Leah in the Zohar

Source Sheet by Atara Cohen

Genesis 29:1-35

(1) Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the children of the east. (2) And he looked, and behold a well in the field, and, lo, three flocks of sheep lying there by it. - For out of that well they watered the flocks. And the stone upon the well's mouth was great. (3) And thither were all the flocks gathered; and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone back upon the well's mouth in its place.— (4) And Jacob said unto them: 'My brethren, whence are ye?' And they said: 'Of Haran are we.' (5) And he said unto them: 'Know ye Laban the son of Nahor?' And they said: 'We know him.' (6) And he said unto them: 'Is it well with him?' And they said: 'It is well; and, behold, Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.' (7) And he said: 'Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together; water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.' (8) And they said: 'We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.' (9) While he was yet speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she tended them. (10) And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his

(א) וַיִּשָׂא יַעַקֹב רַגְלֵיו וַיַּלֶּך אָרְצָה בְנִי־ָקֶדֶם: (ב) וַיַּרָא וְהָנָּה בְאֵר בַּשָּׂלֶה וָהָנָּה־שָׁם שָׁלשָה עַדְרֵי־צֹאן רֹבְצִים עַלֶּיהָ ַכּי מַן־הַבָּאָר הַהָּוֹאַ יַשְׁקוּ הָעֲדָרֶים וְהָאָבֶן גִּדֹלָה עַל־פִּי הַבָּאֵר: (ג) וְנָאֶסְפּוּ־שֲׁמָּה כל-העַדָרים וגַלַלוּ אַת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פִּי הַבָּצֵאר וְהָשָׁקוּ אֶת־הַצָּאן וְהַשִּׁיבוּ (ד) אָת־הָאֶבֶן עַל־פָּי הַבָּאֵר לְמִקֹמֵה: וַיָּאמֶר לָהֶם יַעַלְב אַחַי מֵאַין אַתָּם וַיָּאמְרוּ מֶתֶרָן אֲנָחְנוּ: (ה) וַיִּאמֶר לַבֵּׁם הַיִּדַעִתְּם אָת־לָבָן בַּן־נַחָוֹר וַיֹּאמְרָוּ יַדִעְנוּ: (ו) וַיִּאמֶר לָהָם הַשַּׁלְוֹם לֵוֹ וַיֹּאמְרָוּ שָׁלֹוֹם וָהָנֵּה רָחֵל בָּתוֹ בָּאָה עִם־הַצִּאוֹ: (ז) וַיּאמֶר הַן עוד הַיִּוֹם בֶּדוֹל לא־צַת הַאָפֵף הַמְּקְנֶה הַשָּׁקוּ הַצָּאן וּלְכָוּ רְעִוּ: (ח) וַיֹּאמְרוּ ּרָאָ נוּכֵל עַד אֲשֶׁר יֵאָסְפוּ כַּל־הַעֲדַרִים וְגַלַלוּ אָת־הָאֶבֶן מֵעַל פֵּי הַבְּאֵר וְהִשְׁקִינוּ הַצְּאון: (ט) עוֹדֶנוּ מְדַבֵּר עִמָּם וְרָחֵלוֹ בַּאָה עָם־הַצֹּאן אֲשֵׁר לְאַבִּיהָ כִּי רֹאָה הָוֹא: (י) וַיְהִֿי כַּאֲשֶׁר ٛרָאָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת־רָחֵׁל בַּת־לַבַּן אַחָי אָמֹּוֹ וָאֶת־צָאן לָבָן אַחַי אִמֶּוֹ וַיִּגִּשׁ יַעַקֹב וַיַּגֵל אַת־הָאֵבוֹ מֵעַל פִּי הַבְּאֵר וַיַּשְׁק אַת־צָאן לָבָן אַחָי אָמְוֹ: (יא) וַיִּשַׁק יַצַקֹב לַרָתֻל וַיִּשָׂא אֶת־קֹלָוֹ וַיִּבְדָ: (יב) וַיַּגַּד יַעֲלֹב לְרָהֵׁל כִּי אֲחָי אַבִּיהַ הוֹא וְכִי בַּוֹ־רִבָּקה

mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. (11) And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept. (12) And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father. (13) And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and kissed him, and brought him to his house. And he told Laban all these things. (14) And Laban said to him: 'Surely thou art my bone and my flesh.' And he abode with him the space of a month. (15) And Laban said unto Jacob: 'Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought? tell me, what shall thy wages be?' (16) Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. (17) And Leah's eyes were weak; but Rachel was of beautiful form and fair to look upon. (18) And Jacob loved Rachel; and he said: 'I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.' (19) And Laban said: 'It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man; abide with me.' (20) And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. (21) And Jacob said unto Laban: 'Give me my wife, for my days are filled, that I may go in unto

