

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 29-30

JACOB MET THE LORD IN GENESIS 28 AND FOR THE FIRST TIME ENCOUNTERED GOD FOR HIMSELF. HE IS MAKING HIS WAY TOWARDS HIS MOTHER'S HOMELAND TO THE HOUSE OF LABAN, REBEKAH'S BROTHER.

GENESIS 29:1-8 - JACOB ARRIVES, MEETS SHEPHERDS WHO KNOW LABAN

BECAUSE THE STONE COVERING THE WELL WAS SO HEAVY, THE HERDSMEN AND SHEPHERDS WOULD WAIT FOR EVERYONE AND THEIR FLOCKS TO ARRIVE BEFORE UNCOVERING THE STONE. THIS WAY, IT ONLY HAD TO BE DONE ONCE AND PERHAPS THE SHEPHERDS COULD HELP EACH OTHER LIFT THE LARGE STONE.

"PROVIDENTIALLY, LABAN'S DAUGHTER, RACHEL, IS SPOTTED BRINGING HER HERD TO THE WELL. RACHEL MEANS "EWE," AN APPROPRIATE NAME FOR A SHEPHERDESS." (ESV STUDY BIBLE, GENESIS 29:9)

GENESIS 29:9-12 - RACHEL ARRIVES

JACOB IS PRETTY EXCITED TO SEE RACHEL. IT WAS A COOL MOMENT THAT HE HAPPENED TO MEET UP WITH SHEPHERD WHO KNEW LABAN - AND EVEN MORE SO THAT ONE OF LABAN'S DAUGHTERS (AND DON'T FORGET POTENTIAL SPOUSE) WAS MAKING HER WAY TO THAT SAME WELL! IN HIS EXCITEMENT HE GIVES RACHEL A KISS (A WARM GREETING), SHOUTS WITH EXCITEMENT AND EVEN CRIES!

REMEMBER, WHEN JACOB MET THE LORD IN GENESIS 28, HE MADE A VOW ABOUT HIS OWN SERVICE TO GOD, DEPENDANT ON THE SUCCESS OF THIS JOURNEY. HE HAD SAID:

GENESIS 28:20-21 (NLT) - "IF GOD WILL INDEED BE WITH ME AND PROTECT ME ON THIS JOURNEY, AND IF HE WILL PROVIDE ME WITH FOOD AND CLOTHING, 21 AND IF I RETURN SAFELY TO MY FATHER'S HOME, THEN THE LORD WILL CERTAINLY BE MY GOD.

SO THERE'S A LOT OF UNDERSTANDABLE EMOTIONS IN JACOB'S HEART AFTER THIS LONG TREK ACROSS THE DESERT. IN HIS EXCITEMENT, THERE MUST HAVE BEEN SOME ADRENALINE PUMPING TOO, FOR JACOB IS ABLE TO LIFT THE HEAVY STONE COVERING THE WELL, ON HIS OWN. *HUBBA HUBBA*.

GENESIS 29:13-20 - JACOB MEETS LABAN, ASKS TO MARRY RACHEL

LABAN HEARS OF HIS NEPHEW'S ARRIVAL AND RUNS TO MEET HIM. THERE IS A WARM EMBRACE AND WELCOME. JACOB STAYS FOR A WHILE AND ENDS UP SERVING LABAN. UNCLE LABAN WANTS TO REPAY JACOB'S KINDNESS AND ASKS WHAT HE CAN PAY JACOB FOR HIS HELP. JACOB RESPONDS WITH "I WILL SERVE YOU SEVEN YEARS IF I CAN MARRY YOUR DAUGHTER RACHEL!"

THE TEXT TELLS US THAT JACOB WAS IN LOVE WITH RACHEL. SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL (IN FORM AND FACE). THE TEXT ALSO TELLS US THAT LABAN HAD ANOTHER DAUGHTER, HIS OLDEST, NAMED LEAH. LEAH, IN CONTRAST TO RACHEL'S BEAUTY, HAD "WEAK EYES" AN ODD PHRASE WHICH SUGGESTS SHE WAS NOT AS BEAUTIFUL. LABAN AGREES TO THE CONTRACT WITH JACOB.

JACOB'S LOVE FOR RACHEL MAKES THE TIME FLY BY. GENESIS 29:20 IS ONE OF THE MOST ROMANTIC VERSES IN THE BIBLE:

GENESIS 29:20 (NLT) - SO JACOB WORKED SEVEN YEARS TO PAY FOR RACHEL. BUT HIS LOVE FOR HER WAS SO STRONG THAT IT SEEMED TO HIM BUT A FEW DAYS.

