

## And Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons since he was a child of his old age. (37:3)

Yosef was a *ben zekunim*, born to Yaakov *Avinu* when the latter had advanced in age. Is this a reason for Yaakov to love Yosef more than Binyamin, who was the "baby" of the family? The *Chizkuni* responds that since Rachel died during Binyamin's birth, Yaakov *Avinu* did not love him as much. While we can understand that Binyamin brought back memories of the tragic death of his beloved Rachel, one would think that the Patriarch was beyond such emotions. Indeed, one would think that the memory of the mother of his orphaned son would enhance his love towards his son. Moreover, Binyamin was the last fruit of Rachel's life. Is there a greater reason to love Binyamin?

*Horav Mordechai Gifter, Shlita*, explains that a child is the product of the harmony that exists between a man and wife. Marriage is a partnership in which two people are unified; a child is the fruit of this relationship. Thus, the epitome of love for a child is attained only when both parents are sharing together in raising this child. Binyamin's birth, which was the fruit of Yaakov's partnership with Rachel, was regrettably the precursor of Rachel's death and the consequent demise of their partnership. Hence, the happiness and love Yaakov developed with his youngest child was stunted. It could never reach its full expression without his life-long partner, the child's mother. At Yosef's birth, on the other hand, both parents were together, sharing in the joy, jointly experiencing the fruit of their relationship. Although Rachel passed away later on, Yaakov retained the level of love that he had attained in Yosef.