

“But as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died on me... and I buried her there on the road to Efras.” (48:7)

Yaakov *Avinu* explains to his son Yosef, why he did not bury Rachel in the *Meoras HaMachpelah*. It was Hashem's decision that Yaakov bury Rachel on the side of the road, so that the exiled Jews would pass by the Matriarch's grave on the way to Bavel. Her *neshamah*, soul, would weep and pray for their safe passage and eventual return. Rachel's heartfelt prayers will effect a positive response from Hashem. But, we wonder why Rachel was selected for this mission? Clearly, she was virtuous and saintly, and her prayers would have great efficacy, but is that all?

Horav Dovid Budnick, zl, Rosh Yeshivah in pre-World War II Novardok, suggests that Rachel's prayers were comprised of more than her words of prayer. It was Rachel herself, her character. A deep understanding of her life can catalyze a desire to repent and embrace the life of a Jew. *Geulah*, redemption, will occur when we will perform *teshuvah*, repent/return to the Almighty. Rachel's life can generate that emotion, that striving to return.

The second *Bais HaMikdash* was destroyed due to *sinaas chinam*, unwarranted hatred, among Jews. They studied Torah, performed *mitzvos*, but they did not get along. They had no regard for one another. It was that reason – totally unwarranted, baseless hatred – that brought about the *churban*, destruction. Let us analyze the roots of hatred. Enmity does not grow in a vacuum. One does not just suddenly decide to hate his fellow. The precursor for hate is simple jealousy. We become envious of the fellow who “used” to be our “good” friend, and suddenly we begin to hate him. My “friend” receives an honor which makes me envious. The next step is denigrating him. He does not deserve it. Who is he to be so honored? Why him, and not me? This is how unwarranted, baseless, nothing to gain hatred begins. It begins with *kinah*, envy, and graduates to *sinah*, enmity.

Rachel *Imeinu* withstood one of the greatest challenges that a human can confront. Yaakov wanted to marry her – and only her. He worked for her hand in marriage for seven long years. Out of his love for Rachel, the time went by quickly. (This is all attested to by the Torah.) Rachel was well aware of this and waited patiently, anticipating a fulfilling life with Yaakov. Suddenly, her father, Lavan the swindler – a man who was incapable of telling the truth – came up with a plan to cheat Yaakov and Rachel. He claimed that he was doing it to preserve the custom of not giving the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Did he really care about his oldest daughter, Leah? No! He was a crook, and this is how a crook operates!

Rachel, *nebach*, regrettably, was the innocent victim. She was humiliated by her father, and would have to witness her sister marry Yaakov, for whom Rachel had waited seven years. How easy it would have been for Rachel to reveal the deception and expose it for what it really was. However, she did not because it would have hurt her sister. Rachel swallowed her pride, accepted the shame, and even gave Leah the predetermined signs. She went so far as to remain in hiding while Yaakov spoke with Leah, answering for her sister, allowing the ruse to work. She was willing to do

all of this so that Leah would not be humiliated. This represents nobility of character at its zenith. This was unabashed goodness – a *lev tov*, good heart, overflowing with kindness and sensitivity. Is there still a question concerning why Rachel was selected to be the Matriarch to intercede on behalf of her children? They had been victims of strife, generated by seeds of envy and cultivated by baseless hatred. She would teach and inspire them about how brothers and sisters should act, how human beings should treat one another. Her inspiration would catalyze their introspection and eventual *teshuvah*, which would bring about the *Geulah sheleimah*, complete Redemption. It was not just Rachel's prayer. It was Rachel *Imeinu* herself – the hallmark of selflessness, love for a sister, empathy for a sister's pain, a willingness to sustain pain and humiliation, in order to spare another person. Rachel will help to catalyze the *Geulah*.