GENESIS 29:21-30 - WEDDING SURPRISE!

SEVEN YEARS HAVE NOW PASSED AND JACOB APPROACHES LABAN FOR RACHEL'S HAND IN MARRIAGE. THEY HAVE A GREAT WEDDING FEAST WITH MANY GUESTS AND WHEN EVENING COMES (AKA WHEN IT WAS VERY DARK OUT) LABAN SNEAKS LEAH INTO THE HONEYMOON TENT INSTEAD OF RACHEL! JACOB HAS SEX WITH LEAH (IN THE DARK HE CLEARLY CAN'T MAKE OUT WHO HAS THE WEAK OR STRONG EYES) AND ONLY 5 VERSES AWAY FROM THE MOST ROMANTIC VERSE IN SCRIPTURE WE GET ONE OF THE MOST FRIEGHTENING!:

"AND IT CAME TO PASS, THAT IN THE MORNING, BEHOLD, IT WAS LEAH." (GENESIS 29:25)

YIKES.

MAKE NO MISTAKE, THIS WAS NO ACCIDENT. THIS WAS AN INTENTIONAL MOVE ON THE PART OF GOOD OL' UNCLE LABAN. HE EXPLAINS HIMSELF WITH A VERY MATTER OF FACT "OH YEAH, OUR CUSTOM IS TO NEVER MARRY THE YOUNGER DAUGHTER BEFORE THE OLDER. YOU WANT TO MARRY RACHEL, FINE - BUT YOU NEED TO WORK FOR ME ANOTHER 7 YEARS. JACOB MUST HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED.

THIS IS A MOMENT WHERE JACOB, WHO WAS NAMED IN LIGHT OF HIS HEEL-HOLDING, DECEIVER CHARACTER IS HIMSELF TRICKED. YET HE MARRIES RACHEL AT LAST, AND BEGINS TO SERVE LABAN, NOW WITH RACHEL AS HIS WIFE (OH YEAH AND LEAH TOO). DURING THIS TIME IT IS CLEAR THAT JACOB LOVES RACHEL MORE THAN LEAH. THESE DECEPTIVE ACTS AND THE EMOTIONS THAT RESULT WILL SET UP A STORY OF DYSFUNCTION ONLY THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY COULD PRODUCE.

GENESIS 29:31-35 - THE BABY BATTLE BEGINS

THIS BEGINS THE STORY OF THE PECULIAR WAY THAT THE LORD WORKS THROUGH JACOB AND HIS WIVES TO BUILD THE FAMILY OF ABRAHAM'S GRANDSON AND GREAT-GRANDCHILDREN. IT STARTS WITH LEAH, THE UNLOVED WIFE OF JACOB BEING THE FIRST TO BEAR A CHILD. RACHEL, THE TEXTS TELL US IS "BARREN" (AN INTERESTINGLY COMMON TREND IN THE WOMEN ABRAHAM AND HIS CHILDREN MARRY).

WHAT WE WILL SEE IS THAT THE WIVES OF JACOB NAME THEIR SONS BASED ON THE MOMENTS AND EMOTIONS THAT THEY ARE EXPERIENCING AT THIS TIME. WITH EACH CHILD THE WOMEN HOPE TO FIND FAVOR IN THEIR HUSBAND'S EYES. WITH EACH CHILD THE WOMEN HOPE TO FIND PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE. WITH EACH CHILD THE WOMEN ARE COMPETING WITH ONE ANOTHER. WITH EACH CHILD THE WOMEN TRY TO FIND COMFORT IN SPITE OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES. WHAT A CRAZY STORY.

LEAH BEARS THE FIRST BORN AND NAMES HIM REUBEN. REUBEN MEAN "LOOKED UPON" LEAH NAMES HER SON REUBEN BECAUSE SHE FEELS THAT THE LORD HAS "LOOKED UPON" HER UNLOVED STATE AND BLESSED HER WITH A SON (IN CONTRAST TO THE FAVORED WIFE RACHEL'S BARRENNESS).

HER SECOND SON IS NAMED SIMEON (WHO'S NAME MEANS "HEARD") BECAUSE EVEN AFTER BEING HOPEFUL THAT HAVING A SON WOULD CHANGE HER STATUS, SHE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT THE LORD "HEARD" THAT SHE REMAINS UNLOVED.

