

Torah Portion: Vayetze (Genesis 28:10-32:3)

[The focus of this Torah portion series is family structure and function as revealed in Scripture. I.e., headship, patriarchy, marriage, etc, graduating to understanding community and Israel as a whole. If you have not read other portions up to this point, you may want to as parts build on previous lessons in Torah.]

Buckle up, because this Torah portion is going to stretch your thought process and understanding of God, *His* ways and what headship and patriarchy are all about!

Our portion begins with Jacob leaving his father's home and beginning the journey north to Paddan-aram, in obedience to the instruction of his father and mother. (28:7) His goal is to take a wife from the daughters of Laban. (28:2) Before doing that, though, something very important has to happen. Jacob must have a vision.

10 Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. **11** He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the **stones** of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place. **12** He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. **13** And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. **14** Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. **15** Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until

I have done what I have promised you.” **16** Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.” **17** He was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

There is much we need to unpack from these verses. First, let us be reminded of the guiding pattern we have consistently referred back to because it is central to the events happening here.

I Cor. 11:3 But I want you to understand that Messiah is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Messiah.

Jacob, having left the tent of his mother and the covering of his father is now fully exposed to and under the headship of the Messiah. Now, this assertion may be a source of chaffing for some readers, but it would serve us well to consider several very interesting and related topics: The Angel of the Lord, the Memra de Yeya and Machut! Many books have been written on each of these topics. I have included several in the Bibliography with a couple citations in the following crash course.

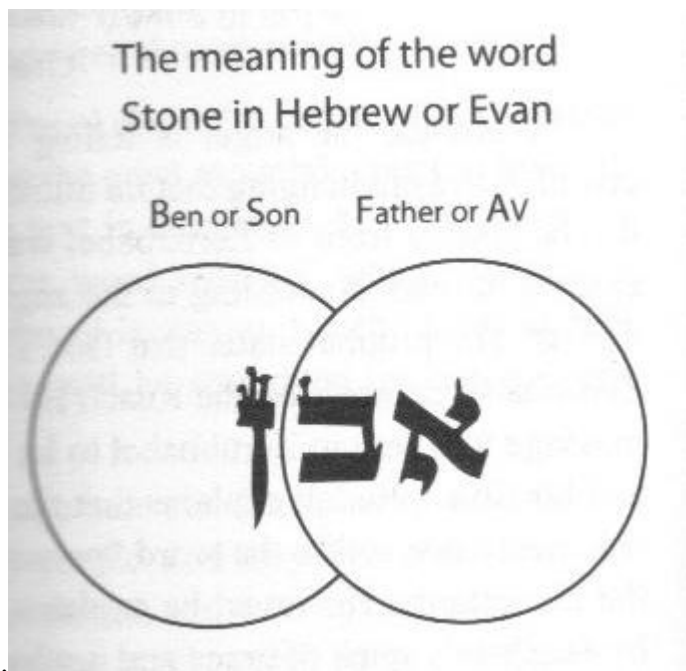
Christians are taught that ‘Jesus is on every page’ of Scripture. The problem is that few ever learn or understand what that means or how to ‘find’ Him. Early in my transition from the pulpit to walking Torah, I was in mortal fear of ‘losing my salvation,’ so I set out to discover Yeshua on every page. Indeed, He is there!! Many, many concepts and pieces expose Him, multiples of which are in this very passage that opens our portion. But as a quick review up to this point in Scripture, we could consider,

- 1:26 ‘Let US make man in OUR image...’
- 3:8 ‘They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day...’
- Targum Onkolos, an authoritative Aramaic translation of the Torah renders 3:8 as ‘..sound of the Word of the Lord (Memra de Yeya) walking in the garden...’
- 9:17 T. Onkolos ‘...the covenant which I have established between My Memra and all flesh...’
- 15:6 ‘Then he believed in the Memra de Yeya and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.’ T. Onkolos

- 16:7, 9, 10, 11 the *visible* Angel of the Lord speaks and makes promises, then in v. 13 the Hebrew says ‘the Lord who spoke with her’, T. Jerusalem says, ‘the Memra who spoke to her...’
- And many more instances of a *visible interaction* between God and man.

