

## VII. THE THIRD ARGUMENT -- PARALLELS AND REPETITIONS

One of the arguments most stressed in books dealing with the multi-documentary theory is the claim that the Pentateuch, and in particular the Book of Genesis, has many parallel accounts or duplicates. This argument, when presented in a superficial way, sounds extremely strong. On careful examination it proves to be not nearly as strong as it sounded at first.

The alleged parallels can be divided into various types. One of these types consists in the occurrence of short sentences which say almost the same thing. Thus Carpenter-Harford (page 511) gives the first part of Genesis 30:22 to P, the next to E, and the last third of the verse to J. The verse reads: "And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to *her*, and opened her womb."

A little reflection should show the inadequacy of such reasoning. It is a common device to repeat ideas for emphasis. Any public address that is at all effective will contain sections in which the same thing is said two or three times in different ways. Not only is this true of all writing and all literature; it is particularly true at certain periods when repetition becomes a very frequent literary usage. Thus, if one looks at the Book of Psalms or the Book of Proverbs, or at one of the Books of the prophets, he will find innumerable cases where a statement is made and then repeated in slightly different language.

Repetition of an idea for emphasis or for literary beauty is a particularly common feature of Hebrew writing, and is found in all parts of the Old Testament, even in those where there is no doubt of the unity of authorship. It is not at all strange that such repetition is found not only in this verse about Rachel, but at many other places in Genesis and Exodus.