HER THIRD SON IS NAMED LEVI (WHO'S NAME MEANS "ATTACH") BECAUSE SHE IS HOPEFUL THAT AFTER GIVING JACOB THREE SONS (A BIG DEAL IN THAT CULTURE), HE WOULD ATTACH HIMSELF TO HER. NEVERTHELESS, SHE IS HAVING SONS, BUT REMAINS UNLOVED BY JACOB. HE DOESN'T

"LOOK" ON HER OR "HEAR" HER NOR "ATTACH" HIMSELF TO HER. WHERE THEN WILL LEAH'S HOPE FOR VALUE AND LOVE COME? AT LAST IT SEEMS THAT SHE LEARNS THE TRUE SOURCE.

AND SO SHE NAMES HER FOURTH SON JUDAH (WHICH MEANS "PRAISE") FOR SHE HAS DECIDED THAT NO MATTER WHAT JACOB MY THINK OF HER, SHE IS GOING TO "PRAISE THE LORD" (GENESIS 29:35). WHAT A JOURNEY TO BE ON TO AT LAST LEARN THIS IMPORTANT TRUTH.

GENESIS 30:1-13 - RACHEL V. LEAH CONTINUES

ALL THE WHILE LEAH IS INCREDIBLY FERTILE, THE "LOVED" WIFE OF JACOB, RACHEL IS BARREN. SHE'S THE PRETTY SISTER, SHE'S THE ONE JACOB REALLY WANTED IN THE BEGINNING AND SHE'S THE ONE HE LOVES NOW - YET SHE IS NOT FULFILLED EITHER! SHE IS JEALOUS OF HER SISTER'S FERTILITY AND COMPLAINS TO HER HUSBAND. SHE OFFERS HER MAID BILHAH TO JACOB WHO SHE HOPE WILL BE A SURROGATE OF SORTS TO HER SIDE'S CAUSE. JACOB DOESN'T ARGUE WITH THE PROPOSITION.

BILHAH CONCEIVES AND RACHEL NAMES THIS SON "DAN" (WHICH MEANS "JUDGED") BECAUSE SHE FEELS GOD HAS JUDGED IN HER FAVOR IN THE MATTER OF RACHEL V. LEAH. SOON AFTER BILHAH BEARS ANOTHER SON AND RACHEL NAMES HIM NAPHTALI (WHICH MEANS WRESTLING) BECAUSE IN HER MIND, THE "WRESTLING MATCH" BETWEEN HER AND HER SISTER IS STARTING TO TURN IN HER FAVOR.

BUT LEAH ISN'T TAPPED OUT YET. SHE ENLISTS HER MAID ZILPAH FOR TEAM LEAH AND ZILPAH BEARS A SON SHE WILL NAME GAD (WHICH MEANS "FORTUNATE" - BECAUSE AFTER ALL, SHE'S FORTUNATE TO BE WINNING THIS BATTLE AGAIN!). LEAH'S MAID BEARS *ANOTHER* SON THROUGH JACOB AND SHE NAMES THAT BOY "ASHER" (MEANING "HAPPY") BECAUSE SHE BELIEVES OTHERS LOOKING AT HER SITUATION WILL CALL HER "HAPPY".

BOY OH BOY. (ACTUALLY AT LAST COUNT WE'RE AT 8 BOYS).

WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS BACK AND FORTH SO FAR?