A free study guide for pursuing the Angel of the Lord instances in the Torah is available at <https://natsab.com/2015/07/19/angel-of-the-lord-study-guide/> while a free audio teaching and powerpoint concerning the Memra are available at <https://natsab.com/2015/01/26/sunday-school-p-4-the-memra-crash-course/> . Additional resources would include *The Messiah in the Tanach*, by Tim Hegg and *Who Ate Lunch with Abraham*, by Asher Intrater. Tangential, and used below, is *The Concealed Light*, by Tsvi Tsadan. An additional recommendation is chapter two of the *Addendum to the Bilingual Edition of Likkutei Amarim Tanya*, by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Laidi, which explores the idea of Malchut.

So, we should not be surprised that Jacob is met early in his journey to Paddan-aram by a situation and vision that is positively dripping with Messianic reference as he is brought clearly under the headship



of this figure.

Our first reference is to a stone that he placed under his head to rest. In *The Concealed Light*, Tsvi Sadan connects multiple messianic passages and uses of ‘stone’ while explaining why ‘Stone’ is a name of the Messiah. For our purposes, because Sadan glosses over this passage (presumably because there are so many uses to choose from), we will cite Rabbi Itzhak Shapira in [*The Return of the Kosher Pig*](#). [I wrote about a terrific connection](#) and illustration (reproduced at right from page 90) R. Shapira uses to demonstrate the interesting connection between father and son in the word ‘stone.’ Notice that ‘stone’ is used at least eight times in the first 20 or so verses of our portion.

In conjunction with stone, the vision of a ladder with angels ascending and descending upon it is a clear picture of Messiah, directly cited by Yeshua. In two footnotes,, R. Avrom ties the Memra, the Ladder and Yeshua neatly together (**emphasis mine**);

1 The Palestinian Targums in verse 10 insist that a miracle happened to make Ya’aqov Avinu stop for the night at Beyth-Eyl because **“the word” wanted to speak to him.**” The symbolism of **“the word” i.e. Messiah being the actual ladder** to heaven is quite remarkable. See Ronning, J. (2011). *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology* (p. 198). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

4 Alfred Edersheim points out this is an instance of the **Memra, the word, manifest** in order

to visit man directly. See Edersheim, A. (1896). The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Vol. 2, pp. 660–661). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. Further testimony that this is **the Memra referenced by Yeshua**’s own reference to this fact, “Truly, truly, I say to you, **you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.**” – Basorat Yochanan 1:51.

Avrom, Rabbi Yirmeyah Ben. [*Genesis Look Again: A Fresh Translation with Notes*](#) (Torah Book 1) (p. 116). Kindle Edition.

Amazing!! But, why?!?

The reason, as previously alluded, is that Jacob is now out of his father’s house and clearly under the headship of the Messiah. The *purpose* of this encounter is directly related to headship and patriarchy. Jacob is being placed under direct authority, but more significantly, he is being given a specific calling. Adonai tells him the course and direction of his life and grants him a vision so great it will take many generations to fulfill. He’s going to need, as we will see in a few minutes, more than one helpmeet to do what he is being given. Recall,

the LORD stood above it and said, “I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. **14** Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and **you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.** **15** Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

Every man needs to understand the centrality of vision and calling in his purpose for being. If man is created in the image of God and is to display His glory, then he must come to grips with the fact that God is not merely existing. He is all about a plan and a purpose. Messiah, our next example, exhibits a plan and purpose with every step, every action, every minute of every day. Each appears focused on a

particular long term plan. Noah, same. Abraham, same. Jacob, same. Joseph, Moses, David, etc...

