

Names and Their Meanings in the Story of Jacob's Family

| Name | Parents | Context | Text | Meaning |
|------------------|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Esau/Edom | Isaac and Rebekah | He was one of the twin boys that God gave to Isaac and Rebekah after Isaac prayed for his barren wife. He fought with his brother from the womb on. | Genesis 25:25 Now the first came forth red, and all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau. Genesis 25:30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. | The meaning of Esau is disputed. Some say "hairy" from an Arabic word; others say "made" because he was already "made" like a man when born covered in red hair. Edom means red. |
| Jacob | Isaac and Rebekah | Same as Esau | Genesis 25:26 Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Genesis 27:36 Then [Esau] said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." | Jacob means "one who takes by the heel, supplants, or cheats." |
| Reuben | Jacob and Leah Son #1 | The Lord saw that Leah was unloved by her husband Jacob, and blessed her with sons, while Jacob's beloved wife Rachel was barren. | Genesis 29:32 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." | Reuben means "See, a son" |
| Simeon | Jacob and Leah Son #2 | Same as Reuben | Genesis 29:33 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. | Simeon sounds like the Hebrew word for heard. |
| Levi | Jacob and Leah Son #3 | Same as Reuben | Genesis 29:34 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. | Levi sounds like the Hebrew word for attached. |
| Judah | Jacob and Leah Son #4 | Same as Reuben | Genesis 29:35 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. | Judah sounds like the Hebrew word for praise. |

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| Dan | Jacob and Bilhah (Rachel's servant) Son #5 | Rachel, who was barren, was jealous of Leah, so she convinced Jacob to take her maid Bilhah as a wife/concubine. Bilhah's children were considered Rachel's, so Rachel named them. | Genesis 30:6 Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. | Dan sounds like the Hebrew word for judged. |
| Naphtali | Jacob and Bilhah (Rachel's servant) Son #6 | Same as Dan. | Genesis 30:8 So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali. | Naphtali sounds like the Hebrew word for wrestling. |
| Gad | Jacob and Zilpah (Leah's servant) Son #7 | When Leah realized that she was no longer getting pregnant, she gave her maid Zilpah to be Jacob's wife/concubine. Zilpah's children were considered Leah's, so Leah named them. | Genesis 30:11 Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad. | Gad sounds like the Hebrew word for good fortune. |
| Asher | Jacob and Zilpah (Leah's servant) Son #8 | Same as Gad | Genesis 30:13 Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher." | Asher sounds like the Hebrew word for happy. |
| Issachar | Jacob and Leah Son #9 | Leah's son Reuben brought her mandrakes he'd found. Rachel wanted them, and so Leah bartered them away in exchange for a night with Jacob, during which she conceived Issachar. | Genesis 30:17-18 God have heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. | Issachar sounds like the Hebrew word for wages, or hire. |
| Zebulun | Jacob and Leah Son #10 | Leah's sixth and final son. | Genesis 30:19-20 Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. 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. | Zebulun sounds like the Hebrew word for honor. |
| Dinah | Jacob and Leah | Dinah is the only daughter of Jacob mentioned by name. Genesis 37:35 and 46:7 may indicate that Jacob had other daughters. | Genesis 30:21 Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah. | |

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| Joseph | Jacob and Rachel Son #11 | God listened to Rachel and opened her womb after years of barrenness. | Genesis 30:23-24 So she conceived and bore a son and said, "God has taken away my reproach." She named him Joseph, saying, "May the Lord give me another son." | Joseph means "may he add" and sounds like the Hebrew word for taken away. |
| Benjamin | Jacob and Rachel Son #12 | In naming Joseph, Rachel had asked the Lord to give her a second son. God later granted her request, but she had a difficult labor and delivery. As she was dying, she named him "son of my sorrow," but Jacob changed it to "son of my right hand." Benjamin was the only son born in the land of Canaan. | Genesis 35:18 It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. | Ben-oni means "son of my sorrow;" Benjamin means "son of the right hand." |