A Biographical Study of Rachel

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Rachel

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

I. Her husband
   A. She was the youngest daughter of Laban, brother of Rebekah (Gen. 29:5-6, 16).
   B. She worked as a shepherdess and was a beautiful girl (Gen. 29:9, 17).
   C. Jacob worked a total of 14 years for her hand in marriage (Gen. 29:18-20, 26-30).

II. Her handmaid
   A. Laban presented her with Bilhah to serve as her handmaid (Gen. 29:29).
   B. Rachel was barren for a number of years (Gen. 29:31).
   C. Rachel then presented Bilhah to Jacob, hoping that she could bear children to Jacob through her handmaid (Gen. 30:1-3).

III. Her sister
   A. She became jealous of her sister’s fruitful womb and demanded that Jacob give her children, lest she die (Gen. 30:1).
   B. She even ate some mandrake plants in hope that this would help her bear children (Gen. 30:14-16).
   C. She, along with her sister Leah, encouraged Jacob to leave his father-in-law (and their father) Laban and return to Canaan (Gen. 31:14-16).

IV. Her father
   A. Rachel stole her father’s household gods before they left for Canaan (Gen. 31:19).
   B. She hid them inside her camel’s saddle, and lied about taking them, thus preventing Laban from finding them when he caught up with Jacob in the wilderness (Gen. 31:34-35).

V. Her sons
   A. She gave birth to Joseph in Haran (Gen. 30:23-24).
   B. She gave birth to Benjamin near Bethlehem (Gen. 35:16-20).
      1. Realizing she was dying in childbirth, Rachel named him Ben-oni, meaning “son of my trouble.”
      2. However, Jacob called him Benjamin, meaning “son of my right hand.”
      3. A special pillar was made by Jacob and placed over her grave (Gen. 35:20).

THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY

I. Years later a doubtful Saul was told by Samuel he would meet two men by Rachel’s tomb with a reassuring message concerning his role as Israel’s first king (1 Sam. 10:2).

II. Because of Rachel’s hard life, she would become a symbol for future Israelite mothers who wept over their children. Two historical events illustrated this.
   A. When Jewish mothers wept at Ramah over the deaths of their babies killed by Nebuchanezzar (Jer. 31:15).
   B. When Jewish mothers wept at Bethlehem over the deaths of their babies killed by Herod (Matt. 2:18).
STATISTICS

Father: Laban (Gen. 29:16)
Spouse: Jacob (Gen. 29:18, 30)
Sons: Joseph and Benjamin (Gen. 30:23-24; 35:16-20)
Sister: Leah (Gen. 29:16)
First mention: Genesis 29:6
Final mention: Matthew 2:18
Meaning of her name: “Lamb”
Frequency of her name: Referred to 47 times
Biblical books mentioning her: Five books (Genesis, Ruth, 1 Samuel, Jeremiah, Matthew)
Place of death: Bethlehem (Gen. 35:16-20)
Circumstances of death: She died in childbirth (Gen. 35:16-20)
Important fact about her life: She was the beloved wife of Jacob and mother of both Joseph and Benjamin (Gen. 29:18; 30:23-24; 35:16-20).