



**Gutenberg College Summer Institute 2015  
REUNION: Tanakh and the Gospel of Matthew**

**Talk 10: Reunion of Jeremiah 31:15 and Matthew 2:18  
David Crabtree**

**I. Introduction**

- A. Bigger project than I expected
- B. Keep going back
  - 1. We will work our way back from Matthew to Genesis then work our way from Genesis to Matthew.
    - a) Torah is so foundational.

**II. Matthew 2:16-18**

- A. Not a difficult passage
- B. Herod was paranoid and extremely insecure.
  - 1. Not Jewish by heritage
  - 2. Not of royal blood
  - 3. Maintained in power due to friendship with Caesar Augustus
    - a) Herod taxed heavily to be able to be generous toward Romans.
    - b) He depended on them for his power.
- C. People had heightened messianic expectations at this time.
  - 1. Many pretenders arose.
  - 2. Some of those led uprisings.
    - a) They could be dangerous.
- D. Herod was brutal.
  - 1. He killed his favorite wife and sons.
- E. The killing of the children in Bethlehem is very plausible.
  - 1. No extra-biblical evidence
  - 2. Demographic information suggests about 20-30 children killed.
- F. But why does Matthew quote Jeremiah at this point?

**III. Jeremiah 31:15-16**

- A. Context
  - 1. Reforms under Josiah in Judah

- a) Found scroll (Deuteronomy) (to a unified Israel)
- b) Reforms carried out.
- c) Reform movement influenced Israel.
  - (1) Some came to Jerusalem for feasts.
  - (2) Influx of people from Israel
2. Most of Jeremiah 1-29 is about the judgment coming on Judah for its wickedness.
  - a) Judah should surrender to Babylon.
    - (1) Otherwise destruction and exile
  - b) False prophets were saying God would reward Judah for its righteousness.
    - (1) They sought to kill Jeremiah.
- B. Jeremiah 30-31 is very different in tone.
  1. These two chapters could be the “book” mentioned in verse 2.
  2. Very upbeat; glorious future of Israel and Judah
  3. Israel and Judah will be saved.
    - a) There will be a “turning.”
      - (1) The people will turn (repent).
      - (2) God will turn (look favorably on Israel).
      - (3) God will turn their mourning into joy (verse 13).
  4. Verse 15 comes as a shock in this context.
  5. Why “lamentation and bitter weeping”?—Reconstruction from the clues:
    - a) Why Ramah?
      - (1) Ramah is now Ramallah.
        - (a) Just north of Jerusalem, on the border between Judah and Israel
        - (b) Babylonians gathered the captured there (Jeremiah 40:1).
          - (i) They did triage there.
          - (ii) They sent the best people into exile in Babylon from there.
      - (2) There is some indication Rachel was buried at Ramah.
        - (a) Tradition says she was buried near Bethlehem.
        - (b) Destination of pilgrimage as early as third century A.D.
        - (c) But the bulk of the evidence seems to point to Ramah.
          - (i) I lean toward the later, but the place is not critical for our purposes.

- b) Why Rachel?
  - (1) Rachel, one of the wives of Jacob, crying over the fate of Israel
  - (2) Crying because this is one of the lowest points of Israel's history
- c) But Why Rachel?
  - (1) Why not Abraham? or Sarah? or Rebecca? or Leah?

#### IV. Genesis 25-35

- A. I have taught through Genesis twice.
  - 1. I have looked at it carefully.
  - 2. I ended up changing my mind on some things.
    - a) I had the question "Why Rachel?" in mind.
    - b) I was looking to see if Jeremiah had noticed things I had previously missed.
    - c) I don't think I am reading things into Genesis.
      - (1) You will be the judge.
- B. Patriarchal trajectory
  - 1. The narrative portrays the patriarchs as growing in faith and understanding.
    - a) There is plenty of dysfunction in the family.
    - b) It is not so much that they become better people.
    - c) They come to value what God has promised; they grow in trust, and they want to enjoy his favor. \*
  - 2. This trajectory is true of
    - a) Abraham and Sarah
    - b) Isaac and Rebekah
    - c) But I will start with Jacob.
- C. Birth of Jacob (Genesis 25:19-26)
  - 1. Fought with Esau in the womb
    - a) Born grasping the heel of Esau
  - 2. Rebekah received an oracle from God (Genesis 25:23)
    - a) "And the older shall serve the younger."
  - 3. The name Jacob means "God protects," but sounds like the word for "heel."
    - a) This will be important later.
- D. Purchase of the birthright (Genesis 25:27-34)
  - 1. Esau loved to hunt; Jacob liked to stay in the tents.
  - 2. One day Esau was hunting.