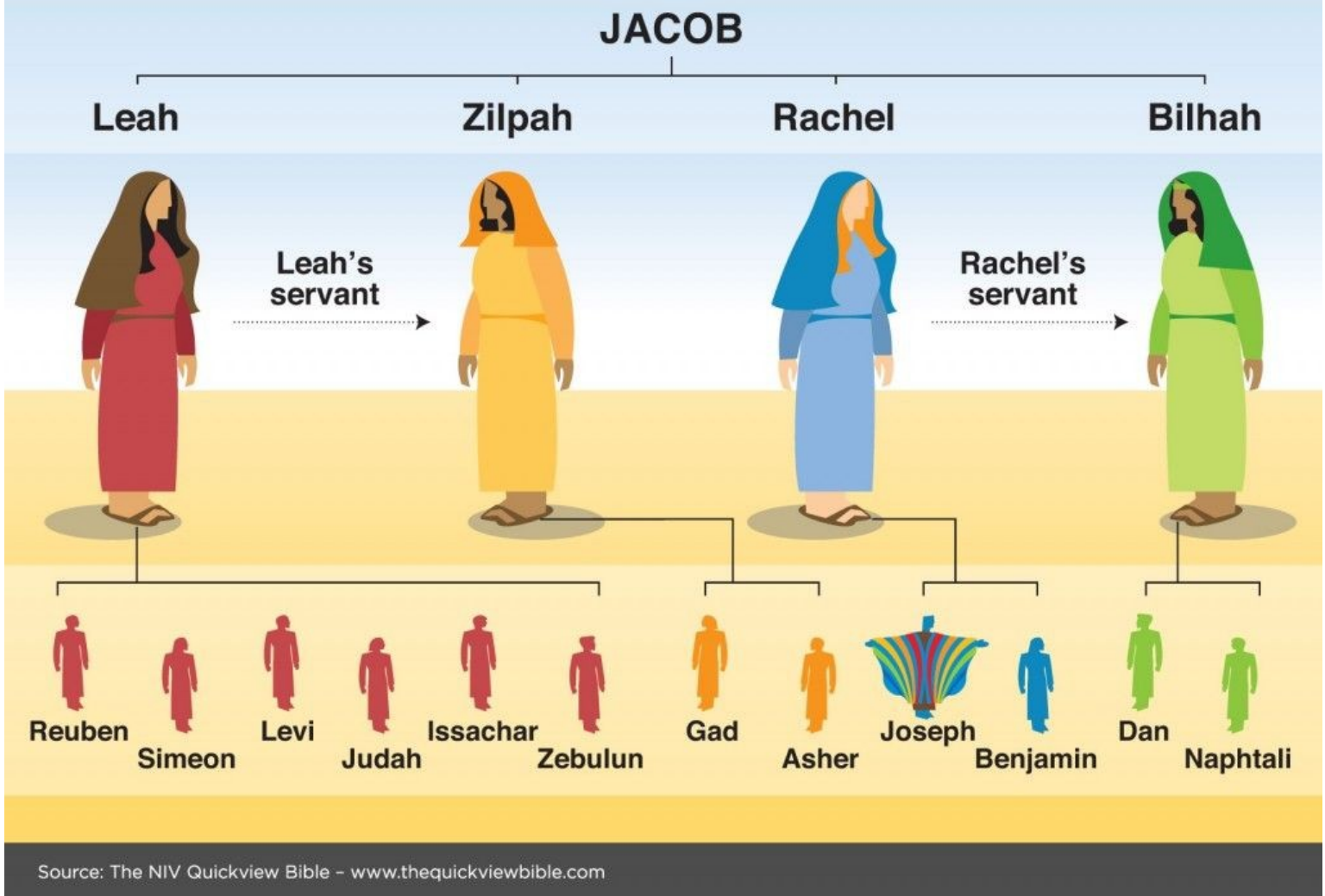
GENESIS 30:14-24 - THE FINAL FOUR

WE READ AN ODD STORY ABOUT REUBEN FINDING "MANDRAKES" (WHICH SOME SCHOLARS BELIEVE MAY HAVE BEEN THOUGHT TO BE A FRUIT WHICH IMPROVED FERTILITY). LEAH AND RACHEL GO BACK AND FORTH ABOUT THESE MANDRAKES AND END UP MAKING A DEAL - LEAH GETS TO SLEEP WITH JACOB AND RACHEL GETS REUBEN'S MANDRAKES. (MEANWHILE JACOB IS NOT PHASED BY ANY OF THIS.)

LEAH BEARS ANOTHER SON FROM THIS ENCOUNTER AND NAMES HIM ISSACHAR (MEANING "WAGES" WHICH ALLUDES TO THE "WAGES" SHE PAID TO HAVE THE ENCOUNTER WHICH LEADS TO ISSACHAR). SOON AFTER SHE BEARS ANOTHER SON, NAMING HIM ZEBULUN, WHICH MEANS "HONOR" (A LIKELY REFERENCE TO THE HOPE THAT JACOB AT LAST WILL HONOR HER AFTER SHE HAS BORNE HIM SIX SONS!). SHE ALSO BEARS ANOTHER CHILD, THIS TIME THE FIRST DAUGHTER, DINAH. (MORE ON HER LATER). LEAH HAD THOUGHT SHE WAS DONE BEARING CHILDREN (29:35) BUT ENDS UP BEARING THE MAJORITY OF JACOB'S CHILDREN.