הָוֹא וַהָּרָץ וַתַּגָּד לְאָבִיהָ: (יג) וַיִהִי בְּשָׁמֹעַ לָבָו אֶת־יַשָּמַעו יַעַקֹב בֶּן־אַחֹתוֹ וַיַּרַץ לְקָרַאתוֹ וַיְחַבֶּק־לוֹ וַיְנַשֶּׁק־לוֹ וַיְבִיאַהוּ אֶל־בֵּיתֶוֹ וַיְסַפֶּר לְלַבַּׁן אָת כַּל־הַדְּבַרִים ָּהָאֵלֶה: (יד) וַלָּאמֶר לוֹ לַבַּׁן אָךְ עַצְמִי וֹבְשָׂרָי אָתָה וַיִּשֶׁב עִמְוֹ חָדֵשׁ יַמִים: (טוּ) וַיָּאמֶר לַבַן לִיַעַלְב הַכִי־אַחִי אַתַה וַעֲבַדְתַנִי חָבָּם הַגִּידָה לָי מַה־מַשְׂכָּרְתַּדְּ: (טז) וּלְלָבֶן שְׁתֵּי בָגוֹת שָׁם הַגִּדֹלָה לֵאַה וְעֵיבֵי לֵאָה רָחֲלֹ: (יוֹ) וְעֵיבֵי לֵאָה רַכְּוֹת ָוָרָחֵל' הָיְתָּה יִפַּת־הָּאַר וִיפַת מַרְאָה: (יח ַוֹיֶאֲהָב יַעֲקֹב אָת־רָחֻל וַיֹּאמֶר אָעֲבַדְדְּ (יט) אָבָע שָׁנִים בְּרָחָל בִּתְּדָ הַקְּטַנָּה: וַיָּאמֶר לָבָּן טִוֹב תִּתְי אֹתָה לֵדְ מִתִּתִּי אֹתַה לְאָישׁ אַחֶר שְׁבָה עִמָּדִי: (כ) וַיַּעֲבָד יַעַקֹב בְּרָחַל אֲבַע שַׁגִים וַיִּהִיָּוּ בִעֵינֵיוֹ כִּיַמֵים אַחָלִים בְּאַהֶבֶתוֹ אֹתָה: (כא) וַיּאמֶר יַעַקֹב אֶל־לֶבֶן הָבָה אֶת־אָשׁתִּׁי כִּי מַלְאוּ יַמֵי ואַבוֹאַה אַלִיה: (כב) ויַאַסֹף לבו אָת־כָּל־אַנְאָי הַמָּקוֹם וַיִּעֲשׁ מִשְׁתָּה: (כג) וַיָהֶי בָעָּרֶב וַיִּקָּח אֵת־לֵאַה בָתוֹ וַיַּבָא אֹתָה אָלֶיו וַיָּבָא אֶלֶיהָ: (כד) וַיַּתַּן לְבַן לַה אֶת־זִלְפָּה שִׁפְּחָתֵוֹ לְלֵאָה בִתְּוֹ שִׁפְחָה: (כה) וַיָּהֵי בַבּּקָר וְהָנָּה־הָוֹא לֶאָה וַיִּאמֶר אֵל־לַבַּוֹ מַה־זֹאת עַשִּׁיתָ לִּי הַלָּא בְרַחַל עַבַדְתִּי עַפֶּּהְ וְלֻפָּה רִמִּיתָנִי: (כו) וַיִּאמֶר לַבַּׁן לא־יֵעָעָה כֵן בִּמְקוֹמֵנוּ לָתָת הַצִּעִירָה לְפָּגֵי הַבְּכִיָרָה: (כז) מַלָּא שָׁבֶעַ זָאת וְנִתְּנַה לְךְּ גַם־אֶת־וֹאת בַּעַבֹרָה אַשֶׁר תַּעַבִּד עָמַדִּי