- a) Returned hungry
  - b) Asked Jacob for some stew
  - c) Jacob agreed to trade it to him for his birthright.
  - d) Esau agreed
  - e) “Thus Esau despised his birthright.”
- E. Jacob deceived Isaac for the blessing (Genesis 27:1-40).
- 1. Isaac preferred Esau.
    - a) Both sensual
      - (1) Esau was animal-like.
      - (2) Isaac is a man of the senses.
    - b) Isaac was blind to Esau’s flaws.
      - (1) Esau married badly (Genesis 26:34-35)
      - (2) Esau did not value his birthright (Genesis 25:34).
        - (a) This means he did not value God’s promises.
    - c) Isaac should have recognized that Esau was not an appropriate heir.\*
  - 2. Rebekah preferred Jacob.
    - a) Both schemers
    - b) Rebekah did not want Esau to inherit.
      - (1) She came up with a plan to trick Isaac.
      - (2) Jacob objects because he is afraid of getting caught.
        - (a) Rebekah will take the blame.
    - c) Jacob fooled Isaac.
      - (1) Received blessing (prosperity and power)
    - d) Isaac and Esau discovered the deception.
      - (1) Isaac couldn’t take back the blessing.
        - (a) Because he recognized the rightness of what has happened\*
      - (2) Esau was angry.
- F. Jacob was sent to Haran (Genesis 27:41-28:9).
- 1. To escape Esau
  - 2. To marry well
  - 3. Isaac blessed Jacob again.
    - a) This is more like the blessing Abraham received from God.
      - (1) Descendants without number

- (2) The land of Canaan
- 4. Isaac seemed to understand that Jacob was the right heir.
- G. God spoke to Jacob (Genesis 28:10-22).
  - 1. God blessed Jacob.
    - a) Descendants without number
    - b) Land of Canaan
    - c) Divine protection
- H. Jacob wrestled with God (Genesis 32:24-32).
  - 1. This is out of chronology because I want to focus on Jacob's trajectory.
  - 2. An angel of God appeared to Jacob in his sleep.
    - a) Jacob wrestled with him.
    - b) Jacob wouldn't let him go.
    - c) The angel dislocated his hip.
    - d) Jacob would not let go until God gave him a blessing.
      - (1) Jacob desperately wanted God's favor.
      - e) He got blessed.
      - f) Jacob was renamed "Israel."
        - (1) Meaning—God will prevail.
        - (2) "You have striven with God and man and have prevailed."
- I. Jacob married the daughters of Laban (Genesis 29:1-30).
  - 1. Jacob met and fell in love with Rachel.
    - a) Agreed to work seven years for her
  - 2. Laban had two daughters.
    - a) Leah—oldest, unattractive eyes
    - b) Rachel—youngest, beautiful
  - 3. Laban deceived Jacob and gave him the oldest daughter.
    - a) Jacob agreed to work seven more years for the youngest.
- J. Competition between Rachel and Leah (Genesis 29:31-24)
  - 1. Leah was fertile and unloved; Rachel was loved but barren.
    - a) They engaged in a competition: Leah for love; Rachel for children.
    - b) Only a few incidents help us to see what they are thinking.
    - c) But the names of the sons are the most important clues.\*
  - 2. Neither Rachel nor Leah conducted themselves admirably in this.

3. Leah had four sons.
  - a) First three names show her longing for husband's love.
    - (1) With these names she tries to influence how Jacob sees her.
  - b) Fourth son—This time “I will praise the Lord” (because now my husband will love me?).
4. Rachel became jealous.
  - a) Said to Jacob, “Give me children or else I die.”
    - (1) Turned her frustration on Jacob
  - b) Gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob
    - (1) Bilhah gave birth to Dan: “vindication.”
      - (a) But it was hollow vindication.
    - (2) She gave birth to Naphtali: “with wrestlings of God I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed.”
      - (a) First hint that Rachel realizes her struggles are with God
5. Leah retaliated.
  - a) She gave her maid to Jacob.
  - b) She gave birth to two sons.
    - (1) Gad: “How fortunate”
    - (2) Asher: “Happy am I, for women will call me happy.”
    - (3) These names try to influence how people see her.
6. Rachel bought aphrodisiac.
  - a) Reuben brought home mandrakes.
  - b) Rachel asked for some.
  - c) Leah reacted negatively.
  - d) Rachel traded mandrakes in exchange for Leah spending a night with Jacob.
  - e) Leah gave birth to Issachar: “God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to Jacob.”
    - (1) Her thinking, “At least God sees that I have been good to Jacob.”
  - f) She gives birth to Zebulun: “God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me.”
    - (1) These names are also designed to beg for Jacob's attention.
7. Rachel bore a son.

