

Men And Women Of The Bible—Leah

Genesis 29:15-35 ~ September 23, 2020

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?” 16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

17 Leah’s eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. 18 Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, “I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.” 19 Laban said, “It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me.” 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.” 22 So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. 23 But in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. 24 (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) 25 When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?”

26 Laban said, “This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn.

27 Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years.” 28 Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. 29 (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maid.) 30 So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban for another seven years.

31 When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben; for she said, “Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.”

33 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also”; and she named him Simeon. 34 Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, “Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons”; therefore he was named Levi. 35 She conceived again and bore a son, and said, “This time I will praise the LORD”; therefore she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing.

Leah...

- A woman who learned to be faithful to the Lord though her circumstances didn't improve
- Never really loved by her father or sister or husband—we never hear anything about her mother at all—but the two men favored Rachel over her
- Leah was the unwanted one, which is why her story is so fascinating—she found a deep and rich faith in the Lord despite the fact that on earth she was pushed aside
- Leah had weak eyes, which was likely a way to say that she wasn't the most physically beautiful woman in the world. It was Hebrew slang.
- To understand the predicament Leah was in, we have to understand marriage customs during that time. Marriage was arranged by the father, and the girl was not consulted.
- But it was different with Rachel and Jacob. For seven years he lived with his cousins, and eventually Rachel began to love Jacob, so that on the day of the wedding they truly were ready to be husband and wife.
- So how in the world did Laban manage to put Leah in Rachel's place? There was a tradition called "tenting the bride."
- Laban, claiming that it wasn't right to allow the younger daughter to marry before the older, offers to give Rachel to Jacob in marriage in return for another seven years of work. Jacob accepts the offer and marries Rachel after the week-long celebration of his marriage to Leah—he doesn't have to wait another seven years.

Leah's Marriage...

- Rachel was well loved, but Leah had been betrayed by her father, and her husband was cool to her while doting on her sister. She no doubt was somewhat depressed.
- Leah's sons...
 - Leah named her firstborn Reuben, indicating that the LORD had seen her misery.
 - She named her second son Simeon, because "the Lord heard that I am unloved."
 - Levi means "companion," and she named him that hoping that her husband would become her companion after giving him three sons in a row.
 - When Judah was born, it is clear that Leah was satisfied by the Lord's love. Judah means "let Him be praised." She is looking to God for her security and love now.
- Her sons became the leaders of six of the twelve tribes of Israel. It was through her son Judah's line that Jesus was born. So even though her husband never really gives her much respect, the Lord has seen her and is abundantly blessing her.

What Do We Learn From Leah?

- How to live our lives with God as the focus, even in undesirable circumstances
- How can we each become more focused on Him even when things in our lives aren't going according to our plan?
- *The only question when we are praising is "Who are you thinking about?" After her first son, Leah thought about Jacob. After her second son, Leah thought about Jacob. After her third son, Leah thought about Jacob. But, after her fourth son, Leah said, "Now I will praise the Lord." Simply put, when you think about the goodness of the Lord, and all that he has done in your life, then you can praise God.*