her.' (22) And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. (23) And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her to him; and he went in unto her. (24) And Laban gave Zilpah his handmaid unto his daughter Leah for a handmaid. (25) And it came to pass in the morning that, behold, it was Leah; and he said to Laban: 'What is this thou hast done unto me? did not I serve with thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?' (26) And Laban said: 'It is not so done in our place, to give the younger before the first-born. (27) Fulfil the week of this one, and we will give thee the other also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.' (28) And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week; and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife. (29) And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her handmaid. (30) And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years. (31) And the LORD saw that Leah was hated, and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. (32) And Leah conceived, and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said: 'Because the LORD ahath looked upon my affliction; for now my husband will love me.' (33) And she conceived again, and bore a son; and said: 'Because the LORD hath heard that I am hated, He hath therefore given me this son also.' And she called his

עוֹד שֶׁבַע־שָׁגִים אֲחָרוֹת: (כח) וַיַּעַשׂ יַעֲקֹבֹ בָּן וַיְמֵלֵא שְׁבָעַ זָאת וַיִּתֶּן־לָוֹ אֶת־רָחֵל בִּתְּוֹ לָוֹ לְאָשָׁה: (כט) וַיְּתֵּן לָבֶן לְרָחֵל בִּתֹּוֹ אֶת־בִּלְהָה שִׁפְחָתֵוֹ לָה לְשִׁפְחָה: (ל) וַיָּבֹא גָם אָל־רָחֵל וַיָּאָהָב גַם־אַת־רַחַל מִלַּאַה (לא) ניַעַבִד עַמוֹ עוֹד שָׁבַע־שַׁנִים אֲחֶרוֹת: ויַרָא יקוק כַּי־שָׁנוּאַה לֵאַה וַיִּפְתַּח אֶת־רַחְמֶה וְרָחֵל עֲקָרָה: (לב) וַתַּּהַר לֵאָה וַתָּלֵד בַּן וַתִּקָרָא שָׁמִוֹ רְאוּבֵן כִּי אָמְרָה כֵּי־רַאַה יקוק בְּעַנִיֹי כִּי עַהַה יָאֱהָבַנִי אִישִׁי: (לג) וַתַּהַר עוֹד וַתַּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר ַכִּי־שַׁמַע יקוק כִּי־שִׁנוּאָה אֲנֹכִי וַיִּתֶּן־לָי נַם־אֶת־זֶה וַתִּקָרָא שָׁמְוֹ שִׁמְעוֹן: (לד) וַתַּהָר עוֹד וַתַּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר עַתַּה הַפַּעַם ילַנָה אַישִׁי אָלֵי כִּי־יָלַדְתִּי לְוֹ שְׁלֹשָה בָגִים עַל־כַּן קַרָא־שָׁמָוֹ לָוָי: (לה) וַמַּהַר עוֹד ותַּלֶד בַּוֹן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפַּעַם אוֹדָה אָת־יקוק צַל־כָּן קַרְאָה שְׁמִוֹ יִהוּדֶה וַתַּצַמִּד מְלֵּדֶת:

name Simeon. (34) And she conceived again, and bore a son; and said: 'Now this time will my husband be djoined unto me, because I have borne him three sons.' Therefore was his name called Levi. (35) And she conceived again, and bore a son; and she said: 'This time will I epraise the LORD.' Therefore she called his name Judah; and she left off bearing.

Bereishit Rabbah 70:16

..AND LEAH'S EYES WERE WEAK-RAKKOTH . R. Johanan's amora translated this before him: And Leah's eyes were [naturally] weak. Said he to him: Your mother's eyes were weak! But what does rakkoth mean? That they had grown weak through weeping, for [people used to say]: This was the arrangement; the elder daughter [Leah] is for the elder son [Esau], and the younger daughter [Rachel] for the younger son [Jacob], while she used to weep and pray, May it be Thy will that I do not fall to the lot of that wicked man. R. Huna said: Great is prayer, that it annulled the decree.5 and she even took precedence of her sister.