- a) God remembered Rachel.
  - b) Joseph: “God has taken away my reproach.” “May the Lord give me another son.”
    - (1) Rachel wants more children.
      - (a) This is what God had promised to the patriarchs.\*
      - (b) She wanted more of what God had promised to give.
- K. Jacob fled Haran (Genesis 31-42).
- 1. Laban came chasing after them.
  - 2. After tense exchange, things were worked out.
  - 3. But Laban accused Jacob of stealing his teraphim.
    - a) Rachel had stolen them.
  - 4. She hid them under a saddle and did not get up due to her period.
  - 5. Why did Rachel take them?
    - a) What are they?
      - (1) Objects of worship
      - (2) Means of divining the future
      - (3) Magic for safe travel
      - (4) Like a deed to the father’s estate
    - b) Rutherglen makes the best argument.
      - (1) Emphasis on division and separation
        - (a) Flocks divided
        - (b) Separating from home
      - (2) They are leaving everything they knew.
        - (a) Rachel just grabs them; they are something familiar.
    - c) This is not a sign of her waywardness; it is a sign of how it is to develop faith.\*
- L. Death of Rachel (Genesis 35:16-22)
- 1. They were on their way to the homeland.
  - 2. Rachel went into labor.
    - a) Very difficult and painful
    - b) She was dying.
    - c) “Do not fear for now you have another son.”
  - 3. Rachel named him Ben-Oni.

- a) Meaning: “Son of my affliction” or “Son of my vigor.”
- 4. Jacob named him Benjamin.
  - a) Meaning: “Son of the right” or “Son of days.”
- 5. How do these names play off each other?
  - a) Rachel wants what is valuable, but can’t possess it.\*
    - (1) She got one son but will not be able to enjoy her second.
    - (2) She wanted God’s favor but didn’t get to experience it.
  - b) Jacob recognized that God’s favor was closer than Rachel realized.
    - (1) “Son of the south”—Benjamin was born in the promised land.
- M. Rachel buried “on the way” to Ephrath.
  - 1. She was the only one of the patriarchal family not buried in the cave at Machpelah.
  - 2. Is this divine punishment?
    - a) Jacob erected a pillar.
    - b) Jacob continued to love and respect her.
    - c) “That is the pillar of Rachel’s grave to this day.”
      - (1) Remembered and honored by the people long afterward
- N. Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph.
  - 1. Jacob made Joseph’s sons equal to his sons.
    - a) This means Joseph received the double portion.
  - 2. Jacob did this in memory of Rachel.
    - a) Posthumous consolation to his favorite wife
  - 3. In one verse, the phrase “on the way” is repeated three times (Genesis 48:7).
    - a) This is significant; Rachel was “on the way” but never arrived.
    - b) She became a woman of faith.\*
    - c) She wanted God’s blessing and his promises but never really experienced them.\*
- O. Other interpretations are possible.
  - 1. Leon Kass sees Rachel as a negative figure and Leah as a positive figure.
  - 2. It seems to me that when you put together all the pieces, we are meant to see Rachel as a positive, but tragic, figure.
    - a) Her trajectory parallels Jacob’s.
      - (1) Competition with older sibling



- (2) Came down to wrestling match with God
  - (3) Both desperately wanted the blessing of God.
  - (4) They were not just lovers; they were soul-mates.
3. She had her own struggle with God, but, with difficulty, she came to value God and everything God values; but she never got to enjoy the realization of God's promises.

## V. Jeremiah 31:15

- A. Rachel is the perfect figure to appear at this time.
  1. She understands sorrow and suffering.
  2. She wants God's blessing but has trouble seeing it coming.
    - a) It looks like the end of the line.
- B. This was one of the low points in the history of Israel.
  1. Much to grieve
- C. God's response to her:
  1. "Restrain your voice from weeping. . ."
  2. "For your work shall be rewarded . . ."
    - a) God could see her soul, and he is going to reward her.
    - b) God saw her wrestling, her passion for God's blessing, her hope for the promises.
  3. The people of Judah being sent into exile will return.
  4. There is hope; they will return to the promised land.

