Reuben’s Birth

- And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.
- And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.
- And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me. (Gen 29:30-32 KJV)

Reuben and the Dudaim

“And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son’s mandrakes.”

“And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son’s mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son’s mandrakes.”

“And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son’s mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.” (Gen 30:14-16 KJV)
What were the dudaim?

Reuben

- First born son of Leah
- Name means “See a son”
- Should receive the becorah
- Should become the leader of the family
- Concerned about his mother’s well being and place in the family
- Strong loyalty
- His flag - red with a mandrake on it. His stone is “odem.” (Ruby.)
- Known for his repentance. - Hosea

Reuben's Personality Profile

- His mother was not Jacob’s favorite…
- Realized that being the firstborn guarantees nothing
  - Isaac not Ishmael
  - Jacob not Esau
  - Rachel not Leah
- What affect did this have on him personally?
Rachel's Death

And it came to pass, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine: and Israel heard it. (Gen 35:22 KJV)

• Once again his mother is pushed aside.
• Jacob seeks comfort from Rachel's handmaiden (Bilhah) instead of Leah!
• He reacts rashly!
• The consequence is: He looses the becorah!

Reuben and Joseph

And Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again. (Gen 37:22)
Reuben seeks atonement

- Story of Joseph – Reuben protects Joseph Why?
  - In order to bring him back to Jacob and get back in good graces.
  - Because of this the first "ir miklat" city of refuge was placed in his nachalah.
- In Egypt – Reuben offers the lives of his two son's if he does not bring back Benjamin.

Character Traits

- Impetuous
- Isolation
- Family Loyalty

Jacob’s Blessing?

Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

4 Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father’s bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

(Gen 49:3-4 KJV)
His impetuosity and haste in which he rushed in with Bilhah revealed his instability.

The tribe of Reuben never took the lead in any battles or campaigns.

Moses’s Plea for Reuben
Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few. (Deu 33:6)

Reuben and the Conquest
Numbers 32: Gad and Reuben want their allotment now!
Why did Reuben and Gad decide to stay on the east side of the Jordan instead of waiting and seeing the rest of the land?
Was it because of Reuben’s impetuous nature?
Was he wanting to isolate himself again from his brothers?
Deborah criticizes Reuben

And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah; even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.
16 Why abdest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart. (Jdg 5:15-16 KJV)

His Tribal Allotment

And the border of the children of Reuben was Jordan, and the border thereof. This was the inheritance of the children of Reuben after their families, the cities and the villages thereof. (Jos 13:23 KJV)

Territory of Reuben

Reuben’s territory abuts the land of Moab and at times Moab possessed part of it. There is a strong similarity in the history of the region.
What made this area appropriate for the tribe of Reuben?

It was good for grazing large herds.
What became of Reuben

In 732 B.C.E. the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser started his campaign against Israel. Reuben was easily defeated and taken away, so say to Syria and some believe he left his mark on the origins of French culture. The Yalkut Shimoni 157 states “Reuben, you will be the first to receive your land inheritance… and also the first to lose it.”

Reuven’s Impact on the Land

- What does one feel when visiting Reuben’s territory?
  - Peaceful - Mishor
  - Isolation/remote – cut off from everyone and everything
  - Brooding
  - Lonely / Withdrawn
  - Survival mode
  - Private / Closed off
  - Almost catatonic

Life Lesson

The main theme that runs throughout the life of Reuben is that thru one impetuous act not only was his life altered but this trait ran throughout his offspring for many generations.