



*Leah*

DIGNITY  
PERSONIFIED



*Leah*  
DIGNITY

*Rachel*  
SACRIFICE

*Devorah*  
LEADERSHIP

*Chana*  
PRAYER

*Esther*  
MODESTY

*Bruriah*  
UNDERSTANDING

# LEAH- DIGNIFIED PERSONIFIED

## INITIAL DESCRIPTIONS

Bereishis Parshat Vayetzai chapter 29	בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק כט
<p>16) And Lavan had 2 daughters, the name of the elder was Leah and the name of the younger was Rachel.</p> <p>17) And the eyes of Leah were tender and Rachel was of beautiful appearance and beautiful form.</p> <p>18) And Yaakov loved Rachel and he said: I will work for seven years for Rachel your younger daughter.</p>	<p>טז) וללבן שתי בנות שם הגדולה לאה ושם הקטנה רחל:</p> <p>יז) ועיני לאה רכות ורחל היתה יפתתאר ויפת מראה:</p> <p>יח) ויאָהב יַעקב אֶת־רַחֵל ויאָמַר אֶעבְדָּךְ שְׁבַע שָׁנִים בְּרַחֵל בְּתֶךְ הַקְטָנָה:</p>
<p>23) And it was in the evening and he took Leah his daughter and he brought her to him and he lay with her.</p> <p>25) And it was in the morning and behold it was Leah. And he said to Lavan: What is this you have done to me? Did I not work for Rachel for you, why did you trick me?</p>	<p>כג) וַיְהִי בְעֶרְבַּי וַיִּקַּח אֶת־לֵאָה בִּתּוֹ וַיָּבֵא אֵתָהּ אֵלָיו וַיָּבֵא אֵלָיָהּ:</p> <p>כה) וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַהֲנִיָּהּ הוּא לֵאָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־לֵבָן מַה־זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עֲבַדְתִּי עֶמְדָּה וְלָמָּה רָמִיתָנִי:</p>

❖ WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL IMPRESSIONS OF LEAH?

❖ WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LEAH?



Talmud Bavli: Bava Basra 123a	תלמוד בבלי: בבא בתרא דף קכג: א
<p>The condition of Leah's eyes was no disgrace to her but as a credit, for at the crossroads she heard people saying "Rivka has 2 sons and Lavan has 2 daughters. The elder son should marry the elder daughter and the younger to the younger.</p> <p>Leah sat at the crossroads and asked "How does the elder conduct himself?"</p> <p>She was told: "He is a wicked man, a highway robber."</p> <p>"And how does the younger conduct himself?"</p> <p>"A quiet man dwelling in tents"</p> <p>And she wept until her eyelashes dropped."</p>	<p>רב אמר: לעולם רכות ממש, ולא גנאי הוא להאל א שבח הוא לה, שהיתה שומעת על פרשת דרכים בני אדם שהיו אומרים: שני בנים יש לה לרבקה, שתי בנות יש לו ללבן, גדולה לגדול וקטנה לקטן, והיתה יושבת על פרשת דרכים ומשאלת: גדול מה מעשיו? איש רע הוא מלסטם בריות, קטן מה מע שיו? איש תם יושב אוהלים, והיתה בוכה עד שנ שרו ריסי עיניה.</p>

<b>Bereishis Raba: Parshat Vayetzai 71</b>	<b>בראשית רבה פרשת ויצא פרשה עא</b>
Rav Huna said: Strong is prayer that it annulled the decree (her natural destiny) not only that, she married him before her sister.	אמר ר' חונא גדולה תפילה שבטלה הגזירה ולא עו ד אלא שקדמה לאחותה

- ❖ WHAT CAN BE SAID OF LEAH'S CHARACTER FROM THE ABOVE SOURCES?

### STANDING UP FOR HERSELF

*We almost always think about Rachel when we learn about this story, how amazing her sacrifice was... but what was Leah thinking? How did she justify her part in the deception?*

<b>Bereishis: Chapter 29</b>	<b>בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק כט</b>
25) And in the morning and behold it was Leah and he said to Lavan, what is this you have done to me, was it not Rachel that I worked for you for 7 years, why did you deceive me?	כה) וַיְהִי בַבֹּקֶר וַהֲנִיָּהּ הוּא לְאֵה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-לְבָן מִהַזֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי הֲלֹא בְרַחֵל עֲבַדְתִּי עֶמְדָּה וְלָמָּה רָמִיתָנִי:

<b>Bereishis Rabbah</b>	<b>בראשית רבה (וילנא) פרשת ויצא פרשה ע</b>
Throughout the night he called her Rachel and she responded. In the morning, behold it was Leah! "Deceiver, daughter of a deceiver!" He said. "all night I called you Rachel and you responded!" She said to him "Is there a teacher without disciples? Did your father not call you Eisav and did you not respond?"	וכל ההוא ליליא הוה צווח לה רחל והיא עניא ליה, בצפרא והנה היא לאה אמר לה מה רמייתא בת רמאה לאו בליליא הוה קרינא רחל ואת ענית לי, אמרה ליה אית ספר דלית ליה תלמידים לא כך היה צווח לך אבוך עשו ואת עני ליה

- ❖ WHAT DO YOU THINK OF LEAH'S RESPONSE TO YAAKOV?
- ❖ HOW DOES LEAH JUSTIFY HER PART?



