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

29: 31-35

When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved, He opened her womb 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 ydah*, 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**.