

# טעמו וראו

A taste of the  
Rebbe's teachings

## Vayishlach

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### A Mother's Dedication

Before his death, Jacob asked his son Joseph to interred him in the Cave of Machpelah. He took the opportunity to explain why he buried his mother on the road near Bethlehem instead of bringing her to the Cave of Machpelah - so that the children of Israel on their way to exile would pray at her gravesite and ask her to intercede on their behalf.

But why should Joseph come to terms with his mother's loneliness? How could Jacob sacrifice her comfort for something that would happen one thousand years later?

# Part 1 - Historical Overview

## Source 1

Bireishit 35:16-20

And they journeyed from Bet El, and there was still some distance to come to Ephrat, and Rachel gave birth, and her labor was difficult.

It came to pass when she had such difficulty giving birth, that the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid, for this one, too, is a son for you."

And it came to pass, when her soul departed for she died that she named him Ben Oni, but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the road to Ephrat, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob erected a monument on her grave; that is the tombstone of Rachel until this day.

חומש בראשית, פרק ל"ה, פסוק ט"ז ואילך

טז וַיִּסְעוּ מִבֵּית אֵל וַיְהִי עוֹד  
כְּבָרַת הָאָרֶץ לָבוֹא אֶפְרָתָה  
וַתֵּלֶד רַחֵל וַתִּקְשׁ בְּלִדְתָּהּ. יז  
וַיְהִי בְּהִקְשָׁתָהּ בְּלִדְתָּהּ וַתֹּאמֶר  
לָהּ הַמִּיִּלְדֹת אֵל תִּירָאִי כִּי גַם זֶה  
לִךְ בֶּן. יח וַיְהִי בְּצֵאת נַפְשָׁהּ כִּי  
מָתָה וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בֶּן אוֹנִי וְאָבִיו  
קָרָא לוֹ בְּנִימִין. יט וַתָּמָת רַחֵל  
וַתִּקָּבֵר בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָתָה הוּא בֵּית  
לְחֶם. כ וַיִּצַב יַעֲקֹב מִצְבֵּה עַל  
קְבֻרָתָהּ הוּא מִצְבֵּהת קְבֻרַת רַחֵל  
עַד הַיּוֹם.

## Source 2

B'reishit 47:29-31



And when the time approached for Israel [Jacob] to die, he summoned his son Joseph and said to him, "Do me this favor, place your hand under my thigh as a pledge of your steadfast loyalty: please do not bury me in Egypt. When I lie down with my fathers, take me up from Egypt and bury me in their burial-place." He replied, "I will do as you have spoken." And he said, "Swear to me." And he swore to him. Then Israel [Jacob] bowed at the head of the bed.

חומש בראשית, פרק מ"ז, פסוק כ"ט ואילך

כט וַיִּקְרָבוּ יְמֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוֹת  
וַיִּקְרָא לְבָנוֹ לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם־  
נָא מִצְאָתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׂים־נָא  
יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד  
וְאֲמַת אֶל־נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרָיִם:  
ל וְשָׁכַבְתִּי עִם־אֲבֹתַי וְנִשְׂאָתֵנִי  
מִמִּצְרָיִם וְקִבְרַתֵּנִי בְּקְבֻרָתָם  
וַיֹּאמֶר אֹנֹכִי אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדַבְּרֶךָ: לא  
וַיֹּאמֶר הַשְּׁבַעָה לִּי וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ  
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה:

## Source 3

B'reishit 48:7



“As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way, while still some distance short of Ephrat, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrat, which is Bethlehem.”

Rashi on the verse:



**I buried her there:** I didn't even take her to Bethlehem to bring her into the Land, and I know that you hold it against me. But you should know that I buried her there by Divine command, so that she would be of assistance to her children. When Nebuzaradan exiles them, and they pass by there, Rachel will emerge from her grave and weep and beg mercy for them.

As it is said: “A voice is heard on high...Rachel is weeping for her children,” and G-d answers her, “There is reward for your work, says the Lord, and the children shall return to their own border.”

## Source 4

Jeremiah 31:14-16



So says G-d: “A voice is heard on high, lamentation, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children, she refuses to be comforted for her children for they are not.”

So says G-d: “Refrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for there is reward for your work,” says G-d, “and they shall come back from the land of the enemy.”

“And there is hope for your future,” says G-d, “and the children shall return to their own border.”

חומש בראשית פרק מ"ח פסוק ז'

ז וַאֲנִי בָבֶאֱי מִפָּדָן מָתָה עָלַי רַחֵל  
בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּעוֹד כְּבָרְתִי  
אֶרֶץ לְבָא אֶפְרָתָה וְאֶקְבְּרָהָ שָׁם  
בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרָת הוּא בַּיִת לְחָם:

רש"י על הפסוק

אקברה שם: ולא הולכתיה אפלו  
לביית לחם להכניסה לארץ,  
וידעתי שיש בלבך עלי; אבל דע  
לך שעל פי הדבור קברתיה שם,  
שתהא לעזרה לבניה כשיגלה  
אותם נבוזראדן, והיו עוברים דרך  
שם, יוצאת רחל על קברה ובוכה  
ומבקשת עליהם רחמים, שנאמר  
קול ברמה נשמע וגו' והקב"ה  
משיבה יש שחר לפעלתך נאם ה'  
ושבו בנים לגבולם (ירמיהו ל"א).

