

Love that Knows No Bounds

Genesis, Chapter 47

28. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years, and Jacob's days, the years of his life, were a hundred and forty seven years.

29. When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son, for Joseph and said to him, "If I have now found favor in your eyes, now place your hand beneath my thigh, and you shall deal with me with loving kindness and truth; do not bury me now in Egypt.

30. I will lie with my forefathers, and you shall carry me out of Egypt, and you shall bury me in their grave." And he said, "I will do as you say."

Genesis, Chapter 48

1. Now it came to pass after these incidents that [someone] said to Joseph, "Behold, your father is ill." So he took his two sons with him, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2. And [someone] told Jacob and said, "Behold, your son Joseph is coming to you." And Israel summoned his strength and sat up on the bed...

7. As for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died to me in the land of Canaan on the way, when there was still a stretch of land to come to Ephrath, and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem."

He called for his son, for Joseph (47:29)

Rashi

To the one who had the ability to act.

Maskil LeDavid

Had the verse said "and he called for his son Joseph," it would have implied that Jacob called to Joseph because Joseph was his son. Now that it uses the "for" prefix, "and he called for his son, for Joseph," implies that he called to Joseph not only because of their relationship, but because of something innate in Joseph, that he had the power to carry out Jacob's wishes.

Do me a kindness and a truth (47:30)

Rashi

A kindness done to the dead is a true kindness, for one does not expect a favor in return.

And I, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan on the way, when yet there was but a little way to come to Efrat; and I buried her there in the way of Efrat, that is Bethlehem (48:7)

Rashi

Why did Jacob evoke the memory of Rachel's burial?

So said Jacob to Joseph: I am asking you to trouble yourself to take me to be buried in the Land, even though I did not do the same for your mother. She died a short distance from Bethlehem, and I did not even take her to [Bethlehem] but buried her at the wayside.

I know that there is resentment in your heart to me over this. But know that it was by Divine command that I buried her there, so that she should be a help for her children when Nebuzaradan will exile them and they will pass by there. Then Rachel will come out upon her grave and weep and plead for mercy



פרק מז

כח. ויהי יעקב
בְּאָרְץ מִצְרַיִם שֹׁבֵעַ
עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה וַיְהִי יָמָיו
יַעֲקֹב שְׁנֵי חַיָּו שֹׁבֵעַ שָׁנִים וְאַרְבָּעִים וּמֵאָת
שָׁנָה: כט. וַיִּקְרָבוּ יָמָיו וְיִשְׂרָאֵל לָמוּת וַיִּקְרָא
לְבָנָו לְיוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אִם נָא מִצְּאֹתַי חַן
בְּעֵינֶיךָ שִׁים נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי וְעֲשֵׂיתָ
עִמָּדִי חֶסֶד וְאֶמֶת אֵל נָא תִקְבְּרֵנִי בְּמִצְרַיִם:
ל. וְשִׁכַבְתִּי עִם אֲבֹתַי וְנִשְׂאֹתַי מִמִּצְרַיִם
וְקִבַּרְתֵּנִי בְּקִבְרֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אָנֹכִי אֲעֲשֶׂה
כְּדַבְּרֶךָ: לא. וַיֹּאמֶר הַשֹּׁבֵעַ לִי וַיִּשְׁבַּע לוֹ
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל רֹאשׁ הַמִּטָּה:

פרק מח

א. וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר
לְיוֹסֵף הִנֵּה אָבִיךָ חָלָה וַיִּקַּח אֶת שְׁנֵי
בָנָיו עִמּוֹ אֶת מְנַשֶּׁה וְאֶת אֶפְרַיִם: ב. וַיִּגַּד
לְיַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה בְנֵךְ יוֹסֵף בָּא אֵלָיךָ
וַיִּתְחַזַּק יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּשָּׁב עַל הַמִּטָּה:
ז. וַאֲנִי בָבְאִי מִפָּדָן מָתָה עָלַי רַחֵל בְּאָרְץ
כְּנַעַן בְּדֶרֶךְ בְּעוֹד כְּבָרַת אָרְץ לְבָא אֶפְרַתָּה
וְאִקְבְּרָהּ שָׁם בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶפְרַת הוּא בֵּית לְחָם:

for them, as it is written (Jeremiah 31:14): "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel is weeping for her children..."; and G-d will answer her, "There is reward for your toil... The children shall return to their own borders." (ibid., v. 15).

Midrash

As the Temple lay in ruins and the Jews were being led into exile as slaves, Abraham came before G-d and said: "Master of the universe, when I was 100 years old, you gave me a son, and when he was 37 years old you told me, 'Raise him as a sacrifice before Me.' I overcame my natural mercy. Will You not remember my devotion and have mercy on my children?"

Next, Isaac approached. "When my father said, 'G-d will show us the sheep for a sacrifice,' I did not hesitate but accepted my fate and extended my neck to be slaughtered. Will You not remember my strength and have mercy on my children?"

Then Jacob beseeched: "I worked for twenty years in the house of Laban and when I left, Esau came to harm me. I suffered all my life raising my children. Now they are being led like sheep to the slaughter. Won't you remember all my pain and suffering and redeem my children?"

Moses rose up and said: "Was I not a loyal shepherd of Israel for forty years? I ran before them in the desert like a horse. When the time came to enter Israel, You decreed that I would die in the desert. Now they go into exile. Won't You listen to my crying over them?"

Before all these virtuous defenders, G-d remained silent.

Then Rachel lifted her voice, "Master of the Universe, You know that Jacob loved me intensely and worked for seven years in order to marry me. When the time of my marriage came, my father substituted my sister for me. I did not let my sister be shamed; I even revealed to her the secret signs that Jacob and I had arranged. If I, a mere mortal, was not prepared to humiliate my sister and was willing to take a rival into my home, how could You, the eternal, compassionate G-d, be jealous of idols, which have no true existence, that were brought into Your home? Will You cause my children to be exiled on this account?"

Immediately, G-d's mercy was aroused and He responded, "For you, Rachel, I will bring Israel back to their place."

The Rebbe

Rachel lost her own spiritual luxury, the privilege of being buried in the Cave of Machpelah in order to help her children. Rachel is the quintessential Jewish mother, sacrificing for the sake of her children. Rachel saw beyond their iniquities to the innocence of their essence, to the inherent goodness and beauty of their souls.

SUMMARY

- For centuries, Rachel waited patiently on the wayside of a forlorn road, simply so that pitiful sinners would find encouragement as they passed by her grave site and she beseeched G-d on their behalf.
- What compelled Rachel to such sacrifice? To Rachel, these were not simply evil sinners. They were her children.
- Can we look beyond the faults or inadequacies of others, and envision what our matriarch saw--brothers and sisters, children of G-d, deserving of mercy and compassion?

