

99-10-24b

We're ready now to resume our study in Genesis chapter 30. We have seen Rachel looking at her sister, who has born four sons in a row. She, although she has no doubt had greater attention from her husband, has produced no offspring whatsoever.

And this creates in her a sense of competition, apparently, with her older sister. So she goes to Jacob and says, give me children or else I will die. There is some irony in these words, as we will see.

I'll go ahead and point it out now, although if I was going to save it for dramatic effect, I would wait till later. How many children, you know these stories well enough, how many children does Rachel end up having? She has two. So she has a child, and then by the time she has children, plural, what happens to her in the birth of her second son? She dies.

Give me children lest I die. It is when she has children that she dies. So this sort of points out for us the difference between the divine perspective and what often constitutes the human perspective on a situation.

As was pointed out during the break, and I think appropriately, we sometimes overlook the real blessing of God because we have our mind or our heart set on something else. We have identified what we think the answer is, or the best thing is. God may have already given us what in his mind is the best, and we miss it.

That story about the drowning man that is trusting in God to save him, motorboat comes by, well, Fred, let us pull you in. Oh no, God's going to save me. We can miss the provision of God.

Leah, even though it is a deception perpetrated on Jacob, is his lawful wedded wife. The pattern in Scripture, the pattern in human history from Adam forward is monogamy. Moses points out by way of commentary in Genesis after Esh and Eshah get together there, that this is the reason a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves unto his wife, and they too become one flesh.

It does not say they three or they four or they five, as is going to ultimately be the case with Jacob here. He is going to wind up with four different mothers for his twelve or thirteen actually children, twelve sons and a daughter. But what should Jacob have done? What could Jacob have done? Well, once you realize that by whatever means and in whatever fashion you now have a wife, that's the wife you have.

And to bargain for, pursue and marry Rachel, even though she is the object of his desire, would not be right. It is in fact a wrong thing. This is a failure.

This is a weakness on Jacob's part. He has in his mind a rationale, a reason for doing this,

but it only breeds strife. It creates envy and jealousy.

The high road that Jacob could have taken had he been further along in his spiritual development would have been to recognize that God has allowed circumstances to intertwine to the point where he is now married to Leah. And obviously God is blessing her with children and he could have been the father of the nation and so forth just with her alone. But he complicates things because he's got his heart set on Rachel.

She is the pleasing one to the eye. She is the E.W.E., according to her name, where Leah is the one of soft eyes, the C.O.W., according to her name, and he doesn't find her interesting. But God is at work to correct his perceptions.

She has four sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. In chapter 30, Rachel sees this. Give me children or else I die.

Jacob gets angry against Rachel. Am I in the place of God who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb? Jacob recognizes that God is in charge. No record of anybody going to God in this situation.

Does Jacob go to the God of Bethel and say, Oh Lord, here's the woman of my dreams? You suspect that maybe he's got a little bit of recognition that maybe he's in an untenable situation. Can he really go to God and defend his decision to marry the younger sister? Interesting to go to the law. I'll leave you to your own researches on this, but you can go to the law and find out what the Bible has to say about marrying a woman and her sister.

So she said, Here is my maid Bilhah. Go into her and she will bear a child on my knees that I also may have children by her. Well, this has been tried before.

The results were not happy. This may have been a relatively common thing in the culture from which all of these women come, which was also a good observation made during the break. And yet the fact that it is commonplace and that it may be quote-unquote normal in one's society doesn't make it right for a child of God.

So she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife and after much argumentation and arm-twisting Jacob finally, it doesn't say that. Jacob apparently didn't have much trouble. Apparently the maids were not unattractive and so he didn't really have to be asked twice.

He went into her, Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, God has judged my case. Well, this is a misperception if there ever was one.

If God had really judged her case, God would have opened her womb, wouldn't he? She sees her solution to the problem as God's will and God's doing, which of course it is not. And this is a common mistake that is made by us and by others in the age in which we live. We go about doing things and accomplishing things that we think are good and we

say, Oh, God be praised.

Isn't God good? Look at what God has done. God may have had nothing to do with it whatsoever, but we like to think he did because it makes us feel better that our machinations have given us the desire of our heart and we want to ascribe it all to God to put sort of a premature on it, to put a stamp of approval. And deep within our hearts, I suspect we probably know better.

God has judged my case. He has heard my voice and given me a son. He has done no such thing.

This is the very same mechanism by which Ishmael came into the world. And we know all of the symbolic baggage that that carries. Therefore, she called his name Dan.