Same! Vision and calling is central to a man's reason for being. It is also the reason he needs woman and should be the very reason woman is attracted to him. Men, what is your calling? Why do you use up oxygen? Is it to be lethargic and apathetic, or did God create you for more? Have you asked *Him* for what *He* wants you to be doing? Far too many men are chasing nothing, or chasing worldly or self-serving desires. God created you to be a patriarchal head with a vision that is multigenerational! [As a very quick side note: Generally, a man's vision is related to Kingdom work, but he may walk that out through a business or career that focuses somehow in Kingdom direction. The key is to seek your Head for clear vision and direction!]

Woman was created as a helpmeet. Her purpose is to help her husband accomplish *his* God-given purpose. Paul clearly tells us, woman was created for man, not man for woman. Her purpose is bound up in him! Eve's job was to support Adam, not go off on her own. The fact is, woman *cannot fulfill her purpose* without a husband. (Paul offers a couple rare exceptions... widows over 60, or avowed celibates serving the kingdom. He advises single women to 'marry, only marry in the Lord.') Even with these exceptions, these women should still be under the covering of a man (ie. father, brother, son, uncle, nephew, close family friend, an elder in the community etc...) and they should be submitted to and contributing to the household in whatever way their head sees fit. I find no long term place within the Torah for any "uncovered" lady. Concerning this matter in future prophecy, Isaiah says,

Isaiah 4 For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!"

Consider the surrounding context of the above passage. Without question, this is yet future. Paul makes it clear that it is shameful (reproachful?) for a lady to be uncovered both physically and spiritually. In the case of a single woman, a particular man would have the same authority over her that her father would have and he should exercise that appropriately with regard to the women in his covering. Married women, do you know what your husband's calling is? Are you actively helping him toward it? If he does not know, are you encouraging him to seek his Head, or are you steering him

toward your own desires? Single ladies, foremost, you are to have a covering. Do you? If not, you should be actively seeking the Father for a solution, whether temporary (father, brother, son, etc) or permanent (husband). You should be pursuing the Father asking that He mould your heart and equip you to be the helper for whoever He has for you and trust Him to go before you.

Ponder and discuss.

This next section of Scripture is quite challenging for most of Christendom. It rather seriously rattles some dearly held paradigms. Let's take care to see through the eyes of God and His Word and not the eyes of culture or tradition.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her." **22** Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. **23** Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and *Jacob* went in to her. **24** Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. **25** So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" **26** But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. **27** Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years." **28** Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. **29** Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. **30** So *Jacob* went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

Jacob has worked seven years and asks for his wages, Rachel. Laban pulls a fast one and pawns Leah off on him. Because he had gone in to Leah, she was now his. After addressing Laban, he is also joined to Rachel. After seven years of labor he has not one but two wives, two hand-maidens and another

seven year debt to pay off. Wow! Talk about a head turning series of events!!

Christendom makes a lot of hay about this turn of events, but the short of it is that God wasn't surprised. In fact, a case can be made that He *ordained* it. Chew on that for a minute!

Simply, from Scripture, no sin was committed by Jacob, Leah or Rachel. More precisely, Jacob acted righteously in keeping Leah, though we do see a problem with him picking favorites, a dynamic he likely witnessed between Isaac and Rebecca over himself and Esau. But, these verses expose some very hard questions that must be asked. We have seen the story of Lamech and his two wives in Genesis 4. We have seen that Abraham had Sarah as well as several concubines. Now we have Jacob with Leah and Rachel, sisters in what *seems* really problematic. So, let us parse out the several issues here.

1. Is it lawful to have two (or more) wives?
2. Is this just an Old Testament cultural aberration?
3. What about sisters? Doesn't Leviticus 18:18 say no to marrying sisters?
4. How should Jacob treat his wives?

Each of these could take pages or even a good book to fully sort out, so we will offer resources beyond our answer to further support why we take the position we take. Please understand, for many, this is incredibly emotionally challenging material, but we must align ourselves with the Word, not bend the Word to fit our feelings. Now, each question in turn.

Is it lawful to have two (or more) wives? Christendom's ready answer is 'no!' But, is that a traditional answer or does Scripture support it? In fact, there is not a single verse or command in Scripture against a man having more than one wife. Rather, the testimony of Scripture is quite the opposite. Consider, does God commit sin or ever describe Himself in sinful terms?

