The Twelve Sons of Jacob (Gen. 29; 30; 35:16-18)

The influences of tribal customs-the marrying first of the elder daughter, polygamy, the desire for numerous progeny, the substitution of handmaids as secondary wives--left their mark on these children. Added to these potent factors were the emotional pressures of human relationships – Jacob’s strong love for Rachel, his hatred of Leah, the shame of barrenness, the sisters’ rivalry for their husband’s affection. These psychological forces were later reflected ion the characters of the sons and their tribal offspring. (Shotwell 150).

“From Jacob’s analysis of the character and quality of these human branches, it would appear that not all of them would contribute to the moral and spiritual strength of the nation. They are not all of spiritual Israel who are of national Israel. In his long and intimate association with his sons, during which he had doubtless instructed them in all that he had learned of God, he would naturally observe the quality and tendency of their thoughts, having in mind the time when they would enlarge into a nation, and become “as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Greenwood 56).

(numbers after the name indicate the birth order)

LEAH:

Reuben (1)

Simeon (2)

Levi (3)

Judah (4)

Issachar (9)

Zebulun (10)

Dinah (11)

Zilpah: (Leah’s servant)

Gad (7)

Asher (8)

RACHEL:

Joseph (12)

Benjamin (13)

BILHAH: (Rachel’s servant)

Dan (5)

Naphtali (6)