We'll return to Dan here shortly. Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again. Oh, so this was such a success that we're going to keep up this relationship with the maid.

So now apparently Jacob is splitting his physical attentions amongst three different women. Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, By the way, you will notice that these sons are not numbered sequentially one to twelve, are they? Leah has had sons one through four.

But the son that Bilhah bears that's named Dan is a son and the second son is called a second son. He's numbered separately. He's numbered as a son of Bilhah.

It doesn't say she bore Jacob a fifth and a sixth son. So already the narrator here is segregating these sons by origin. Then Rachel said when she sees this son, With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister.

Well, this wrestling is something that's going to come up again, isn't it? Jacob is going to be the wrestler here not too far in the future. And she's in the same mode as Jacob is. You wrestle away what you want.

You just apply brute force to the problem to try to solve it. She says, With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister and indeed I have prevailed. Almost the same thing the angel is going to say, or the man, quote-unquote, is going to say to Jacob after the all-night wrestling match.

You have wrestled with God and have prevailed. Well, who are they really wrestling with here? God is the one who opens and closes the womb. God has closed Rachel's womb and Rachel has wrestled her way around that problem and has two surrogate sons, so to speak, two adopted sons.

Is she wrestling with her sister or is she wrestling with God? She's wrestling with God. Has she prevailed? She thinks she has. She's got these two adopted sons that she claims

they are born on her knees.

She names them. So she calls his name Naphtali. Anytime you see an l on the end of a name or a word in Hebrew, that's usually the first person possessive.

So this is my something and this word is the word for wrestle, for my wrestling. When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah, her maid, and gave her to Jacob as wife. You get the idea that this is kind of a horse race now and she sees that the Rachel side of the marriage is starting to even the odds a little bit.

It's now four to two and lest this process continue and she lose her advantage, she sees that she's not having any more children. How long does it take to see that you're not conceiving? Well, after you give birth and a few months go by and all the systems get back to normal, she's immediately once again cohabiting with Jacob and within a month or two she doesn't get pregnant. So she says, well, I can't fall behind in the numbers game here.

So she gives her maid Zilpah. She says, if Rachel can do it, I can do it. So Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

Leah said, a troop comes. She says, I'll generate an army over here on the Leah side if I have to. So she called his name Gad.

A lot of these names have double entendres. We'll return to these names here when we finish finding out how they all got here. Then Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

So this seems to be working and in the same case as before, Jacob now is dividing his attention between four women. Leah said, I am happy for the daughters will call me blessed. So she called his name Asher, which basically means happy.

It's interesting when you think about the message of Gabriel to Mary, the mother of the Lord's humanity, and she says, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. And that is sort of foreshadowed here when Leah says, I'm happy for the daughters, these are the daughters of Israel, will call me blessed. Well, this seems to be sort of an appropriated blessing.

If she was really blessed, she would be bearing these children, wouldn't she? But she seems to be lapsing into a little bit of, she seems to be sinking to the level of her sister at this point and looking at what other people are going to think and what other people are going to say. This is not the same spirit of blessing in which Mary says what she says. All generations, she understands what her child will mean to the nations and the generations.

But Leah calls this child Asher. Now, here's kind of a strange little interlude here. We've

been having the baby boom going on in the tent of Jacob.

Then we get this little story. Reuben, who by now is a boy of an age to be independent and go off by himself. He was the firstborn son.

We have seen that his mother Leah had three other children, so at least four or five years went by at that point. And then Rachel's maid Bilhah has two children, so that's five or six years have gone by. And then the maid Zilpah has a couple of children, so that's seven, eight, maybe nine, ten years have gone by at this point.

Reuben, so he's a boy of what we would call maybe late grade school age. He went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field. I will confess to you, I didn't know what a mandrake was when I was younger.

I thought it was, I somehow got it confused with ducks. I thought it was like he found ducks in the field. And that it was just, I had in mind, you know, like the little decoys with the stripe around their neck and all that.

But I learned somewhat later that mandrake is a plant. This is a plant that doesn't have a stalk. It's not a bush type of plant.

It grows at the surface of the ground. A bunch of leaves come out of one place in the ground. It's a low growing plant with these leaves kind of going in every direction.

And in the center of the leaves will eventually appear a violet colored flower. And it will ultimately produce a fruit in the center of the plant. So you're going to have this little fruit sitting there almost like a egg in a bird's nest.