ספר ירמיה, פרק ל"א פסוק י"ד ואילך

יד כה אמר יהוה, קול ברמה  
נשמע נהי בכי תמרורים--רחל,  
מבכה על-בניה; מאנה להנחם  
על-בניה, כי איננו. טו כה אמר  
יהוה, מנעי קולך מבכי, ועיניך,  
מדםעה: כי יש שחר לפעלתך  
נאם-יהוה, ושובו מארץ אויב.  
טז ויש-תקוה לאחריתך, נאם-  
יהוה; ושובו בנים, לגבולם.



The Midrash Aggadah states that the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs went to appease G-d for the sin of Menashe who placed an idol in the Temple but He was not appeased.

Rachel entered and stated before Him, “Master of the Universe, whose mercy is greater, Your mercy or the mercy of a flesh and blood person? You must admit that Your mercy is greater. Now did I not bring my rival into my house? For all the work that Jacob worked for my father he worked only for me. When I came to enter the nuptial canopy, they brought my sister, and it was not enough that I kept my silence, but I gave her my password. You, too, if Your children have brought Your rival into Your house, keep Your silence for them.”

G-d said to her, “You have defended them well. There is reward for your deed and for your righteousness, that you gave over your password to your sister.”

מדרש אגדה אמר: שהלכו אבות ואמהות לפייס את הקב"ה על שהעמיד מנשה דמות בהיכל ולא נתפייס,

נכנסה רחל אמרה לפניו: רבוננו של עולם, רחמי מי מרובים? רחמיך או רחמי בשר ודם? הוי אומר רחמיך מרובים. והלא אני הכנסתי צרתי בתוך ביתי, שכל עבודה שעבד יעקב את אבי לא עבד אלא בשבילי, כשבאתי ליכנס לחופה, הכניסו את אחותי, ולא די ששתקתי, אלא שמסרתי לה סימני! אף אתה, אם הכניסו בניך צרתך בביתך שתוק להם.

אמר לה: יפה למדת סנגוריא, יש שכר לפעולתך ולצדקתך, שמסרת סימנך לאחותך.

# Part 2 - Why Did Rachel Deserve It?

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## Excerpt from Shabbat Parshat Vayechi (1985)

### I Know You are Upset

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Parshat Vayechi<sup>1</sup> describes Jacob's conversation with Joseph regarding the burial place of his mother, Rachel: "As for me," Jacob said, "when I came from Padan, Rachel died in the land of Canaan on the way...and I buried her there on the way to Ephrat, which is Bethlehem."

There seems to be a contradiction: Jacob is requesting that Joseph bring his body from Egypt to Canaan for burial; why would he mention that he didn't do so for Rachel, Joseph's mother?!

Rashi explains that Jacob's intention was to negate this argument. This was his point: "I burden you to bury me in Canaan, while I did not do so to your mother, for she died close to Bethlehem...and I buried her there - I didn't even take her to Bethlehem to bring her into the Land (there is a separate discussion about the meaning of these words),<sup>2</sup> and I know that you hold it against me. But you should know that I buried her there by Divine command, so that she would be of assistance to her children. When Nebuzaradan exiles them, and they pass by there, Rachel will emerge from her grave and weep and beg mercy for them, as it is said: 'A voice is heard on high...Rachel is weeping for her children.'<sup>3</sup> And G-d answers her, "'There is reward for your work,' says G-d... 'and the children shall return to their own border.'"

This tells us that the redemption comes through the intercession of Rachel. In the words of the verse, "There is reward for your work, says G-d...and the children shall return to their own border."

The Midrash<sup>4</sup> brings more details: The prophet Jeremiah went to call Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses to appease G-d; "The Patriarchs and the

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1) Bireishit 32:2

3) Vol. 1 165a.

2) Ibid. 28:11

4) Bireishit 31:46. See Rashi.

Matriarchs went to appease G-d...but He was not appeased. Then Rachel entered and stated before Him: 'Master of the Universe...' G-d's mercy was aroused and He said to her, "For you, Rachel, I will return them to their home. As the verse says, A voice is heard on high...Rachel crying for her children...there is reward for your deed...and the sons will return to their borders." Clearly, it was Rachel in whose merit G-d promised to return the Jewish people to their homeland.

We still need to understand: How did Jacob negate Joseph's argument by explaining Rachel's part in the salvation from Nebuzaradan. Why should Rachel need to suffer because of that situation?

## Rachel's Joy

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The explanation is straightforward: Because Rachel knew that she would be of assistance to her children on their way to exile, she was not upset about her burial on the roadside. To the contrary, the fact that she could be of assistance to her children brought her joy, knowing that G-d's promise of redemption will come through her.

Obviously, Rachel's joy at the prospect of helping her children negated Joseph's complaint against his father, because he sought only his mother's well-being and satisfaction. Once Jacob explained that Rachel's burial on the "road to Ephrat" was for her own good, "to be of assistance to her children," he was appeased.

