

**BARREN WOMEN AND SIBLING RIVALRY: A STUDY OF RACHEL AND LEAH IN  
BIBLICAL NARRATIVE**

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Leah and Rachel are two of the most well-known matriarchs in Biblical literature. Between the two sisters, they are accredited for the twelve sons of Jacob, the father of the Israelite nation. Both women struggle under the sociological expectations for women of their time—motherhood and potential fertility dominated their lives. The competitive relationship that exists between these sisters is the direct result of their need to be accepted in a society that treated barren women as unblessed by God. My paper looks at the ways in which traditional concepts of motherhood affected Leah and Rachel and how these concepts have influenced modern views of women as mothers. My research will examine the biblical texts concerning Leah and Rachel as well as modern interpretations of their relationship. I will discuss barrenness, the methods of surrogacy, and the emotional and physical dangers of motherhood for women in the ancient Near East.