And this fruit looks a lot like a tomato. It's kind of, except it's more yellow-orange, but in appearance it resembles a tomato. And the the word mandrake in Hebrew is similar to the word for love or lover.

The word for lover in Hebrew is dod, d-o-d. And love itself is dodim. One of the words, there's lots of different words for love, ahav and so forth, but one of the words for romantic love is is dodim.

And it comes from dod, which means lover. And the word for mandrake has that same element at its core. And so whether by paranamasia or some other form of association of words, people began to think that mandrakes were an aphrodisiac.

And even down to the present in that part of the world where these things grow, that fruit is called love apples. And it's supposed to have this heightened fertility effect. So the mandrakes are found in the field, so he brought them to his mother Leah.

Well, why is Rachel interested in these mandrakes? The aphrodisiac quality. She's not content, even though she's done the surrogate mother adoption route and has got a

couple of adopted sons. She still wants to capture Jacob's interest and bear him a son on her own.

So Rachel said to Leah, please give me some of your son's mandrakes. But Leah says in verse 15, is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? And that's literally what Rachel has done. Leah is the wife.

She is the wife. She was there first. She was only the single wife for a week.

But at the point of the marriage, she is Jacob's wife. Rachel came along and took her husband's affections, his attention, and she is in a very awkward situation. Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also? Rachel said, therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes.

If you let me have the mandrakes, you can have first chance at Jacob. You can have Jacob in your tent tonight. You give me the mandrakes.

She figures she's going to consume the mandrakes and let him do their work in her to increase her fertility or something, and then she'll get a chance with Jacob later. So apparently Jacob has gotten real happy with Bilhah and Zilpah. Maybe he's not paying too much attention to either Leah or Rachel.

And so this strikes a bargain. And so when Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, you must come in to me, which apparently he's not been doing of late, for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes. This word for hire, by the way, is the Hebrew word zokar, z-o-k-a-r.

And this is an intensive. When it says surely I have hired you, this is an example. You may remember way back years ago when we were in Genesis chapter 2 and chapter 3, and God was talking to Adam in the garden.

Of all the trees in the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt what? Surely die. And you've probably heard those who know Hebrew will tell you that you can translate that literally, dying thou shalt die. And it's a combination of what we would call in English a gerund, an ing word, or in Hebrew it's a participle, dying and then thou shalt die.

And that's the future. And so you have a doubling of the verb there. And it's an intensifying force and that's why a lot of times when you have a double verb in Hebrew it'll say surely this will take place.

Thou shalt surely die. Dying thou shalt die. This is another example of that same construction.

When she says I have surely hired you, she says hiring I have hired you. And that should help us understand a little bit about how much to read into the doubling back in the earlier account, because people have tried to pick that apart and say well you've died in one way and later you're going to die in another way. But this is a commonplace in Hebrew.

This is a typical construction to intensify a verb. And she's saying look I have hired you. You are hired.

And she's intensifying that idea by saying hiring I have hired you with my son's mandrakes. So he lay with her that night. And from a purely statistical point of view, especially for people that may have spent time attempting to conceive a child, you would think well how significant can one night be? But when God is opening and closing wombs and when God is superintending, one night is all it takes.

In fact in the case of Mary it didn't even take a night. It happened through the Holy Spirit and there wasn't anybody there at all. God listened to Leah in verse 17.

Somebody has been talking to God. And it isn't the mandrakes because the mandrakes went to Rachel. But God listened to Leah.

Apparently Leah said a little blessing before the night's festivities and God listened to her. So in this whole chapter what evidence do we have that anyone is talking to God? Well here Leah is talking to God and God listened to her. So it tells us something about if there's anybody that's a little bit better off status-wise with God, it's apparently Leah.

She conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Notice that's fifth in her count. Leah said God has given me my wages because I have given my maid to my husband.

So she called his name Issachar. And this is more play on words because Socar, and this is you can see in the beginning of his name, Ish is the Hebrew word for man. He is Ish Socar.

He is the man of wages or the man of hire. Ish Socar or Issachar. Then verse 19, Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.

Leah said God has endowed me with a good endowment. Now my husband will dwell with me because I have borne him six sons. So she called his name Zebulun.

And this is a word, you probably have a footnote in your Bible there that says literally dwelling and that's another play on words. How many sons has Leah now born to Jacob? Six. Six is a significant number.

God created the heavens and the earth in six days. You will recall that the first three days were then echoed in the second three days. It's interesting when you think about

the sons of Leah to do the same sort of thing.

