

RABBI GOLDBERG'S *Parsha Perspectives* **FOR TODAY**

Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Vayechi for your Shabbos Table
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Sponsored by Eli & Sara Malka Neger as a zechus for a refuah shleima for Chaya Esther Tehila bas Arielle Tsiporah and lilui nishmas Yitzchok Moshe ben Aaron Yaakov Yehoshua.

DVAR TORAH FOR THE FRIDAY NIGHT MEAL

The Realization of Our Dreams

Before Yaakov's passing, Yosef came with his two sons to visit him, and during this visit, Yaakov recalled how Yosef's mother, Rachel, had died along the road, as the family was traveling. Yaakov buried her at that location, along the roadside. Rashi (48:7) explains that Yaakov mentioned this now because he had requested that Yosef go through the trouble of bringing his remains from Egypt for burial in *Me'aras Ha'machpeila* in Chevron – something he had not done for Rachel. The reason he had buried Rachel along the road, Rashi writes, is because Rachel would later pray for her descendants at the time of the destruction of Yerushalayim, when they would be exiled and would pass by her grave.

The Radbaz, in one of his responsa (2:696), makes an intentionally terse, enigmatic remark about Rachel's burial on the roadside:

ואם ידעת למה זכתה לאה להקבר במערת המכפלה ורחל בפרשת דרכים, תבין סוד שתי אחיות.

And if you knew why Leah was granted the privilege to be buried in the Machpeila Cave, and Rachel along the roadside, you would understand the secret of the two sisters.

While I cannot claim with any sort of confidence to know the "secret" to which the Radbaz here refers, I could suggest a possible direction to take in solving this intriguing mystery.

As mentioned, Rashi explains that Rachel was buried along the road so that she would pray for *Am Yisrael* as they passed by her grave on their way to exile. The Midrash in fact relates that at the time of the destruction of Yerushalayim, the patriarchs all came before Hashem to pray on their children's behalf, but He did not accept their pleas. But then Rachel came before God and begged that He have pity on *Am Yisrael*, and He accepted her petition. Rachel is forever known as "*Mama Rochel*" –

our loving, devoted mother, who spares no efforts to care for us, and thus prays incessantly on our behalf, that our bitter exile should end and we should return home. As our mother, her prayers for us are answered.

During her lifetime, Rachel desperately wished to be a mother. She received Yaakov's love and affection, but she remained childless for many years. This is what was missing throughout most of her life. But for all eternity, she is known as "*Mama Rochel*." Her everlasting identity is that of a mother, the mother of the entire Jewish Nation, who never stops worrying, caring about, and praying for her precious children, even to this day.

Leah, meanwhile, bore many children, but pined for Yaakov's love and attention. She was blessed with children, but pained by her husband's preference for Rachel. And yet, for all eternity, she lies alongside Yaakov in *Me'aras Ha'machpeila*. Rachel and Leah both received precisely what they desperately wished for – but only after many years of struggle and waiting.

This might be the *סוד שתי אחיות* of which the Radbaz speaks. Leah received the privilege of being buried next to Yaakov in fulfillment of her dreams of receiving Yaakov's love, and Rachel was buried along the road, where she would plead for her children, in fulfillment of her dreams of being a mother.

We should never forego on our dreams, no matter how long we need to wait for them to be realized. Rarely do we enjoy any significant blessing in life without struggle, and without delay. We need to be persistent and patient in the pursuit of our aspirations, and live with the faith and conviction that they will eventually be realized, in a manner that even far surpasses our wildest dreams.

Being Honest With Ourselves

In recounting to Yosef his mother's death and burial, Yaakov mentioned that she died בעוד כבוד ארץ (לבוא אפרתה 48:7). Rashi explains that Yaakov was emphasizing two points – that Rachel died not far from the town of Beis-Lechem (also known as אפרת), and that

she died in the summertime, when the weather was pleasant. He was explaining to Yosef that his decision to bury Rachel along the road, and not in a more respectable location, in the town of Beis-Lechem, was not a matter of convenience. It would not have taken him long to get to Beis-Lechem, and it was not cold or raining. Rather, as Rashi writes, Yaakov made this decision על פי הדיבור, by Hashem's decree. Apparently, He received a prophetic directive to bury Rachel on the roadside, so that centuries later she would pray for her descendants along their trek into exile.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (in *Sichos Mussar*) raises the question of why Yaakov needed to mention the point that convenience was not a factor. Once Yaakov heard a *bas kol* (heavenly voice) instructing him to bury Rachel along the road, why did anything else need to be said? Why did Yaakov feel the need to prove to Yosef that he did not make this decision for the purpose of convenience, if he in any event received a clear directive from God?

