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# Shabbos INSPIRE.

MONTHLY PARSHA SHEET

Parshas Vayishlach  
 פרשת וישלח  
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## Rachel Weeps For Her Children

By Rabbi Moshe Zionce

**"A**nd Rachel died, and she was buried on the way...". (בראשית לה:יט) Rachel Imeinu, sadly, died during childbirth at the age of 36. After giving birth to Binyamin and completing the cosmic task of bringing forth the last of the twelve tribes, her neshama rose to her Father in Heaven.

The Medrash provides insight into why Rachel was buried "on the way" and not in Ma'aras HaMachpelah a relatively short distance from the place of her demise: Yaakov Avinu foresaw that the Yidden, after the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash, would be led into a bitter exile and would pass by this site. He therefore buried her "on the way" so that she would sense her children's anguish and would intercede on their behalf. (בראשית רבה פב:י)

The Medrash in Eicha tells us that Hashem sent the navi Yermiah to Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaacov, and Moshe to request that they plead on behalf of the Jewish people. Each luminary advocated on behalf of Klal Yisroel. They attempted to appease and plead before Hashem, asking Him to account merit to the Jewish people through their virtues. However, Hashem did not respond.

The Medrash tells us that Rachel Imeinu then appeared before Hashem and described the extreme piety and מסיירת נפש - self sacrifice with which she saved her sister from shame. (It was to be Rachel's wedding day, yet she disclosed the secret signs enabling Leah to conceal her true identity from Yaakov). Rachel pleaded with Hashem, "If I, as a flesh and blood mortal, was able to transcend my jealousy and anger, how much more so should You, an immortal King, find compassion for Your people."

The Medrash tells us that, as soon as He heard Rachel's cries, Hashem responded to her tears. Hashem promised that He would ultimately redeem Klal Yisroel from their exile through the z'chus of Rachel Imeinu.

The navi Yermiah says: "Thus said Hashem: A voice is heard on high, wailing, bitter weeping, רחל מבכה על בנייה - Rachel weeps for her children; she refuses to be consoled for her children, for they are gone. Thus said Hashem: Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears; for there is reward for your accomplishment - the word of Hashem - and they will return from the enemy's land. There is hope for your future - the word of Hashem - and your children will return to their border." (ירמיה לא:יד-טז) The Targum Yonasan adds a keen insight: Rachel Imeinu's tears will only

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## Just Be Happy

By Gavriel Horan

**A**fter becoming *frum* in college, Rachel was sure that her family would be happy for her. As an idealistic youth, she thought they would be supportive of her decision, considering that she had found fulfillment and happiness for the first time in her life. Unfortunately, as with families of many *ba'alei teshuva*, that was not the case; Rachel's parents weren't supportive at all, and they never missed an opportunity to make her feel bad for her decision.

Despite the fact that her extended family remembered their great matriarch, Grandma Esther, a committed and Frum Jew, her aunts and uncles gave their condolences to Rachel's mother. "We're so sorry to hear that your daughter has become brainwashed by those backward, archaic Orthodox," they would say. Having immigrated as a teenager from Poland to America before the war, Grandma Esther was unfortunately unable to pass her *Yiddishkeit* on to her children. With the exception of Rachel, her descendants all drifted away from *Yiddishkeit* in search of



freedom, happiness, and the "American dream." Her children were traditional "Conservadox" Jews, her grandchildren were Reform, and her great-grandchildren were on the verge of intermarriage—with the exception of Rachel, who reversed the trend of assimilation.

Although Rachel requested that family gatherings be catered kosher, she was told to bring her own food along. "That's what Grandma Esther used to do also," they would remind her, referring to the fact that Grandma Esther used to bring little brown lunch bags filled with her own kosher food to family gatherings.

At a recent graduation dinner for one of her cousins, Rachel sat next to Grandma Esther's cousin Herb, an old man in his late seventies. He had been living in Florida for over two decades. Herb was a good conversationalist and he started telling her all about his tennis games and bridge club in Boca Raton. Soon the conversation turned to her bagged meal, and Rachel explained that she was Orthodox and kept kosher.

"Oh, that explains the long sleeves!" Herb exclaimed. "I was trying to figure out how anyone could be cold in this weather—and I'm from Florida! That's nice that you are connecting to your roots! I could never choose such a restrictive lifestyle for myself, but I always say, 'What matters is that you're happy.'"

"My parents don't feel that way *at all*," Rachel confided to the jovial old man. His accepting attitude was like a breath of fresh air. Maybe her

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help to achieve redemption when her children end all strife amongst themselves and do teshuva.

