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## 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).