Ezekiel 23: The word of the LORD came to me again, saying, **2** "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; **3** and they played the harlot in

Egypt. They played the harlot in their youth; there their breasts were pressed and there their virgin bosom was handled. **4** Their names were Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister. And they became Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. And *as for* their names, Samaria is Oholah and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

5 “Oholah played the harlot while she was Mine; and she lusted after her lovers, after the Assyrians, *her* neighbors,

God clearly describes Himself as the husband of two sister brides. Consider this passage,

Jeremiah 3:**6** Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. **7** I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. **8** And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. **9** Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. **10** Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares the LORD.

God gave the house of Israel a certificate of divorce, but He did not give one to the house of Judah. To be sure, one cannot divorce half of a bride. As with Ezekiel 23, the house of Israel and the house of Judah undeniably represent two brides. This is confirmed yet again in Jeremiah 31 in the New Covenant, no less,

Jeremiah 31:**31** “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I

was a husband to **them**," declares the LORD.

At this point, most that have never faced this truth have minds blown! Yet, the above verses are intimately connected to Rachel and Leah! The house of Israel sprang from Rachel and the house of Judah came from Leah! Read [*Does God Have Two Brides?*](#) for more connections.

Our original question was 'is it lawful?' In fact, over and over in Scripture we see God supporting such an arrangement when pursued righteously. Consider verses like,

Gen. 20:2 Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. **3** But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is [c]married." **6** Then God said to him in the dream, "**Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also [f]kept you from sinning against Me**; therefore I did not let you touch her....**17** Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore *children*. **18** For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.

Notice, God himself agrees with Abimelech that he had taken Sarah "in the integrity of [his] heart" but Abimelech already had *at least one wife* as well as maids who bare him children.

2 Samuel 12:**8** [God speaking to David through Nathan, the prophet] I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

2 Chro. 24 Joash *was* seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name *was* Zibiah from Beersheba. **2** Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. **3**

Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters.....**15** Now when Jehoiada reached a ripe old age he died; he was one hundred and thirty years old at his death. **16** They buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done well in Israel and to God and His house.

These are paradigm shifting passages, particularly in light of Hebrews 11 that lists Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon and David among the great men of faith, all of whom had more than one wife. Clearly, God does not seem to have a problem.

We must then ask, ‘**Is this just an Old Testament cultural aberration?**’ Christendom assumes that it is and invokes Yeshua’s Matthew 19 conversation wherein He quotes Genesis by saying,

4 And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, **5** and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? **6** So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

The problem is that both before and after these verses the text very clearly declares the subject being discussed is divorce. Yeshua makes clear that once two become one, they cannot be separated, which in this Torah portion affirms Jacob’s righteousness in keeping Leah!!

Ironically, Yeshua describes Himself in polygynous terms in Matthew 25 and the parable of the virgins. Consider,

25 “Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to **ten virgins**, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. **2** Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. **3** For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, **4** but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. **5** Now while the **bridegroom** was delaying, they all got drowsy and *began* to sleep. **6** But at

midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the **bridegroom**! Come out to meet *him*.' **7** Then all those **virgins** rose and trimmed their lamps. **8** The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' **9** But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you *too*; go instead to the dealers and buy *some* for yourselves.' **10** And while they were going away to make the purchase, the **bridegroom** came, and those who were ready went in with him to the **wedding feast**; and the door was shut. **11** Later the other **virgins** also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.' **12** But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' **13** Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.

Paul confirms this very understanding in I Corinthians 7:2. The English says,

2 But because of immoralities, each man is to have his **own** [heautou] wife, and each woman is to have her **own** [idios] husband.