I would like to suggest that there is a profound lesson found in the words of the Targum Yonasan: Teshuva will only be achieved if there is love amongst Klal Yisroel. One cannot cause another to repent when he is judgmental and condescending of the other. We must look for what is wonderful in every Jew. It is not about who he/she is not, but it is about who he/she is. Every Jew has unlimited potential. We all possess a neshama - חלק אלוהי ממעל - a part of Hashem Himself. Like a pure diamond, the essence of every Jew remains wholesome and luminescent at all times.

Rachel Imeinu's love is everlasting. She lived and died for Klal Yisroel, hence her cry penetrates the heavens and our hearts for eternity. Through extreme sensitivity and care she saved her sister from degradation. Rachel cries uncontrollably for all Jews. It is this cry, an outpouring of love and affection, that helps to facilitate teshuva.

Every day, as we are "on the way", we encounter our brethren. They have been wandering in exile for over two thousand years. All too often, each footstep is another step further away from our mesorah and further away from Klal Yisroel. It is their own mother, Mama Rachel, who cries profusely for their wellbeing, but they do not know her, nor do they hear her cry. It is up to each and every one of us, who live with the legacy of Rachel Imeinu, to take her inspiration and her example and to draw on it, to affect another Jew. Together our tears will join with hers.

"רחל מבכה על בנייה" The word "*mevaka*" is difficult to interpret. Some translate it as an excessive crying. Perhaps it can be translated as a causative verb - it is Rachel Imeinu who shows us how to cry. We must not let this long exile make us indifferent and insensitive. Rachel Imeinu teaches that within all of us is a deep well of emotion and tears held in reserve for Klal Yisroel.

In the mystical sources, the name "Rachel" is a hint to an exalted aspect of the Shechinah. The Gemarah explains that when Klal Yisroel went into galus, so did the Shechinah. "Yisrael is so dear...that wherever we are exiled, the Shechinah accompanies us. (מגילה כט.) Therefore, it is none other than Hashem Who journeys with us and cries for us in the exile.

It is the Shechinah in the galus that is weeping for all Jews to unite as a family, through achdus and shalom. Then instead of crying, our mouths will be full of laughter. Through this eternal bond may we all return in a perfect teshuva, as we collectively take the last strides "on the way" to the final redemption together. **PI**

Good Shabbos,  
**Moshe Zionce**  
Director, Project Inspire Toronto

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parents could learn a thing or two from him about children. "I've never been so happy with myself since I became *frum*. In fact, the *only* thing going wrong in my life is my parents' disapproval with my lifestyle. Regardless of my fulfillment, they wish it was a passing trend. They would prefer it if the extent of my Judaism was *latkas* on Chanukah and *kneidelech* on *Pesach!*"

"Listen," Herb said. "I'm sure they're happy for you deep down inside. I always raised my children knowing that whatever they chose to do in life was fine, as long as they were happy. That's why it didn't bother me that all of them intermarried. They found nice spouses who made them happy—that's all that matters in life."

Rachel was taken aback by his nonchalance. "You wouldn't have preferred that your children had married Jewish?" she asked.

"It would have been nice, I guess," he said with a hint of regret in his voice, "but we wanted our children to be free to make their own choices, so we never made Judaism all that important in our home. Heck, all of my grandchildren are being raised as Christians—every one of them—but they're happy, good people and I'm proud of them. I support them in their choices as long as they're happy."

"Being happy is a wonderful thing," Rachel said gathering up her courage, "but only if you're doing good things with your life. Happiness alone isn't enough of a measuring stick."

"Gosh, I never thought of it that way," Herb said with a sigh while he sank back into his chair. "We just tried so hard to make sure our kids had the opportunities in life that we didn't have growing up so that they could be happy."

"It isn't good to be happy doing the wrong thing," she said.

"Maybe you're right," Herb conceded. "I've never thought about it like that before. Happiness might not be all there is in life if you're not doing the right thing."

The irony was tangible. There she was, doing what was right without her parents' approval, whereas he totally approved of his children's wrong decisions.

Long after their conversation ended, Herb continued to sit there with a deep look of contemplation on his brow. "Maybe she's right," he mumbled to himself again and again.

Later that evening, Herb found Rachel's mother and made sure to tell her what a wonderful daughter she had. "She's so intelligent and inspiring," he said. "I wish I had grandchildren like her. You may not approve of everything she does, but as long as she's happy and *doing the right thing*, that's all that matters!"

When Rachel's mother started to object, Herb interrupted: "Better an Orthodox Jew than a Christian!"

So many people leave *Yiddishkeit* because they only see the restriction and the hardship it brings. The single greatest tool we have is to show people that a life of Torah and *mitzvos* brings us happiness, fulfillment and joy, a deep inner joy that can only come from doing the right thing

Later that night, Herb suffered a massive heart attack and passed away in his sleep at the age of 78. He died having finally gotten the message. It may have been 78 years too late, but at least it wasn't one day later. Every opportunity to inspire someone is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Don't miss the chance! **PI**

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