AND AT LAST WE READ THAT RACHEL, LONG BARREN, BEARS A SON FOR JACOB. SHE NAMED THIS SON JOSEPH (WHICH MEANS "ADD TO ME") BECAUSE AT LAST, HER PRAYER IS HEARD AND GOD HAS "ADDED TO HER" A CHILD OF HER OWN. IT ALSO IS A PRAYER THAT PERHAPS IN THE FUTURE GOD WILL "ADD TO" HER ANOTHER SON OTHER THAN JOSEPH. BUT FOR NOW WE WILL PAUSE, AND TAKE A BREATH AFTER THIS WILD VISIT TO THE ABRAHAMIC MATERNITY WARD.

Jacob's Family



WE STARTED GENESIS 29 WITH JACOB TRAVELING TO FIND A WIFE AND WE END WITH JACOB SERVING ALMOST AS A BYSTANDER TO THE WOMEN IN HIS LIFE BATTLING WITH EACH OTHER OVER HIS ATTENTION, HIS LOVE AND THEIR OWN HONOR. THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE DYSFUNCTION OF THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY AND THE GENERATIONAL SINS THAT WERE PASSED DOWN. BY NOW WE LOOK BACK AT ABRAHAM AND SARAH WITH HONOR, FONDNESS AND NOSTALGIA, BUT DON'T FORGET SARAH WAS THE ONE WHO OFFERED HER SERVANT HAGAR TO HER HUSBAND TO ACCELERATE THE WHOLE FATHER OF MANY NATIONS PROMISE. IT WAS ABRAHAM, AND ISAAC, WHO LIED TO ABIMELECH ABOUT THEIR WIVES BEING THEIR SISTERS. AND WE READ GENESIS 29-30 AND SEE JACOB BEING TRICKED AND EMOTIONAL (AND SEXUAL) WOUNDS REVEALED AND INFLECTED.

WHILE THERE ARE LIKELY A NUMBER OF LESSONS TO LEARN FROM THIS RECORD, THE MAIN ONE WE WILL HIGHLIGHT IS THE WOMEN'S ATTEMPT TO FIND VALUE AND FULFILLMENT IN THEIR ROLES, STATUS AND CIRCUMSTANCES. WHAT A TERRIBLE RELATIONSHIP TO BE IN FOR POOR LEAH...HOPING THAT IF SHE CAN MAKE JACOB HAPPY BY HER ACTIONS (IN THIS CASE BY THE SONS SHE BIRTHED), SHE WILL BE HAPPY. HER HAPPINESS WAS DIRECTLY TIED TO WHETHER OR NOT HER HUSBAND WAS PLEASED WITH HER. AND SADLY, IN JACOB'S OWN BROKENNESS, HE WAS NOT PLEASED WITH HER -- AT LEAST NOT AS PLEASED AS HE WAS WITH RACHEL.

RACHEL, FOR HER PART DOESN'T FEEL ANY BETTER ABOUT HERSELF, EVEN THOUGH SHE'S THE LOVED ONE OF THE TWO. SHE HAS A HUSBAND WHO LOVES HER AND HONORS HER BUT SHE DOESN'T FEEL FULFILLED EVEN IN THAT BECAUSE SHE IS BEAUTIFUL BUT BARREN WHILE WEAK-EYED LEAH IS A BABY BOY

FACTORY. SO SHE HAS THE EMOTIONAL SOURCE FROM HER HUSBAND, BUT SHE STILL LACKS VALUE AND AN IDENTITY THAT IS SECURE. RACHEL LOOKS AT LEAH AND WISHES SHE WAS LEAH, WHILE LEAH LOOKS BACK AT HER, LONGING TO BE RACHEL.

PEOPLE ARE LOUSY SOURCES FOR FULFILLMENT AND VALUE. THEIR RELIABILITY IS SHAKY AT BEST. ON MONDAY WE FEEL SPECIAL AND LOVED BECAUSE OUR FRIENDS OR FAMILY SHOWS US LOVE, HONORS US, THINKS OF US...AND THEN ON TUESDAY THEY HAVE THEIR OWN ISSUES GOING ON AND WE GET DUMPED ON THE SIDE. TYPICALLY THEN WE DO ONE OF TWO THINGS. ONE GROUP GETS MAD AND HURT AND PULLS AWAY TO FEEL BAD. WE ARE OFFENDED AND DISCARDED AND WE LET OTHER PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT IT. OUR FACES SHOW THAT WE ARE HURT AND PEOPLE ASKS US "WHAT'S WRONG, IS EVERYTHING OKAY" - AND THEN WE START TO FEEL BETTER BECAUSE PEOPLE "NOTICE US", EVEN IF THEY ARE NOTICING US BECAUSE WE ARE FOCUSING ON THE BAD STUFF WE'RE GOING THROUGH. OTHERS IN THIS OPTION WILL HARDEN THEMSELVES SO AS TO NOT BE HURT AGAIN. THEY WILL TAKE UP THE MAVERICK ATTITUDE OF "I DON'T NEED ANYONE ELSE. IT'S ME, MYSELF AND I." LONELY MISERY, BUT AT LEAST WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE HURT BY ANYONE ELSE.