The problem is that the English does not reveal that the Greek words for 'own' are not the same!! The Greek 'heautou' denotes exclusive ownership. Essentially, she belongs exclusively to him. The Greek 'idios' denotes 'belonging to' as used in Matthew 9:1 and Luke 2:3 'his own city' or Luke 6:44 'his own fruit.' The fruit doesn't 'own' the tree or the citizen the city. In each case, they belong to the subject just as a woman 'belongs to her husband' exactly supporting the very points we have been making regarding the order of headship from the beginning.

There are many possible objects, most with very easy explanations. In order to not derail this study, I strongly recommend you prepare to do some deep study and research because headship and patriarchy are intimately connected to what Scripture says regarding marriage and family structure. The clear stance of God as delineated in Scripture is unchanging from beginning to end. "He who finds a wife, finds a good thing." Go to <https://natsab.com/biblical-marriage/> for a bundle of free reading and resources as well as a list of linked books worthy of your study. Let's move on to our third question,

What about sisters? Doesn't Leviticus 18:18 say no to marrying sisters? Well, we've already seen that in Ezekiel 23 God describes Himself as having 'two daughters of one mother' who 'bore Me sons and daughters.' Would He describe Himself in sinful terms? If not, maybe we need to look at the verse again and see what we are missing.

18 You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.

The *intent* of the taking is the heart of the matter. The sister is not to be taken 'as a rival while she [her sister] is alive.' With this understanding, even in Laban's deception, Jacob did not take Leah *as a rival* to Rachel. This is not to say that rivalries did not manifest. Sin is bound up in the heart and the circumstances did not *create* the sin, they merely *revealed* it.

[While we are here, one common indictment against plural marriage is that it causes family strife. Truthfully, the marriage situation only reveals what was already in the heart. Many Biblical monogamous marriages (as far as we know) had strife and contention just like many marriages today! Recall Cain killing Abel, Ham having relations with Noah's wife, Jacob and Esau, etc. The *form* of marriage is not the issue. Sin is the issue!]

One of the problems in Jacob's heart, revealed by this marriage situation, is his tendency to play favorites. We see it in this passage regarding loving Rachel over Leah and we will see it later in his affections for Joseph over the other brothers. The marriage situation doesn't *cause* Jacob to act this way. It *exposes* what is really happening in his heart. We must wonder if this was what he learned from Rebecca and Isaac in their treatment of himself and Esau?

Our final question, related to this is, '**how should Jacob treat his wives?**' And, this is a matter taken up in more detail later in the Torah, but the quick preview comes from Exodus 21:10.

10 If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights.

The point is, the man is to treat each woman equally and with respect and dignity, no different than the way he is to treat his children. Playing favorites with people is never a good practise.

31 Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. **32** Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." **33** Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also." So she named him Simeon. **34** She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. **35** And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

This is a sad passage in that it does reveal that at the very least Leah *feels* unloved. Maybe it was a matter of relevance next to Rachel, maybe Jacob was actively negative toward her. We do not know. On the one hand, she is not missing *some* conjugal rights evidenced by four sons, but something is not being handled correctly by her head. Bottom line, Jacob is the head and he is the responsible party. *Any* disconnect or friction in the family is his responsibility to resolve.

30 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." **2** Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" **3** She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children." **4** So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. **5** Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. **6** Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she

named him Dan. **7** Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. **8** So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali.

The wrestling match between Rachel and Leah is palpable. It doesn't have to be this way, but they chose the way of envy, jealousy and competition instead of seeking how they can be a help to their husband. Western culture looks at the situation and thinks the women are justified in their sinful behavior, however, nothing could be further from the truth. The fruits of the Spirit do not include envy, strife and jealousy.

A couple important notes: the text says 'God has withheld the fruit of the womb' to Rachel. Further, when Rachel gives Bilhah to Jacob as a wife and she conceives, Rachel attributes the vindication to God.

9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, **she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.** **10** Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. **11** Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad. **12** Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. **13** Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher....**17** God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. **18** Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages **because** I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. **19** Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. **20** Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. **21** Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

It is fascinating to note that after Leah bears a fifth son that she attributes the blessing from God to her willingness to give Zilpah, her maid, into Jacob's bosom.