You have Reuben, Simeon, Levi, then you have Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. And in the days of creation we saw that the fourth day had some ties to the first day. Where in the first day God created light, God separated the light from the darkness, and then on the fourth day he created the greater light by day and the lesser light by night and so forth.

Well who, of course I'm probably anticipating a little bit, but just to get your wheels spinning, who should have had the rulership of Israel? What tribe? Should have been Reuben, the first son. What son's tribe ultimately ends up with the rulership? The fourth, Judah. So these numbers and sources of sons are significant.

We'll see some more of that shortly. Afterward, verse 21, she bore a daughter and called her name Dina or Dinah. We would say loosely in English.

There is no etymology given for her name. You can see the terrible political incorrectness of the Bible here that the birth of Dinah doesn't seem to get the attention and the etymology of the name and the story that the others get, but that's the way it is. I can't change it.

I can't give you an extra verse. That's just what it says. Afterward she bore a daughter.

The chronology here is also significant because remember that you have a certain interval of time, nine months for pregnancy and a few months of recovery after that before someone is going to be able to conceive again. For this story to make sense, times are going to need to work out because Jacob was not married and had no children for his first seven years with Laban. He marries Leah as the week of celebration, marries Rachel.

All of these sons and this daughter that have been born take place in a period of seven years. In verse 22, God remembered Rachel and God listened to her and opened her womb. Notice that it has taken the birth of all of these other children before Rachel finally turns to God and begins to talk to God.

At the point that she talks to God, God listens to her and opens her womb. But Leah has had seven children. The maids have had four children.

So there are already 11 children on the scene before Rachel finally learns what God is teaching. But God remembered her. God listened to her and opened her womb.

She conceived and bore a son and said, God has taken away my reproach. So actually the burying of the children on the knees through Bilhah didn't really take away her reproach, did it? She said in verse 6 that God has judged my case. He has heard my voice and given me a son.

Well, when she says heard my voice, apparently she was asking back then as well. But why? It doesn't say that God listened to her voice. She says God listened to her voice back in verse 6. Now the narrator says God listened to her voice.

So there is a difference in the quality and the motivation of her prayer. And apparently Rachel has learned something over the course of these many years. God listened to her and opened her womb.

God has taken away my reproach. So she called his name Joseph and said the Lord shall add to me another son. So now here's an expression of faith.

And this is the first time we've seen someone believing that God will do something in this whole chapter. And once again we're reminded of the irony of her words in verse 1. But she called his name Joseph. This is another play on words.

And there's a lot, if we had the time to devote to the Hebrew here, there's a lot of really wonderful things. I'll just give you an example in the name of Joseph. There's a Hebrew word called Asaph.

A-S-A-P-H. This is the name of one of the psalmists later on. A psalm of Asaph.

We see that. Asaph is a word that means to remove or to take away. There is also a Hebrew word Yassaf.

And Yassaf means to add or to multiply. So when she names her son Yosef, and I was mentioning to somebody during the break there are these infixes where the vowels like the O-E infix produces a certain kind of a participle. But in Yosef it's sort of a combination of Asaph, which means to take away, and Yassaf, which means to add.

And so that's why she says God has taken away my reproach. He will add to me another son. So they, you know, people didn't have TV and radios and lots of entertainment sitting out there in the agricultural environment, and they had lots of time to think.

And they would meditate and spend time in thought, and they would think about things, and they would come up with these great word plays for their children's names. And there would be, it would be memorable. It would be something that they could tell their children, and that would oftentimes characterize that person in later life.

And so there's a richness in the names of the children of Israel in particular that bears investigation. So she called his name Joseph and said the Lord shall add to me another son. It came to pass when Rachel had born Joseph, verse 25, Jacob said to Laban, send me away that I may go to my own place and to my country.

Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go. So this tells us that Joseph was born in the 14th year, because his second set of seven years of

servitude are up. Jacob says, I have served you for my two wives.

You know my service which I have done for you. Laban, in verse 27, said to him, please stay if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake. But we, the main reason I read up to this point is to show us that the 14 years are complete.

The seven years that he thought he was serving for Rachel, but actually served for Leah. The next seven years that he serves to fulfill his bride price for Rachel. And in that time he has had 11 sons and one daughter born to him through the two wives and the two handmaids.

These sons, and of course we know that that Benjamin is the one remaining son, the son that Rachel predicts in verse 24, he is going to be born and she will die in that childbirth. Not too many episodes hence. But this might be a good time for us to quickly review the significance of these sons because it is significant.

