

And I, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died unto me in the land of Canaan on the road when there was still a stretch of land to come to Efras, and I buried her there on the road. (48:7)

Yaakov seems to be justifying himself for not burying Rachel in the *Me'oras Ha'machpeilah*. After all, Yaakov is imploring Yosef to make sure that he is interred in the burial place of the Patriarchs, even though his beloved wife, Rachel, Yosef's mother, was not buried there! If that was the intended meaning, however, then Yaakov's "speech" would have been placed earlier in the *parsha*, where Yaakov asks Yosef to bury him in the *Me'oras Ha'machpeilah*. In this context his statement is apparently connected to the decision to grant each of Yosef's sons a special position as an individual tribe among the *shevatim*.

Horav S.R. Hirsch, zl, notes that during this entire conversation the *Torah* refers to him as Yaakov -- not Yisrael. This is the case until the point when Yaakov confers "*shevet*" status upon Menashe and Efraim and blesses them. "*Vayischazak Yisrael*," Yaakov pulled himself together only when Yosef approached him. Yaakov's response indicates Yosef's importance. Specifically, it underscores how Yosef's significance would ultimately affect the national future of *Klal Yisrael*. As Yaakov looked at his two grandsons, he viewed them as *Yisrael* - attributing special meaning to that moment.

Horav Hirsch contends that Yaakov's decision to make Yosef's descendants into a double tribe was the result of his overwhelming love for Yosef. Unrelated to national considerations, it was purely a personal decision. In these last days of his life, Yaakov's thoughts reverted back to Rachel, his intended wife, whom he cherished with great affection, who had been tragically taken away from him the earliest. Her memory was especially prominent in his mind. Indeed, it was more than likely that her fate would cast her in the distant background in the future memorials of the nation. He feared she would be forgotten. In the future, when Yaakov's descendants would go to pray at the graves of their ancestors, they would visit the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, but Rachel *Imeinu*, the Matriarch who was Yosef's mother and Yaakov's beloved, would be missing. Yosef's mother, even in death, did not receive her rightful place. Only two tribes would memorialize her as their mother.

Yaakov feared that Rachel would be forgotten, so he decided to make Yosef - Rachel's firstborn - the firstborn of the tribes, by forming two tribes from the descendants of Yosef's two sons. He granted them a "double portion" as is the due of the firstborn. Yaakov clearly was demonstrating his undying affection for Rachel. He gave her in death what she never had experienced in life.