This teaches us an amazing lesson about our Matriarch Rachel. She was willing to forgo the merit of burial in the Cave of Machpelah, and joyfully so, all in order to come to her children's side in their time of need.

Think about it: Rachel surely appreciated Jacob's greatness. [Especially according to Rashi's teaching<sup>5</sup> that the Matriarchs were all prophetesses, and that their level of prophecy was superior to the prophecy of Abraham].<sup>6</sup> She therefore surely understood the privilege of being buried next to Jacob, and especially in the Cave of Machpelah, the burial place of Isaac and Rebecca, Abraham and Sarah, and Adam and Eve.<sup>7</sup> That being

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5) Vayetze 29:34

7) Bireishit Rabba 58:4. Rashi Chaye Sarah 23:2

6) Vayera 21:12

the case, she no doubt desired to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah with her husband Jacob.

Nonetheless, knowing that a day would come and Nevuzradan will exile her children from the Land of Israel, Rachel gave up on the merit to be buried with Jacob at the Cave of Machpelah and preferred burial on the road to Ephrat, to be of assistance to her children when Nebuzaradan exiles them; “when they pass by there, Rachel will emerge from her grave and weep and beg mercy for them, and G-d will answer, ‘the sons will return to their borders!’”

## Rachel's Sacrifice

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We see here the profound dedication of Rachel and her care for her children. On one hand is the opportunity to be buried in the Cave of Machpelah together with Jacob for hundreds and thousands of years. On the other hand are her children many generations into the future, who will be in such a low spiritual state that will be forced into exile, “we were exiled due to our sins.” Nebuzaradan has no personal power over the Jewish people; the fact that he exiled them was because they were deserving of exile.

Nonetheless, for the sake of those children who sinned and were being exiled, Rachel relinquishes her right to burial in the Cave of Machpelah together with Jacob for hundreds and thousands of years, as long as she can be of assistance to her children!!

In fact, how could she possibly rest peacefully at the Cave of Machpelah, while her children are suffering in exile?!

## The Merit to Bring Redemption

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In fact, her burial there is why she merited to bring about G-d's promise, “the sons will return to their borders.”

Jacob went to rest in the Cave of Machpelah together with the rest of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. But Rachel our Mother couldn't bring herself to rest peacefully in the Cave of Machpelah. She remained on the roadside on the way to Ephrat, to stand guard and assist her children as they went into exile. Therefore, she was the one to arouse G-d's mercy; she told G-d, “Who has greater mercy, You or a person of flesh and blood?” and immediately, the Midrash writes, G-d's mercy was aroused and He said to her, “For you, Rachel, I will return them to their home...and the sons will return to their borders.”

## Source 5

Likutei Sichot vol. 30 pg. 238



Rachel was the Akeret Habayit, the 'mainstay of the home.' She was willing to forgo her personal merit of burial in the Cave of Machpelah, to be of help to her children – descendants who lived many generations later, and descendants who were deserving of exile. For the sake of those sinful, exiled children, she was willing to forgo her burial in the Cave of Machpelah together with Jacob her husband for thousands of years, to be of assistance to her children.

Therefore, her prayers on their behalf were successful, and G-d promised her, "the children will return to their borders." She disregarded her children's spiritual state and made a sacrifice for them because of her essential connection to them. Therefore, she channeled G-d's blessings measure for measure: G-d promises that "the children will return to their borders" despite the fact that they deserve to be exiled, by virtue of our essential connection to Him as His children; therefore, they will be returned to their land, with the true and complete redemption, speedily in our day.

לקוטי שיחות חלק ל' עמוד 238

ומעלתה המיוחדת של רחל -  
"עיקרו של בית", "עקרת הבית"  
- שהיא מוותרת על שלימות  
ומעלת עצמה להיות קבורה  
במערת המכפלה, כדי שתהא  
לעזרה לבני", ובזה גופא - בני  
שיהיו לאחרי כמה וכמה דורות,  
ובנים שיהיו במעמד ומצב בלתי  
רצוי, עד כדי כך שיתחייבו גלות:  
ובשביל אותם הבנים שחטאו  
וגלו - מוותרת רחל אמנו על  
זכות קבורה במערת המכפלה  
ביחד עם יעקב אבינו במשך  
מאות ואלפי שנים, כדי שעל ידי  
זה תוכל להיות "לעזרה לבני".

וזהו הטעם שהיא הביאה את  
ההבטחה ד"ושבו בנים לגבולם"  
- דהיות שהיא וויתרה על  
מעלת עצמה, בשביל בנים  
אלו, מצד הקשר העצמי שבינה  
ובינם (בכל מצב שיהיו), הרי זה  
ממשיך מלמעלה "מדה כנגד  
מדה", שלמרות מצבם הגלוי של  
הבנים (שנתחייבו גלות), הבטיח  
הקדוש ברוך הוא "ושבו בנים  
לגבולם", שלהיותם בנים הרי  
ודאי שישבו לגבולם, בגאולה  
האמיתית והשלימה, במהרה  
בימינו ממש.