Reuben is the firstborn and if you pay attention to the source and to the later history of these sons and to the tribes that bear their names and comprise their descendants, it comes back to this chapter and this period in Jacob's life. For example, Reuben, the first son of Jacob is his firstborn from his legitimate wife Leah. And just off the surface, if you think about Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, they are significant tribes in the later history of Israel, aren't they? Judah, the tribe of rulership, the Davidic kings come from the tribe of Judah.

Jesus Christ himself, we sometimes forget, is a card-carrying member of the tribe of Judah. Levi, from whom Aaron and all of the priests will be descended. The remaining Levites who are not Aaronic descendants also serve in the worship life of Israel.

Reuben and Simeon will have more to say about. But in the later history of Israel, when they take the first census in the wilderness, the numbers are given for each of the tribes of Israel. It lists in Numbers chapter 1, verse 21, 46,500 fighting men from the tribe of Reuben.

And there's a second census taken in the wilderness and their numbers have fallen to 43,730. So the tribe of Reuben is a little bit on the wane there. You remember in the traveling configuration and in the camp configuration of Israel in the wilderness during the 40 years of wandering, they had assigned places relative to the tabernacle.

When they would pitch their tents and make camp and dwell in a place, the tabernacle would be set up in the center of the camp. And then there were three tribes on each side of the tabernacle. Four times three equals twelve.

So the Reubenites were on the south side of the tabernacle. They were assigned a place on the south side along with Simeon and Gad. Of course Reuben and Simeon both miss

out on all of the privileges of the firstborn.

These were all Reuben's possession and Reuben is going to disqualify himself. You're probably familiar with the story. Reuben actually winds up having intercourse with one of his father's concubines and this is really a stench in the nostrils of his father and of God.

And so his privileges are all forfeit. But he is on the southern side. The total number of men in that division is 151,450.

There is a Targum called Pseudo-Jonathan and we don't always know how reliable the Targums were. Ancient rabbinical commentaries on the Bible and sometimes they reflect oral transmission of information and it's of varying degrees of reliability. But according to Targum-Jonathan, the flag or the standard of the tribe of Reuben had a deer on it.

And that was the symbol with a legend, Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord, which would be a great motto to have on your flag. When the nation of Israel was on the march, this division took second place. The division meaning this quarter of the nation.

The prince of the tribe was Eliezer ben Shadur. His offering is described in Numbers chapter 7 verse 30. You recall also that each tribe sent a spy into the land when they got to the Jordan River and the twelve spies went in.

You had Caleb, Joshua and the other ten. The representative of this tribe amongst the spies was Shamuah ben Zakkur in 1304. There was a conspiracy against Moses, you'll recall, Dathan and Abiram with the assistance of Korah the Levite.

And it is implied in the text there that the Reubenites were trying to reassert their supremacy as the firstborn tribe. This was part of their rationale. Dathan and Abiram were from the tribe of Reuben.

And you can see the idea that, well, we're from the firstborn tribe. What are we doing being led by these Levites? They're third in order. And so this was probably part of the rationale.

Korah was involved in this. He was a Levite. But Korah's offspring, his descendants, were not consumed the way that Dathan and Abiram and the others were.

And there's some significance in that. You can look in a good Bible at the back at your map and see the territory that was assigned to the tribe of Reuben once they entered the land. Each of the tribes was assigned territory and we'll save an analysis of that for a future study when we actually look at Israel in the land.

But Reuben and Gad were neighbors in the land. And they were valiant men able to bear a buckler and sword and to shoot with the bow and skillful in war, it says in 1 Chronicles 5.18. And there are some later history that we won't go into. But this could have been

the tribe of the kings of Israel.

This could have been the tribe from which the Lord Jesus Christ would come, but it wasn't. Great potential, great opportunity, just as we have seen with Esau, just as we have seen with so many cases in Scripture where you can start with great advantages, but they can turn into disadvantages and be forfeited if we're not in that Romans 8.28 frame of mind. To love God, to recognize the calling according to his purpose, and to pursue that.

That's the tribe of Reuben. Simeon, and of course Reuben, I think I mentioned earlier that his name means literally behold a son. Riu from Ra'ah, which means to see, and Ben is the word for son, like Ben Hur, Charlton Heston, that means son of Hur, H-U-R.

