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## "GRATITUDE"

### IV. Leah's Greatness

It is here that the greatness of Leah shines forth in all its glory: her fourth child is born—and she calls him *Yehudah*. Why?—"for this time I shall thank the Lord." This time, when I realize and accept the fact that the greatest, most overwhelming desire of my life will NOT be granted to me by G-d, this time I will thank Him! Despite all my failures and disappointments—I thank G-d! *Ha-paam*—"this time," for the first time in history, a great soul reached into the heights of the spirit and recognized that thankfulness is more than thanksgiving, that it is a way of reacting to G-d's very Presence and not merely paying a debt for his favors. *Ha-paam*—"this time," though my hopes are doomed, my love unrequited, my ambitions dashed, I am yet grateful. I do have a great husband nonetheless. I do have wonderful children. I do have the Lord's promise to be the matriarch of a great people.

This was not the thanksgiving of Compensation but the thankfulness of Consecration. This was not Leah's social gesture, but her spiritual ascent. Would that all of us in our affluent society learn that even if we do not get all we want—and who does?—yet there is so very much to be thankful for. We ought to be grateful *al nishmotenu ha-pekudot lakh*, for the religious freedom we Jews enjoy in our beloved America. Compare our situation with those of our brothers in Russia, where the Jewish *neshamah* is stifled cruelly. We ought be grateful *al nisekha she'be'khol yom imanu*, for life, health, family, friends. In our *Nishmat* prayer we speak of thanks *al ahat me'elef alfei ribei revavot pe'amim*—thousands and millions of thanks. For in this prayer, mentioned in the Talmud, we thank G-d for rain—indeed for every single raindrop! And it is not only things that we thank G-d for. Gratitude is a state of mind, a psychological attunement to G-d, a climate of conscience, a cast of character, a matter not so much of having something as of being someone.

Norman Lamm

The Jewish Center 26-1-62