

Insights from the Meshech Chochma
רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל
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וַתְּהַר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפְּעַם אוֹדָה אֶת ה' עַל בֶּן קְרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה... (פרק כט' לה)
(Leah) conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will give thanks to Hashem"; therefore, she called his name Yehuda;...

Sforno tells us that “the name Yehuda contains the letters of the honored Name of G-d as well as those of הוֹדָאָה, thankfulness.” What better way to show appreciation to HKBH for her good fortune. The obvious question is why did Leah wait until הַפְּעַם to pay tribute to Hashem? Rashi explains that since Yaakov had four wives and she prophetically knew that he would have twelve sons, each wife would be expected to give birth to three sons. With her fourth son, she took “more than my share. Now it is required of me to give thanks.”

Rav Hirsch* poignantly approaches this issue as follows: “The names (Leah) gave to her sons show that, with each new son that she presented to her husband, his attitude to her became more and more loving. First, ה' בְּעֵינַי / *Hashem has seen my humiliation*. Previously, Yaakov’s preference for Rochel was visible and apparent to all. That changed with the birth of Reuven. But to Leah’s ear, the preference was still audible. From the tone of Yaakov’s voice, Leah sensed that she had not yet won the full measure of his love. Hence, she named her second son Shimon (with its root being שָׁמַע, hear.) With the birth of her third son, 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: יְלוּהוּ אִישׁוֹ אֵלַי / *this time my husband will become to me*. Indeed, לווה or הלוה denotes a close association of two people, where each one regards himself as a לוה, the debtor, of the other, and feels that he owes his happiness to the other. Accordingly, not Leah but יְלוּהוּ / *(Yaakov) called his name Levi...* Coming from *his* mouth, however, it was the sweetest acknowledgement. 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 Hashem’ just for His gift.” עַל בֶּן קְרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה.

Rav Meir Simcha expounds these names using Midrash Rabba: “R’ Yose bar Chanina said: ‘Four qualities were stated regarding names: There are those whose names are fair and their actions are fair; some whose names are foul and their actions are foul; some whose