## LEAH'S DEEPEST WISH

Bereishit Parshat Vayetzai 29	בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק כט
31) And God saw that Leah was hated and he opened her womb and Rachel was barren.	לא (א) וַיֵּרָא יְקֹוֹק כִּי־שִׂנְאוּהָ לְאָה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רַחְמָהּ וַרְחַל עִקְרָה:

Radak's Commentary	רד"ק בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק כט
<p><i>And God saw that Leah was hated:</i> Yaakov did not hate Leah, of course he loved her but because he loved Rachel more than Leah, the texts calls Leah hated.</p> <p><i>And He opened her womb:</i> To teach you that she was barren and God opened her womb. Rachel remained barren as she was.</p>	<p>לא(א) וירא ה' כי שנואה לאה - לא היה יעקב שונא אותה, אבל היה אוהב אותה, אלא לפי שהיה אוהב את רחל יותר מלאה קרא לאה שנואה ויפתח מלמד שהיתה עקרה וה' פתח רחמה, ורחל נשארה עקרה כמו שהיתה:</p>

### ❖ WHY WAS LEAH GRANTED CHILDREN?

Rut Raba 7	רות רבה (לרנר) פרשה ז
Rabbi Yitzchak said: Rachel was the mainstay of the home therefore Rachel was barren.	א"ר יצחק, רחל היתה עיקרו של בית לפיכך, ורחל עקרה (בראשית כט: לא), עיקרה של בית.

Bereishit Raba Parshat Vayetzai 72	בראשית רבה פרשת ויצא פרשה עב
Leah was "barren of the house" she gave birth to seven.	לאה שהיתה עקרה מן הבית ילדה שבעה

*It is clear from these midrashin that Hashem held something back from both Rachel and Leah, each had to pray for that which they desired most in the world. We can see this from Leah's teffilos AFTER she has each child.*

## FOCUSED PRAYER

Bereishit Parshat Vayetzai Chapter 30	בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק ל
32) And Leah conceived and she bore a son and she called his name Reuven because she said "God has seen my affliction and now my husband will love me"	לב) ותהר לאה ותלד בן ותקרא שמו ראובן כי אמרה כיראה יקוק בעניי כי עתה יאהבני אישי
33) And she conceived again, and she bore as son and she said "Because God has listened to me, that I am hated, and he gave me also this one" And she called his name Shimon.	לג) ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר כי שמע יקוק כישנואה אנכי ויתגלי גם את זה ותקרא שמו שמעון:
34) And she conceived again and she bore a	לד) ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר עתה הפעם ילנה

<p>son and she said “This time my husband will become attached to me” Therefore he called his name Levi  35) And she conceived again and she bore a son and she said “This time I will thank God” Therefore she called his name Yehuda. And she stopped bearing children.</p>	<p>אִישׁי אֵלַי כִּי־לָדַתִּי לוֹ שְׁלֹשָׁה בָּנִים עַל־כֵּן קָרָאתִי שְׁמוֹ לְוִי:  (לה) וְתַהֲרַ עוֹד וְתִלְדַּ בֶּן וְתֹאמַר הַפֶּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת־יְקֹוֹק עַל־כֵּן קָרָאתִי שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה וְתִעָמַד מִלֶּדֶת:</p>
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❖ LOOKING AT THE TEXT, WHAT IS LEAH'S PRIMARY FOCUS?

**Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch's Commentary**

32–35 The names she gave to her sons show that, with each new son that she presented to her husband, his attitude toward her became more and more loving. First: ראה ה' בעיניי. Previously, Ya'akov's preference for Rachel was *visible* and apparent to all. That changed with the birth of ראובן. But to Leah's ear, the preference was still *audible*. From the tone of Ya'akov's voice, Leah sensed that she had not yet won the full measure of his love. Hence, she named her second son "שמעון."

With the birth of her third son, however, she felt that the imbalance had been entirely erased. She expressed her full confidence that her relationship with her husband would now be pure and true: ילדה אישי אלי. Indeed, ליה or הלה denotes a close association of two people, where each one regards himself as the ליה, the debtor, of the other, and feels that he owes his happiness to the other. Accordingly, not Leah but Ya'akov קרא שמו לוי. It would have been presumptuous on her part, had she given the name. Coming from his mouth, however, it was the sweetest acknowledgment.

