

Devorah, the wet-nurse of Rivkah, died, and she was buried below Bais Kel, below the plateau; and he named it Allon Bachus. (35:8)

Apparently, the passing of Rivkah *Imeinu's* nursemaid must have been of critical significance to the Jewish people. Otherwise, it would not have been prominently mentioned in the Torah. In fact, it is recorded immediately after we are notified of Yaakov *Avinu's* establishing a *Mizbayach*, Altar, in Bais Kel. While it is true that the elderly nursemaid died and was buried there, does her passing warrant such prominent coverage? Furthermore, the place was named Allon Bachus, due to the excessive weeping that took place there. Who was Devorah that she was granted such honor? What role did she play in Rivkah's life?

Rashi explains that it was not only Devorah who died, but also Rivkah who died. Indeed, the death of Devorah is an allusion to Rivkah's passing, which took place at the same time. Thus, the excessive weeping, with the word *bachus*, weeping, in the plural, alludes to the double weeping – for Rivkah and Devorah. Rivkah's passing is concealed by the Torah for reasons mentioned by the commentators, connected to her being the mother of the wicked Eisav. The world population was not ready to appreciate the life of the woman who gave them the evil Eisav. We have still not resolved the issue of why Devorah, a woman who reached an advanced age, commanded such outpouring of mourning.

Horav Moshe Tzvi Nahariyah, zl, takes us back to our first encounter with Devorah, which occurred at the time of Rivkah's betrothal to Yitzchak. As the young bride was about to leave home, her family decided to send along her nursemaid. The immediate question which glares at us is: If Rivkah was mature enough to make a decision concerning marriage, why did she require the services of her nursemaid? If she was that young – perhaps she should not be getting married. Furthermore, why does the Torah find it necessary to share this tidbit of information concerning Devorah?

Targum Yonasan ben Uriel writes that Devorah was much more than a nursemaid. She was *padgevassa*, her mentor, her spiritual advisor, who guided her on the path of observance. As such, it is understandably crucial that Rivkah's descendants be made aware of the pivotal role she played in her life. Rivkah became the illustrious Matriarch as a result of Devorah's tutelage. We owe her a great debt of gratitude.

Rashi and *Ramban* debate why Devorah was with Yaakov at this point. She was no longer a young woman who could travel freely. *Rashi* contends that Rivkah sent her to inform Yaakov that it was finally safe to return home. The aged nurse unfortunately died on the way home. *Ramban* maintains that it is highly unlikely that Rivkah would dispatch an elderly woman to fetch her son. He suggests that, following Rivkah's marriage, the nursemaid took leave and returned to Padan Aram. When Yaakov left Lavan's home, he took Devorah with him out of respect for his mother. He

planned to support her in her old age.

Rav Nahariyah suggests that there is more to Devorah's accompanying Yaakov. After all is said and done, she was old and frail, clearly not a candidate for wilderness travel. Yaakov wanted Devorah due to what would be her compelling influence on his sons. Any woman who could survive in Lavan's evil environment and emerge a paragon of virtue, fully-committed to Hashem, must have been a very special woman. She deserved to leave.

How did she survive? How did she remain steadfast in her beliefs? There were no schools, no opportunity for education. How did she do it? The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that she was probably one of the "souls made in Charan" (*Bereishis* 12:5) by Avraham and Sarah. The influence and inspiration she received from the first Patriarch family remained with her for her entire life. Out of a sense of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, to Avraham and Sarah, she decided to remain with Yaakov's family and help with the "kids." Her influence was far-reaching, warranting her special mention in the Torah.