Rav Shmuelevitz answered that Yaakov was clarifying that he was not driven by any ulterior motives. Upon hearing this *bas kol*, Yaakov took the time to assure himself that he heard correctly, that Hashem indeed wanted Rachel buried at that spot, and not that this is only what he wanted to hear. He double-checked to ascertain that he did not sound this voice in his mind to spare himself the trouble of bringing Rachel to a place where she would receive a more respectful burial.

There are times when we consider excusing ourselves from *davening* in shul, from attending our regular *shiur*, from an important community project, or some other *mitzva*. Certainly, in many instances, we have very valid reasons to excuse ourselves. But we need to be honest with ourselves, and ask whether we truly believe the reasons we give ourselves for *davening* at home, or skipping the *shiur*, or if these decisions were made purely for the sake of convenience, to save ourselves the trouble, and we are making up excuses to justify our self-serving decision.

DVAR TORAH FOR THE SHABBOS DAY MEAL

A Parent's Greatest Blessing

When Yosef visited Yaakov with his two sons before Yaakov's death, Yaakov blessed them. Surprisingly, however, the Torah introduces this blessing by stating, "Yaakov blessed Yosef, saying..." (48:15). The *pasuk* continues by telling of Yaakov's blessing to Efrayim and Menashe, Yosef's sons – but we find no blessing given to Yosef himself. Why does the Torah introduce this *beracha* as having been given to Yosef, if it was given to Yosef's children?

Rav Moshe Sternbuch, citing the *Zohar*, explains that a parent's greatest blessing is that his children succeed and follow his path of religious devotion. The *Zohar* writes: כד אתברכן בניו איהו מתברך, דברכתא דבנוי דבר נש ברכתיה איהו –

"When one's children are blessed, he is blessed, for the blessing of a person's child is his blessing." When Yaakov blessed Efrayim and Menashe, this was, *ipso facto*, a blessing to Yosef, because there is nothing that a parent wants more than for his children to be happy, successful, and loyal to Torah and *mitzvos*.

DVAR TORAH FOR SHALOSH SEUDOS

Two Types of Tefila

Following Yaakov's *beracha* to Yosef's sons, he turned to Yosef and said that he was bequeathing to Yosef's descendants the city of Shechem אשר לקחתי מיד האמורי בחרבי ובקשתי – "which I seized from the Emorites with my sword and my bow" (48:22).

Of course, Yaakov did not wage war to capture Shechem. The city was taken by his two sons, Shimon and Levi. Therefore, Onkelos interprets the phrase בחרבי ובקשתי figuratively, as an allegory for prayer, translating this expression as בצלותי ובעותי – "with my prayer and my supplication." Yaakov meant that it was through his *tefilos* that Shechem was defeated.

What is the difference between these two words – צלותי and בעותי? Why did Yaakov emphasize that Shechem was captured through the merit of both צלותי and בעותי?

Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in *Meshech Chochma*, explains that these two terms refer to two different types of *tefila*: צלותי refers to the fixed, formal prayer text which we recite on a regular basis, whereas בעותי refers to individual prayers which we are allowed, and even encouraged, to add to the fixed liturgy. Yaakov likens these two forms of *tefila* to two different kinds of weapons – חרבי וקשתי, a sword and an arrow – because they do not work the same way. The fixed text of *tefila* established by the *Anshei Kenesses Ha'gedola* has inherent value and significance regardless of one's level of *kavana* (concentration) when reciting it. While we are of course urged to try to *daven* with *kavana*, the recitation of the fixed התפילה is valuable even when recited without *kavana*. But when we speak to God in our own words, formulating our own prayers and supplications, these prayers are powerful and effective only if they are recited with genuine feeling and concentration. Yaakov thus compared צלותי, the fixed prayer text, to a sword, which has the capacity to maim and kill without much skill or effort on the part of the warrior. By contrast, בעותי – our individual prayers, resemble an arrow, which must be fired with strength, skill and effort in order to achieve its objective. The purpose of an arrow is to kill from a distance, and so the archer must pull the bow back as far as he can, and concentrate intently on the target to aim properly. בעותי is thus an accurate metaphor for בעותי, for the personal *tefilos* which we add to the fixed liturgical text, and which must be recited with intense feeling and concentration in order to achieve their objective.