ANOTHER GROUP AFTER BEING HURT WILL PICK THEMSELVES UP AND RUN AFTER THAT PERSON/THOSE PEOPLE AND WORK TO GET BACK IN THEIR GOOD GRACES AGAIN. AFTERALL, IF THEY CAN START LOVING US, NOTICING US, VALUING US, THEN WE WILL FEEL BETTER ABOUT OURSELVES AGAIN. SO WE DO THINGS TO GET LOVE FROM OTHER PEOPLE. THIS MIGHT MEAN SERVING THEM, IT MIGHT MEAN HAVING SEX WITH THEM. WHATEVER END OF THAT SPECTRUM WE FALL ON, THE ROOT OF OUR ACTIONS IS THAT WE ARE DOING WHAT WE ARE DOING, NOT OUT OF A PURE HEART, BUT TO GET SOMETHING BACK FROM SOMEONE.

PEOPLE ARE LOUSY SOURCES FOR FULFILLMENT AND VALUE.

THE ONE GLIMMER OF GOOD EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND MATURITY IS FOUND IN LEAH AFTER SHE GIVES BIRTH TO HER FOURTH SON. SHE LITERALLY HAS NAMED HER FIRST THREE SONS IN LIGHT OF HOW SHE "FEELS", MAKING SOMEWHAT PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE STATEMENTS ABOUT HER DESIRE TO BE "SEEN" (REUBEN) AND "HEARD" (SIMEON) AND "ATTACHED TO" (LEVI) JACOB. AFTER THIS HEART-BREAKING STORY, SHE HAS HER FOURTH SON AND NAMES HIM JUDAH AND SAYS:

GENESIS 29:35B - "THIS TIME I WILL PRAISE THE LORD." THEREFORE SHE NAMED HIM JUDAH.

"THIS TIME I WILL PRAISE THE LORD." THE PREVIOUS TIMES SHE PUT HER HOPE IN HER CHILDREN, MAKING HER HUSBAND LOVE HER. THIS TIME SHE PRAISES THE LORD. IT SEEMS THAT, EVEN IF JUST FOR A BRIEF MOMENT, LEAH UNDERSTANDS SOMETHING FOR THE FIRST TIME. HER VALUE IS NOT FOUND HER HUSBAND, OR HER SONS, OR HER STATUS...HER VALUE AND WORTH AND WHO SHE REALLY IS, IS FOUND IN THE LORD. AND THE PROOF OF THIS REALIZATION IN HER LIFE IS THAT SHE PRAISES HIM.

GOD IS NOT AN UNRELIABLE SOURCE FOR LOVE, VALUE, FULFILLMENT, IDENTITY OR WORTH. HE'S THE ONLY RELIABLE AND UNFAILING SOURCE. THE UNRELIABLENESS OF OUR SPOUSES, CHILDREN, JOBS, FRIENDS, MONEY AND MORE IS ACTUALLY ONE OF THE WAYS THAT GOD TRIES TO POINT US TOWARDS HIM. WE BOUNCE FROM PERSON TO PERSON, HOPING THAT THEY WILL MAKE US "FEEL" BETTER. BUT THEY DON'T. AT LEAST THEY DON'T FULLY. IT IS ONLY WHEN WE ARE FOCUSED ON AND LIVING FOR AND PRAISING THE LORD THAT WE BEGIN TO SEE THAT'S WHERE IT ALL COMES TOGETHER AND WE FIND WHO WE REALLY ARE. THEN, WHEN WE ARE FULLY LOVED AND VALUED BY GOD, WE ARE FREE TO LOVE OTHERS - WITHOUT ANY NEED TO GET ANYTHING IN RETURN FROM THEM - FOR WE HAVE ALREADY FOUND ALL WE COULD EVER NEED IN HIM.