

Yehudah: Our Namesake, Our Essence

● By Shmuel Silverstein HaKohen

Beor Panecha

part of the K'sod Siach series

BEREISHIS 29:35

וַתֵּהֶר עוֹד וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתֹּאמֶר הַפֶּעַם אֹדָה אֶת־ה' עַל־
כֵּן קָרָאָה שְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה

She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will thank Hashem." Therefore she named him Yehudah.



James Tissot, *Judah* (c. 1896–1902), The Jewish Museum, New York

When our mother Leah gave birth to her fourth son, she named him with an expression of gratitude to Hashem.

Yehudah was one of Yaakov's twelve sons. His descendants became the tribe of Yehudah, and later the Kingdom of Yehudah, Judah, in the Land of Israel. After the northern kingdom fell, the people of the southern kingdom became known as *Yehudim*, Judeans: the source of the English word "Jew," one born of a Jewish

mother or who has joined the Jewish people through conversion.



Most people do not realize that the essence of the Jew is seeing all things, big and small, good and bad, as coming from Hashem. We thank Hashem continually, because we see everything as part of His plan, even when we do not understand how or why. We keep unbroken faith, hope and trust in His plan, whatever the circumstances.

The pasuk above tells us where the Chosen People's name comes from. A deeper look shows how the name itself reflects our essence and our beliefs.



A Jew thanks Hashem the moment he wakes up, with *Modeh Ani*: "I thank You, living and eternal King, for returning my soul to me with compassion; great is Your faithfulness." *Modeh*, "I thank," shares its root with יְהוּדָה, and so with the word "Jew."

TEHILLIM 136:1

הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ

Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good; His kindness is forever.

Thanking Hashem runs through all of our tefillah, and all of our lives.

Three times a day, in *Modim*, we thank Hashem for being our G-d: "We thank You, for You are Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, forever and ever" — *l'olam va'ed*.

There are too many examples to list, but the point is clear: as Jews we serve Hashem, and we thank Him for everything we have.



So how is the essence of the Jew written into the name Yehudah?

יְהוּדָה

ה ו ד

hod · thanks

יה

Yah · a Name of Hashem

Thanks, and the Name

יה · הוד · Bereishis 29:35

יְהוּדָה holds הוד, *hod*, the heart of *hoda'ah*, thanks, as in *hodu* and *modeh*. Take *hod* out of Yehudah and two letters remain, yud and hei: יְה, a Name of Hashem.

The name of the nation of G-d is rooted in thanking Hashem. That is the essence of our name, and the essence of who we are as a people. We thank Hashem for everything we have, because we know it all comes from Him. And for that, we are eternally grateful.

More on Yehudah's name: Mashiach ben David. **BP**

Dedicate a month of Beor Panecha in honor or memory of a loved one: beorpanecha.org/about

info@beorpanecha.org • BeorPanecha.org

© J.S. Silverstein

Scan to read online: beorpanecha.org/a3272