(יי) ועיני לאה רכות - אמוראי דר' יוחנן תרגם קודמוי ועיני לאה הוו רכיכין.
אמר לו: עינוהי דאימך הוו רכיכין?!
ומהו רכות? רכות מבכיה, שהיו
אומרים: כך היו התנאים, הגדולה לגדול, והקטנה לקטן, והיתה בוכה ואומרת: יהי רצון שלא אפול בגורלו של רשע. אמר רבי הונא: קשה היא התפלה, שבטלה את הגזירה, ולא עוד, אלא שקדמה לאחותה. ורחל היתה יפת תואר עיקר סמניה של רחל לא היתה, אלא נאה ורחל היתה

Bereishit Rabbah 71:2

...The Lord upholdeth all that fall (Ps. CXLV, 14)-viz. childless women who fall [i.e. are disgraced] in their own homes; And raiseth up all those that are bowed down (ib.): as soon as God visits them

(ב) דבר אחר: (שם קמה) סומך יקוק לכל הנופלים, אלו העקרות, שהם נופלין בתוך בתיהם. וזוקף לכל הכפופים, כיון שהקדוש ברוך הוא פוקדן בבנים, הן

with children, they are raised up. The proof is that Leah was hated in her house, yet when the Holy One, blessed be He, visited her, she was raised up. Thus it is written, AND THE LORD SAW THAT LEAH WAS HATED, etc. AND THE LORD SAW THAT LEAH WAS HATED. This means that she acted like those who are hated. [Another interpretation]: She was bespoken for an enemy, for such was the arrangement, that the elder son [Esau] should marry the elder daughter [Leah], and the younger son [Jacob] the younger daughter [Rachel], but she wept and prayed, May it be Thy will that I do not fall to the lot of the wicked Esau. R. Huna said: Great is prayer, that it annulled the decree; moreover she took precedence of her sister. [Another interpretation]: All hated [i.e. abused] her: sea-travellers abused her, land-travellers abused her, and even the women behind the beams1 abused her, saying: 'This Leah leads a double life2: she pretends to be righteous, yet is not so, for if she were righteous, would she have deceived her sister!3 R. Judah b. R. Simon and R. Hanan said in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Isaac: When the Patriarch Jacob saw how Leah deceived him by pretending to be her sister, he determined to divorce her. But as soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, visited her with children he exclaimed, 'Shall I divorce the mother of these children! Eventually he gave thanks for her, as it says, And Israel bowed down [in

נזקפות. תדע לך, שכן לאה שנואת הבית היתה, וכיון שפקדה הקב"ה נזקפה. הה"ד: וירא יקוק כי שנואה לאה. כי שנואה לאה, שעשתה כמעשה השנואים, שהיתה אומרת להנשא לשונא, (נ"א שהיתה אמודה לשונא) שכך היו התנאים, שיהא גדול נושא לגדולה, והקטן נושא לקטנה, והיתה בוכה ואומרת: יהי רצון, שלא אפול בחלקו של רשע. אמר רבי הונא: קשה היא התפלה, שביטלה את הגזירה, ולא עוד, אלא שקדמה לאחותה, והיו הכל סונטין בה, מפרשי ימים היו סונטין בה, מהלכי דרכים היו סונטין בה, אף הגתיות מאחורי הקורים היו סונטין בה, והיו אומרים: לאה זו, אין סתרה כגלויה, נראה צדקת ואינה צדקת. אילו היתה צדקת לא היתה מרמה באחותה. ר' חנין בשם ר' שמואל בר ר' יצחק אמר: כיון שראה אבינו יעקב מעשים, שרימה לאה באחותה, נתן דעתו לגרשה, וכיון שפקדה הקדוש ברוך הוא בבנים, אמר: לאמן של אלו אני מגרש?! ובסוף הוא מודה על הדבר, הה"ד (בראשית מז): וישתחו ישראל על ראש המטה מי היה ראש מטתו של אבינו יעקב, לא לאה?! ורחל עקרה אמר רבי יצחק: רחל היתה עיקרו של בית, כמה שנאמר: ורחל עקרה, עיקרה רחל. אמר רבי אבא בר

thanksgiving] for the bed's head (Gen. XLVII, 31): who was the head of our father Jacob's bed? surely Leah.4

