

Leah's Despair

Jacob slept with Rachel also, and indeed, he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years. – Genesis 29:30 HCSB



Unfortunately, women have always been susceptible to the vagaries of human ideas of beauty. Leah probably grew up in the shadows cast by her beautiful sister's limelight, for Rachel was both beautiful and well favored (i.e. curvaceous). In contrast to these physical attributes, Leah was described as being "tender eyed" which, in context, would seem to imply she struggled with poor vision.¹

Imagine being Leah on the night of her honeymoon as Jacob lifted her veil. Imagine the look of disappointment and anger that came across his face as he realized he had been tricked by her father into taking the plain and homely sister! That initial feeling continued on into her marriage and she was trapped by her father's action into a loveless

relationship.

The truth of the matter was that Jacob was the one who was truly trapped. He wasn't trapped by Laban's deceit, but by his inability to look beyond external beauty. The Lord does not see what man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks at our hearts.² Jacob would have been better off had he looked carefully at Rachel's heart rather than her curves! Where Leah loved her husband (though he was by all accounts something of a cad), Rachel was not truly loyal to him. She grew jealous of Leah,³ abused her power over her slaves,⁴ was selfish,⁵ and willing to hire her husband out as a stud to get what she wanted!⁶ She even stole and lied!⁷

Yet throughout all this, Jacob stubbornly favored the prom queen. Meanwhile, Leah quietly gave birth to her children, longed for her husband's affections and in the end found favor. "Found favor?" you may ask. Yes. In the end Hashem worked things out to her advantage. Jacob came to realize after a while that Rachel was under the judgment of God⁸ and Leah was given equal credit for building the nation of Israel.⁹

I find it significant that when Rachel died she was buried in the way to Ephrath,¹⁰ by the side of the road if you will, while Leah was buried with Jacob's grandparents and parents.¹¹ By the way, one of her sons (Levi) went on to found Israel's priesthood and from her son Judah came Israel's kings and the Messiah Himself.

What is the lesson we learn from Leah? Though we are unloved, we should love anyway. Though we are not one of those favored with beauty or skills, we must remain faithful anyway. We should seek relationship over rights. We should serve rather than be served. We should value others rather than seek position and advantage. If we do, Hashem will make sure that, even if only in our deaths, we will be recognized and loved.

¹ Genesis 29:17

² 1 Samuel 16:7

³ Genesis 30:1

⁴ Genesis 30:3-6

⁵ Genesis 30:14

⁶ Genesis 30:15-16

⁷ Genesis 31:34-35

⁸ Genesis 30:2

⁹ Ruth 4:11

¹⁰ Genesis 35:16-20

¹¹ Genesis 49:29-31