## VI. Matthew 2:18

- A. Rachel is the perfect figure to reappear at this time.
- B. This was one of the low points for this particular local.
  1. Much grieving over such senseless slaughter of innocent babies
- C. Rachel would understand the pain and grief.
- D. But God's response to Rachel should be remembered.
  1. Life may seem hopeless right now.
  2. But God is working to realize the promises he made to his people.
    - a) And the birth of Jesus is a huge step in that direction.



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**Names of the Children of Jacob  
David Crabtree**

**Jacob's wives:**

**Leah** (cow?)

- Older (29:16)
- Weak eyes (29:17), but the meaning is not clear. Hamilton says the translation “weak” is not substantiated. He thinks “gentle” or “delicate” is more likely.

**Rachel** (ewe lamb)

- Younger (29:16)
- Beautiful of form and face (29:17)

**Jacob's children:**

1. **Reuben** (from Leah)

- Meaning: “see, a son”
- Because *Yahweh has seen my affliction*; surely now my husband will love me.” (29:32)
- The phrase “my husband will love me” has the consonants of Reuben.

2. **Simeon** (from Leah)

- Meaning: from the verb “to hear”
- “Because the *Lord has heard* that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.” (29:33)

3. **Levi** (from Leah)

- Meaning: from the verb “to attach”
- “Now this time my husband will become *attached* to me, because I have borne him three sons.” (29:34)

4. **Judah** (from Leah)

- Meaning: “I will praise Yahweh” or “May Yahweh be praised.”
- “This time I will *praise* the Lord.” (29:35)

These names represent wishful thinking on Leah's part, designed to influence Jacob to love her.

“Then she (Leah) stopped bearing.” (29:35)

Rachel became jealous and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die.” (30:1)  
 Rachel gives her maid, Bilhah, to Jacob to have more children

5. **Dan** (from Bilhah, maid of Rachel)

- Meaning: from the verb “to vindicate, to judge”
- “God has *vindicated* me, and has indeed *heard* my voice and has given me a son.” (30:6)  
 —A hollow vindication

6. **Naphtali** (from Bilhah, maid of Rachel)

- Meaning: contest?
- “With wrestlings of God I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed.” (30:8)
- (Jacob wrestled [different word] with angel.)
- This name is the first indication that Rachel realizes that her struggle is really with God.

Now Leah gives her maid, Zilpah, to Jacob to have more children.

7. **Gad** (from Zilpah, maid of Leah)

- Meaning: luck
- “How *fortunate!*” (30:12)

8. **Asher** (from Zilpah, maid of Leah)

- Meaning: happiness
- “*Happy* am I! For women will call me happy.” (30:13)

These names suggest that Leah wants to change how others (women) view her.

Rachel bought mandrakes from Leah in exchange for permission to sleep with Jacob. It would appear that Leah had been blocked from sleeping with Jacob (“take my husband” and “you must come in to me”). (30:15)

Leah acted seductively (went out) to rub it in to Rachel (30:16).

“I have hired you.” (30:16)

9. **Issachar** (from Leah)

- Meaning: “there is a reward”
- “God has given me my *wages*, because I gave my maid to my husband.” (30:18)

At this point Rachel must have lifted the ban on Leah sleeping with Jacob.

#### 10. **Zebulun** (from Leah)

- Meaning: ?
- “God has *endowed* me with a good gift: now my husband will *dwell* with me, because I have borne him six sons.” (30:20)

These names suggest that Leah is still trying to influence Jacob to love her. At least God recognizes how good she is to Jacob.

#### **Dinah** (from Leah)

- Meaning: ?
- (30:21)

#### 11. **Joseph** (from Rachel)

- Meaning: Sounds similar to two verbs: “to take away” and “to add”
- “God has *taken away* my reproach.” (30:23)
- “May the Lord *give me another* son.” (30:24)
- Rachel wants more of what God is giving.

Jacob takes his family to Canaan. Rachel hides the household idols under a saddle. (30:25-31:55)

Jacob meets Esau. (32:1-33:17)

Jacob *wrestles* with angel. (32:24-32)

Rape of Dinah (34:1-31)

Move to Bethel (35:1-8)

God names Jacob “Israel.” (35:9-15)

“He who strives with God”

#### 12. **Benoni** (from Rachel)

- Meaning: son of my *affliction*, or “son of my vigor”?
- “Do not fear for now you have another son.” (35:17)
- “And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Benoni.” (35:18)
- **Benjamin**: “son of the right hand,” “son of the south,” “son of days”