

The Bible Vindicated! - 20

The chart which occurs after this page connects the information we now have from the Scripture record with the time-line of Jacob's life. The actions of Laban to get some cheap labor from his sister Rebekah's son created not only a stressful life for Jacob, but a complicated one also.

Jacob, having left Padan-Aram at 97 after his 40 years stay, would have been $97 - 40 = 57$ years old when he first arrived there. The resulting time-line fits with the narrative: Reuben (in Jacob's 65th year), Simeon (67), Levi (69) and Judah (71) were born to Leah over period of seven years. This was a period long enough for Rachel to decide on giving to Jacob her maid to bear Dan (74) and Naphtali (76) over the next five years - Genesis 29:32 - 30:8.

Seven years after Leah "stopped bearing" she gave her maid to Jacob to bear Gad (in Jacob's 79th year) and Asher (81) over the next four years. Two years later Reuben was about 18 years old (83) and manifested the sympathetic side of his otherwise weak character. His father Jacob had been mostly absent from his mother Leah's tent, which tended to increase his respectful and love for his mother. And so when Leah evidently let it be known that she would be pleased if some mandrake could be brought to her, Reuben happily complied. - 30:9-14.

As we saw earlier, a twenty-year stay by Jacob with Laban would make Reuben about four years old to go out into the fields to identify and bring the mandrakes back to his mother. It seems an unlikely age for a child to be allowed to wander the fields in search of this peculiar plant. It is far more believable that an eighteen year old boy would be able to do this on his own, and Reuben's age on this occasion fits with the forty years stay of Jacob in Padan-Aram.

Leah made wise use of this plant which was believed to possess love-inducing properties, and with it managed to persuade her sister Rachel to send Jacob to stay in her tent. The outcome was the additional births by Leah of Issachar (in Jacob's 84th year), Zebulun (86) and her daughter Dinah (88) over the next five years - 30:14-21.

After the birth of Dinah, Jacob returned to his beloved Rachel's tent, and she finally gave birth to her own child, Joseph (in Jacob's 91st year). Jacob would rejoice over this birth, and likely let it be known that it was a highlight of his life. Such celebration would hit Leah hard, as it would all her sons, but it was evidently too much for her now 20 year-old son Judah, to see his mother's tent once again abandoned by Jacob. Judah evidently wanted no more to do with this family, so he "departed from his brothers" - 30:22-24; 38:1.

Regular traffic flowed on the roadways of that time which ran northwards from Egypt, through Canaan, Syria and beyond. An example of this can be seen in the trading caravan mentioned in 37:25. Rebekah's nurse would have stayed most of her life with Isaac and Rebekah - 21:7, but clearly she had been brought along one of these roads to live with Jacob's family, her death occurring after the incident at Shechem - 35:8.

The outrage which Judah would feel from Jacob's treatment of his beloved mother Leah would be enough to make him decide on seeking his fortunes elsewhere. He left home, travelled southwards, and ended up at Adullam, 10 miles/16 km north-west of Hebron. There he made friends with a Canaanite, Hirah. Attracted by a Canaanite girl that he saw, he married her and she bore a son, Er (in Jacob's 92nd year). A year later Judah's wife bore another son, Onan (93), and the next year a third son, Shelah (94) - 38:1-5.