Simeon, the root of his name is from Shammah to here, and as I mentioned it's the same root from which Shmuel or Samuel comes. Simeon is a full brother to Reuben, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. He will eventually be left as a hostage in Egypt later on when Joseph is the vizier down there and the brothers come during the time of famine, and remember we'll see that here not too distant future, Joseph's gradual revealing of himself to his brothers, but when he asks them where is the youngest brother, and he's not among them, Benjamin, that stayed home with the father, Joseph is going to send the brothers back to Jacob in the land and say you bring the youngest brother, and he's going to hold Simeon hostage, and Simeon has to remain in Egypt while the other brothers go get Benjamin.

So the interesting thing about Simeon, he gets skipped over for a lot of things. For example, when you go over to Deuteronomy chapter 33, in the blessing of Moses, when he talks about the future of each of the tribes, Simeon is left out, he's not mentioned. There are some manuscripts of the Septuagint where somebody felt bad about that and put in a little phrase that says Simeon will be a small company, but it's not in the Hebrew text at all.

In the wilderness, the Simeonites camped beside the Reubenites on the south side of the tabernacle. You remember that there was a case where Phinehas, during the time when they're in the camp and so forth, and one of these men goes and gets one of the Canaanite women and has sex with her right there in the middle of the camp, and Phinehas comes and runs them both through with one spear, pins them to the ground. Well, that man was from the tribe of Simeon, so this is sort of their claim to fame.

But that was Zimri, he was a member of the tribe of Simeon, and that's in Numbers 25-14, when Phinehas runs them through, kills them both with one spear, one javelin, I guess. The statistics, of course, in Numbers chapter 1 are given for all the tribes, how many men they had in the first census. He had 59,300 men in the first.

The second census, which is in the latter part of Numbers, like chapter 26, his numbers

are down to 22,200. So this is another tribe that is waning, it's diminishing down, just like the tribe of Reuben. It's also very interesting to see the grouping of the tribes on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim when the blessings and curses of the law are given.

You remember there were six tribes on one side and six tribes on the other side? Turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 27, and we'll have to close with this observation this morning, and next time we'll look at the rest of these sons of Jacob and what their tribes' characteristics were. But in Deuteronomy chapter 27, look at verse 11. Moses commanded the people on the same day saying, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people when you have crossed over the Jordan.

Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. Six tribes. How many of the sons of Leah are in that group? Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar.

Four of the six tribes on the Mount of Blessing are from Leah's group. Four of her six sons. Which ones are missing? The first and the last.

Reuben is not there. Zebulun is not there. These shall stand on Mount Ebal to curse Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

All sons of the concubines, of the handmaids, along with Reuben. What a downer for Reuben to be down there with the Bilhazilpa tribes. So there is significance, and you can see that God honors the sons of Leah.

The tribes that he's going to do much with are from the legitimate wife of Jacob. And the other tribes are included, but they are not tribes of honor, so to speak. Dan, of course, as we'll see next time, is going to be a center of apostasy and false idol worship and all kinds of bad things are going to happen in Dan.

But here's the point. This is what we're trying to get to here. This is a mess.

This marriage and son situation is just a mess. Concubines, one man married the sisters and everything else. But God is going to make a nation out of these tribes.

He's going to bless them all. He's going to bring every tribe into the land. They have the same opportunities as members of any given tribe, and there's going to be outstanding individuals from a lot of these tribes.

But it's what you make of the situation, and God is still going to honor the things that are right. And you can see in the sons of Leah that that can be forfeited. But when it's not forfeited, you have Levi and Judah as probably the two most prominent tribes of the nation of Israel and their sons of Leah.

These others came about through mistakes, bad judgment, wrong thinking, wrong actions, bad motivation. Some of these children were born because the parents were

involved in spite and competition and all kinds of bad things. But God works all things together for good.

And it isn't where you start, it's where you end up that counts. Some of these start well and end badly. Some of the others are going to start badly and end up well, as we'll see when we review these other tribes next time.

God can work all things together for good to those who love him, to those who are the called according to his purpose. We should never doubt the faithfulness, we should never doubt the love, the presence, the grace of God as it is directed toward us individually, no matter what. And it's a wonderful and comforting thing to see God's dealing with the nation of Israel, even in its somewhat cloudy origins, he is going to make of them the greatest nation of ancient history.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the privilege of studying your word. We thank you that we are the recipients of your grace, your faithfulness, your mercies are renewed every morning.

We pray that we will not let consciousness of that fact slip from our minds, but in that light...