

When the LORD Saw That Leah Was Not Loved, He Opened Her Womb

29: 31-35

DIG: Knowing that these twelve sons of Jacob become the twelve tribes of Isra'el, what significance do you see in their birth mothers? Their birth order? Their names?

REFLECT: Have you ever experienced the futility of trying to make somebody love you? Looking for love in all the wrong places? Then you'll know how Leah felt. When in your misery has the LORD showed you the kindness He showed Leah in her misery?

Jacob's marriages were troubled from the start. When ADONAI saw that Leah was not Ya'akov's choice, He opened her womb. As the LORD chose the second born over the firstborn in Jacob's and Esau's cases, now He chooses the unloved Leah over the loved Rachel to be a mother first.⁴⁷⁴ As Ya'akov started serving his seven years of service for Rachel, Leah began having children in rapid succession, maybe within four years or less. But Rachel was barren (29:31). This of course caused tension between them. Leah was more fruitful, but Jacob loved Rachel more. Each wife wanted what the other had.

Each of Leah's sons was named for her feelings at the time. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him **Reuben**, meaning *see a son*, for she said: It is because ADONAI has seen my misery. So the LORD has seen is the origin of the name Reuben. Then she hoped out loud: Surely now my husband will love me (29:32). Having babies degenerated into a competition between the two wives for Jacob's affection.

She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said: Because ADONAI heard, *shamah*, that I am not chosen, he gave me this one, too. So she named him **Simeon**, which means *hearing* (29:33).

Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said: Now at last my husband will become attached to me, *yilabeh*, meaning *to join*, because I have borne him three sons. So he was named **Levi**, meaning *joined* (29:34). Having born Ya'akov three sons, she hoped that this would ensure his permanent love for her. Your heart cannot help but go out to Leah. She seems so desperate for the love of her husband.

She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said: **This time I will praise ADONAI.** This was the consolation for **the wife** not chosen. The Hebrew word for praise is *odeh* from the root *yadah*, meaning *to praise*. **So she named him Judah**, meaning *praise, or literally He will be praised, or let Him be praised*. His name would be the only one of all **her sons** that does not reflect **her** personal feelings. **Judah** was simply an expression of praise to **the LORD**. **Then she stopped having children (29:35).**

Only **ADONAI's** name is used here in connection with these **children** of **Leah** because the births of **her** last two **sons** were of such great importance. **Levi** would be the ancestor of the Levitical priests. **Moses** and **Aaron** were sons of Levites. **Judah** would be the seed son of all **the sons of Jacob**. His tribe, the tribe of **Judah**, would be the tribe of King **David**, and eventually of the **Messiah** who would come into the world. Therefore, two of the major institutions of the **TaNaKh**, the priesthood and the kingship, have their origin in an unwanted and unplanned marriage.⁴⁷⁵ **Ya'akov** might have favored **Rachel**, but **ADONAI** had mercy on **Leah** and allowed **her** to bear the seed **son Judah**.