

"And it came to pass as her soul was departing -- for she died -- that she called his name Ben Oni, but his father called him Binyamin." (35:18)

In focusing upon the disparity between the names given to the child by his respective parents, the *Ramban* comments that Rachel sought to emphasize the pain and sorrow connected with his birth. In contrast, Yaakov wanted his son's name to have an optimistic connotation. The word "*oni*" can be translated as "mourning" or "strength." Yaakov sought to preserve the name that Rachel had chosen, while giving it a positive undertone.

In an article written in the winter of 1943, during the height of the slaughter in Europe, *Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, z.l.*, used the words of the *Ramban* to encourage the brokenhearted Jews. Being a Jew in *galus*, exile, presents a dark and bleak picture. Indeed, what approach can embolden his spirit and strengthen his emotions? The *Ramban* teaches us to be optimistic in every situation. *Horav* Bloch cites the *pasuk* in *Yirmiyah 6:26*, "*A personal mourning make for you*," The *Navi* teaches us that from the perspective of the individual, we are definitely mourning the death of countless thousands of our brethren.

From the perspective of *Klal Yisrael*, however, we should view the present time as an "*eis tzarah*," a period of crisis, a time for serious introspection, repentance, and prayer. The situation calls for a spiritual awakening as we are preparing to usher in a new source of life, emphasizing the eternal nature of *Klal Yisrael*. We should not view it as a time for collective mourning for *Klal Yisrael*. True, *Klal Yisrael* has setbacks, moments of concern, periods of disturbance. However, each one of these periods has catalyzed new and vibrant life for *Klal Yisrael*. This idea should underscore our perception of the national tragedy. While we mourn the tragic loss of the individual, we recognize that *Klal Yisrael*, the collective nation, is eternal in nature. Our descent is the medium for our ascent.