Hence, when the fourth son was born, she no longer regarded her newborn as a means of attaining a greater measure of her husband's love, for that was already entirely hers. Now she could simply rejoice in her son, and as a delighted mother she proclaimed: "This time I can thank God" just for His gift. "She therefore named him Yehudah."

- ❖ WHAT IS LEAH'S DEEPEST DESIRE?
- ❖ HOW DID SHE SHOW THIS IN HOW SHE NAMED HER CHILDREN?

**YOUR HUSBAND? MY HUSBAND!**

<p><b>Bereishit Parshat Vayetzai Chapter 30</b></p>	<p><b>בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק ל</b></p>
<p>14) And Reuven went in the days of the wheat harvest and he found Dudaim in the</p>	<p>יד (וַיֵּלֶךְ רְאוּבֵן בַּיָּמִים קְצִיר־חֲטִים וַיִּמְצָא דוּדַיִם בַּשָּׂדֶה וַיָּבֵא אֹתָם אֶל־לֵאָה אִמּוֹ וְתֹאמַר רַחֵל אֶל־לֵאָה</p>

<p>field and he brought them to his mother Leah. And Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me the Dudaim of your son" 15) And she said to her "is it not enough that you took my husband that you must also take the Dudaim of my son?" And Rachel said "Therefore he shall lie with you tonight in exchange for the Dudaim of your son"</p>	<p>ה תַּנְיִנָּא לִי מִדּוּדָאֵי בְּנִי: טו (וּתְאִמְרֵי לָהּ הִמְעֵט קִחְתְּךָ אֶת־אִישִׁי וְלִקְחַת גַּם אֶת־דּוּדָאֵי בְּנִי וּתְאִמְרֵי רַחֵל לְכֹן יִשְׁכַּב עִמָּךְ הַלַּיְלָה תַּחַת דּוּדָאֵי בְּנִי :</p>
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WHAT CHARACTERISTICS DOES LEAH SHOW IN THIS PASSAGE?

DOES HER REPLY TO RACHEL SHOCK YOU? WHY?

### KINDNESS IN JUDGMENT

<b>Bereishit Parshat Vayetzai chapter 30</b>	<b>בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק ל</b>
And after that, she bore a daughter and she called her name Dinah	כא ואחר ילדה בת ותקרא את שמה דינה:

<b>Rashi's Commentary</b>	<b>רש"י בראשית פרשת ויצא פרק ל</b>
<p><i>Dinah</i> Our rabbis explain that Leah judged herself that if this was a male child, Rachel her sister would not even be equal to the maid servants. So she davened and the fetus changed to a female.</p>	<p>כא: דינה- פירשו רבותינו שדנה לאה דין בעצמה אם זה זכר לא תהא רחל אחותי כאחת השפחות, והתפללה עליו ונהפך לנקבה:</p>

❖ WHAT DOES THIS PRAYER SHOW US ABOUT LEAH'S PERSONALITY?

### DIGNITY AND POWER OF CONVICTION

<b>Adapted from: Visiton and Leadership- Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik</b>
The covenantal community that God established with Abraham displayed two characteristic moral streaks, two tendencies which prima facie are contradictory and mutually exclusive. First, the covenantal community does not shrink from power. We have never endorsed the Christian claim that the meek shall inherit the earth. Throughout the Bible people have

fought for power, strength and independence. Without power, one cannot be majestic and dignified. Majesty and dignity are not sinful, they are moral virtues.

The dignity of man expresses itself through his ability to take a stand, and to defend whatever God has given him, to defy opponents if their opposition is wrong.

However, the covenantal community displays another trait as well; sacrificial action, the ability to give away and renounce basic inalienable rights for the sake of a great vision or ideal or for the benefit of another human being or community.

This dialect, this thesis and antithesis, revolves about the two middot of the Holy One; Chesed and Gevura; Kindness and Strength or expansion and contraction. Sometimes the Almighty reveals Himself through the medium of gevrah and sometimes through chessed.

Leah and Rachel were not merely people. **Leah is the personification of middat hagevura, of dignity and majesty. The name Leah itself means to work hard, to be tired, God wanted her to fight for her elementary rights. Leah represents self assertion and constructive work. She represents the strength of Jewish character and the unshakeable will of the Jew throughout the millennia.** It is because of this persistence, stubbornness and tenacity that we remain a living people after 3500 years of persecution and massacre.

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

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- ❖ Leah is someone who knows how to use prayer to get what she wants.
- ❖ She is someone who embodies majesty and dignity.
- ❖ She is someone who speaks her mind and stands up for herself.
- ❖ She is someone who learns how to embody other character traits including selflessness.