leah is the rejected and unwanted wife of Jacob.
- She is unloved and hated by Jacob, yet he seems to use her body.
- But God sees her plight and God blesses her with a child.
- Reuben's name means, "Look a son." She acknowledges that she has conceived because of God.
- She hopes Jacob will love her now, but he doesn't.
- Her second son is named Simeon, because God has heard of her plight.
- The third son is named Levi, she hopes Jacob will become attached to her.
- Her fourth son is named Judah, in praise to God for giving her sons.
- Her sons are all named in acknowledgment of God.
- Jacob is almost completely absent from this narrative.

### Rachel's Plight

- She is envious of how God has blessed her older sister.
- She feels like she will die if she does not get pregnant.
- Her womb has only been closed or several years, which is small compared to the decades of Sarah and twenty years of Rebekah.
- Jacob points out that God opens and closes wombs.
- Instead of praying and having faith, she tries to get children on her own.
- She imitates Sarah's folly and uses some of the same phrasing.
- She declares that God has judged her, but God does not seem to be involved.
- Her second adopted son is named after her wrestling against God.
- Rachel's schemes do not work and now Leah employs the same tactics.
- These children are named after good fortune and happiness. Leah hopes her hatred from Jacob has passed.
- The Bible does not present the using of servants in this way as positive or good.
- All of the fighting and using of servants is completely unnecessary. God has already been shown to remember, see, and open wombs. Both women should respond with faith.
- And Jacob should not have gone along with any of this foolishness.

### Mandrakes

- The pregnancy battle continues to intensify.
- Reuben finds and brings his mother mandrakes, which are used as an aphrodisiac.
- Rachel believes that this is the answer to her infertility problems.
- Rachel seems to have kept Leah away from Jacob.
- Jacob is exchanged for mandrakes in the same way Esau's birthright was exchanged.
- Leah again conceives twice because God listened to her.
- God seems to be on the side of the unloved and mistreated wife.
- Leah gave up mandrakes and had three more children.
- Rachel took the mandrakes and had no children for at least three more years.

### Rachel's Pregnancy

- Some undisclosed amount of time appears to pass by, at least three years.
- The struggle and battle is now over.
- It appears that Rachel has finally given up and stopped trusting in her own abilities to get pregnant.
- It is only after she surrenders that God remembers her and she conceives.
- It appears that Rachel has actually prayed and asked God to conceive finally.
- The reproach is not just her shame of being barren, but the reproach of her previously sinful ways.
- The name Joseph is also her acknowledging that more children can only come from God as a blessing.
- This is the turning point in Jacob's story. He will stop trying to deceive and will begin his journey home.
- Jacob will be buried with his ancestors and Leah instead of with Rachel.
- I take this to mean Jacob acknowledges his wrong choice in having multiple wives.

### Application

- This passage can be encouraging for those facing infertility, but it is not a guide.
- It does not mean that you must stop trying to get pregnant to get pregnant.
- It does mean that we should not try to gain God's blessings through our own means.
- God sees and blesses those who are mistreated.
- We cannot mess up God's plan.