Jacob now had four wives, a bundle of sons and it is clear that in spite of the family struggles, God was in the middle of it blessing Jacob and establishing the very foundation of Israel!! Much of Christendom denigrates the circumstances, particularly Jacob's multiple wives, but God never utters a single syllable of condemnation or judgment. Maybe we need to rethink how we portray the patriarchs and their families.

22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb. **23** So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." **24** She named him Joseph, saying, "May the LORD give me another son."

25 Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country. **26** Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you." **27** But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, *stay with me*; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account."

Jacob now had four wives, a bundle of sons and it is clear that in spite of the family struggles, God was in the middle of it blessing Jacob and establishing the very foundation of Israel!! Much of Christendom denigrates the circumstances, particularly Jacob's multiple wives, but God never utters a single syllable of condemnation or judgment. Maybe we need to rethink how we portray the patriarchs and their families.

Without question, the testimony of Scripture is God's hand of blessing on Jacob! I am reminded of the words of Balaam concerning Jacob,

Numbers 23:8 "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how can I denounce whom the LORD has not denounced?

We must be *very careful* how we express any cultural disagreement with Jacob because Yehovah has no problem with Jacob here. I believe that we can easily surmise that God ordained the circumstances for Jacob's family in righteousness.

3 Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you." **4** So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, **5** and said to them, "I see your father's attitude, that it is not *friendly* toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me..... **11** Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.'..... **13** I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.'" **14** Rachel and Leah said to him, "Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? **15** Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. **16** Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you."

Jacob is the head of his family. He has worked incredibly hard for twenty years and God has blessed him mightily. Now, he calls his wives to the field and meets with them recounting everything that has happened and relaying the dream. He alone has the decision, but in a wise move, he gathers their input and insures that they are ready to follow.

17 Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels; **18** and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. **19** When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. **20** And Jacob stole the heart of Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. **21** So he fled with all that he had; and he arose and crossed the *Euphrates* River, and set his

face toward the hill country of Gilead.

Jacob acts decisively in order to be obedient to God, preserve his family and the assets God has given him. The one ‘fly in the ointment’ was Rachel’s actions on the way out the door. This leads to a rash statement by Jacob that

29 It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.’ **30** Now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father’s house; *but why did you steal my gods?*” **31** Then Jacob replied to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. **32** The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take *it* for yourself.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

33 So Laban went into Jacob’s tent and into Leah’s tent and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah’s tent and entered Rachel’s tent. **34** Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel’s saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find *them*. **35** She said to her father, “Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me.” So he searched but did not find the household idols.

There is a certain amount of humor to household ‘gods’ being stolen and sat upon by a woman in her uncleanness, and we could get sidetracked exploring the theological imagery as Laban can’t ‘find’ his ‘gods’ as if they could cry out for help. Some gods!

But, there is something else that is distressing. Rachel does something that endangers the whole family without consulting her covering and out of ignorance, he speaks rashly on the matter. Jacob says, “**The**

one with whom you find your household gods shall not live.”

Men, we must guard every word that comes from our mouths. Life and death are in the tongue, therefore, we must be careful to speak truth and life. Scripture does not draw a direct connection between Rachel's death and this moment, however, I find it very interesting that she dies soon after entering the Land is buried separately from the rest of the patriarchs. True, there are significant prophetic implications to the sequence of events regarding Rachel's life when Jacob enters the Land, nevertheless, do his rash words concerning someone under his covering have any bearing? I tend to think so.

Much more could be studied from this portion and each of the several areas we have considered could easily be interconnected with so much more Scripture offering a small book just from this portion. We would conclude with a simple encouragement regarding the two major areas considered here. First, it is very important that a man seek God for vision and calling and for a woman to seek and come under the covering of a man with Godly vision and calling. Second, it is imperative that we study out what Scripture *actually* says regarding marriage and family structure instead of trusting tradition and doctrines that are argued from emotion instead of fact. Both of these critical areas are challenging, particularly the second, to our paradigm, but we must recall, God doesn't change and His ways are higher than ours.

Shalom!