כהנא: רוב מסובין עיקר של לאה היו,
לפיכך עושים רחל עיקר. ורחל עקרה,
רחל היתה עיקרו של בית. תני, רבי
שמעון בן יוחאי: לפי שכל הדברים
תלוין ברחל, לפיכך נקראו ישראל על
שמה, (ירמיה לא): רחל מבכה על בניה,
ולא סוף דבר לשמה, אלא לשם בנה.
(עמוס ה): אולי יחנן יקוק צבאות
שארית יוסף, ולא סוף דבר לשם בנה,
אלא לשם בן בנה, שנאמר (ירמיה לא):
הבן יקיר לי אפרים:

Psalms 113:9

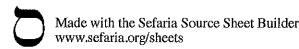
(9) Who maketh the barren woman to dwell in her house As a joyful mother of children. Hallelujah.

(ט) מוֹשִׁיבִי עֲקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת אֵם הַבָּנִים שְׂמֵחָה הַלְלוּ יָה.

Psalms 104:16-17

(16) The trees of the LORD have their fill, The cedars of Lebanon, which He hath planted; (17) Wherein the birds make their nests; As for the stork, the fir-trees are her house.

(מז) יִשְׂבְּעוּ עֲצֵי יקוק אַרְזֵי לְבָנוֹן אֲשֶׁר נָטָע. (יז) אֲשֶׁר שָׁם צְפָּרִים יְקַנֵּנוּ חֲסִידָה בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָה.



Leah in the Zohar:

- 1. "If Jacob encountered a wife at the well, why didn't he encounter Leah, since she engendered all of those tribes? Because the blessed Holy One did not want Jacob to couple with Leah openly, as it is written: "In the morning, here, she was Leah! "(29:25)—until then it was not revealed." Zohar 1:153b Matt 2:354
- 2. "Rabbi Yehudah said, "All her days, Leah would stand in the crossroads and weep for Jacob, having heard that he was righteous, and she prayed for him zealously, corresponding to what is written: Leah's eyes were weak (ibid., 17), as we have established—for she rose early and lingered in the darkness, seeking on the crossroads, whereas Rachel never ventured out. Consequently she (Leah) deserved to be buried with him, whereas Rachel's grave stands on the crossroads, where she was buried, as is written: "As for me, when I was returning from Paddan, Rachel dies alai, upon me (Genesis 48:7). What is alai? Alai precisely: 'on account of me!" In the land of Canaan on the way—on account of me she dies along the way, because she never ventured out for me like her sister." Therefore Leah, who went out and wept in the crossroads on account of Jacob, was worthy of being buried with him. Rachel who did not want to go out and seek for him—her grave is on the crossroads." Zohar 1:223a Matt 3:338
- 3. "Come and See: Leah gave birth to six sons and one daughter, fittingly so, for six directions stand above her; there six and one daughter through the mystery of Jubilee. Rachel gave birth to two righteous ones, fittingly so, for Sabbatical dwells constantly between two righteous ones, as it is written: The righteous will inherit the land Genesis 37:29)—Righteous One above, righteous one below. From Righteous One above, She obtains supernal water; from righteous one below, female emits water toward male to consummate desire. Righteous one on this side, righteous one on that side. Just as male above dwells between two females, so female below dwells between two righteous males. 1:153b Matt 356-7
- 4. Come and see: The trees of YHVH are sated, the cedars of Lebanon that He planted (Psalms 104:16). Who is Lebanon? This has already been established, this verse explained. "There birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the junipers (104:17). Where? In Lebanon. These two birds we have discussed in numerous places, from whom

numerous other birds disperse. However, these are supernal, issuing from Lebanon concealed. Mystery of the word: Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, the name of the younger was Rachel (Genesis 29:16). The stork has her home in the junipers—in those six supernal sons, six directions of the world, as has been said. Why is she called hasidah, a stork? Because this is the higher world—though called female—when it expands, all goodness and radiance issue. Since She is a hasidah, Hesed issues from Her, primordial light, as is written: Elohim said, "let there be light." 1:162b-163a Matt 2:408